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Director-General's Foreword

I have pleasure in submitting this sixth edition of the FAO Programme Evaluation Report to the Council and Conference. It comes at a time when the Organization's evaluation systems are being further reinforced in accordance with our commitment to strengthen FAO as a learning organization and centre of excellence, as articulated in the cross-organizational strategy for Ensuring Excellence.

In November 2001, I issued a Director-General's Bulletin (DGB) on Strengthening the FAO Evaluation System. Following this DGB, and in line with Governing Body recommendations, we are working to improve annual monitoring and assessment by programme managers and to introduce systematic auto-evaluation of all programme entities. Extra-budgetary funds, both in support of FAO's work in the field and for normative programmes, are subject to equally stringent monitoring and evaluation procedures. This further enhances results-based programme planning and budgeting, which is in line with the strategy for Continuing to Improve the Management Process as set out in the Strategic Framework.

As is now the established practice, I have sought and accepted the advice of the Programme Committee in selecting the areas of work to be evaluated during the biennium. Similarly, the practice of submitting the evaluation reports to the Programme Committee, together with the management response to the findings and recommendations, has been continued and has permitted in-depth discussion in the Committee of what is valid and feasible.

All the evaluations have been rigorous and independent, focusing on issues of programme results, their benefit to members and cost-efficiency. They have all brought together consideration of technical cooperation and more normative work in an integrated manner.

Two major initiatives agreed with the Conference upon my first taking office, i.e. the Special Programme for Food Security and EMPRES¹ (both for desert locusts and animal health aspects), have undergone this evaluation process. These evaluations were timely, in that the programmes are now well-established and have become important to the Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries. The programmes have evolved since their inception in line with experience and the observations of the evaluations which have been extremely useful in further optimizing the programmes to benefit members. It was very encouraging that the Programme Committee welcomed the flexible and people-centred approach which we are applying in the SPFS.

The Programme Evaluation Report 2003 also reflects the move supported by the Programme Committee to increasingly evaluate our work against the Strategic Objectives of the Organization as agreed in the Strategic Framework 2000-15. This report includes a summary of the evaluation of work on Strategic Objective A3 "Preparedness for and effective and sustainable response to, food and agricultural emergencies". It is an unfortunate characteristic of the state of the world and of food insecurity that assisting the vulnerable to resume agriculture after emergencies is becoming an increasing part of FAO's work. The evaluation has been useful in identifying lessons for us to become more effective in this role.

Chapter 5 of this report is a summary of the evaluation of the Codex Alimentarius and other FAO and WHO food standards work, which was carried out jointly with our partners in WHO. This has always been a key programme for the Organization and its importance for all countries was underlined both by the evaluation itself and the attention given to it by all sections of the membership, with the report considered at a Special Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. As you will see from the management response, we from our side are taking steps with WHO to implement many of the recommendations, but much will also depend upon the

¹ EMPRES – Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases.

willingness of the membership of Codex to streamline their ways of working and priorities, while also being more inclusive of the developing countries and their needs.

The evaluation of statistical activities in FAO (Chapter 6 of this report) addressed one of the core functions of the Organization. The evaluation confirms the importance and utility of statistical functions, but highlights difficulties faced by many developing countries in maintaining and improving their national systems, on which depends the quality of FAO-produced statistics. The evaluation also underlines the need to review priorities in order to better meet the core information requirements among the expanding diversity of demands. Management intends to use the recommendations in making further progress in this important normative work.

I have noted that, in each case, the evaluations have found that the output of FAO should be expanded in particular ways. This is very gratifying to the Organization and demonstrates the value of our efforts. We are working with you, the membership, and with our other partners to overcome resource constraints which make these recommendations difficult to address. However, in our continuous drive for greater cost-effectiveness, I have also asked the Evaluation Service to ensure that future evaluations present alternatives for improvement within existing resources as well as identifying priorities for additional funding.

The role of evaluation in FAO reflects my drive for full transparency and accountability not just on resource use but also on results. The Programme Committee has on several occasions welcomed the candid and critical examination of impacts and issues in evaluation reports. I share this perception even if sometimes it leads management to an equally frank rebuttal of observations and recommendations which we do not consider viable. In this way, I find the evaluation work of increasing value in both internal debate and in promoting dialogue with the membership on how we can provide the optimum service.

It is in this spirit that I look forward to the comments of the Council and Conference on the conclusions and issues raised in this report.

Jacques Diouf
Director-General

Introduction

1. Following the approval by the Programme Committee at its 82nd Session (September 1999), the policy and principles underlying the new system of evaluation were promulgated in Director-General's Bulletin No. 2001/33 (Strengthening the FAO Evaluation System). Since then, the new evaluation system has been under implementation in order to improve the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization's work in the context of the Strategic Framework and the results-oriented approach. In particular, this has meant: (a) the establishment of a new, comprehensive evaluation system, comprising annual assessment and auto-evaluation by programme managers and programme evaluation at the corporate level by the Evaluation Service (PBEE); (b) further strengthening of programme evaluation in terms of the quality and feedback to programme planning and the implementation process; and (c) facilitating the active participation of the Governing Bodies in the evaluation process, particularly the Programme Committee.

2. The implementation of pre-evaluation monitoring and annual assessment and periodic auto-evaluation is under way in 2003, beginning with an annual assessment of implementation progress by programme managers and a first group of auto-evaluations of selected programme entities under the technical and economic programmes. The implementation is supported by PBE as a whole for the annual assessment, and by PBEE for auto-evaluation, with respect to the provision of and training in methodological and procedural tools. Annual assessments are expected to improve monitoring of programme outputs and their results whereas the auto-evaluation process is expected to help programme managers learn directly from the implementation experience leading to more realistic planning and improved management. The latter should also provide a better basis for, and hence strengthen, programme evaluations. The first synthesis report on the results of auto-evaluation will be made to the Governing Bodies through the Programme Committee in 2005.

3. As regards programme evaluations managed by PBEE, efforts have continued to enhance their quality and usefulness for improvement and learning in the strategic management context as well as their credibility. These evaluations are increasingly framed in relation to specific objectives and approaches set out in the Strategic Framework and the Medium-term Plan. The main aim is to assess the overall relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the ongoing activities linked to the specific strategic objectives so as to provide feedback for improved planning and management of the activities, both individually and collectively. This approach, applied for the first time in the thematic evaluation of activities in support of Strategic Objective A3 (*Preparedness for and effective and sustainable response to food and agricultural emergencies*), has been well received, both by programme managers and the Programme Committee, and will be further refined. At the same time, the approach is also conducive to improved assessment of programme results, providing a clearer framework and criteria for assessing progress in achieving the planned results. Similarly, more systematic field visits to selected countries and questionnaire surveys of partners are employed to assess the results at the field level and the level of satisfaction amongst key partners. Further improvements in this respect, however, will require strengthening the monitoring of results by programme managers as envisaged under the new system of annual assessments referred to above.

4. Selective use of external inputs to the evaluation process continues to be expanded to reinforce technical competencies available to programme evaluations or to lend greater credibility to evaluation results. The mechanism of an external peer review panel has a special role to play in that it enriches the range of expertise and experience applied to the process, provides an independent validation of the substance and quality of evaluations and, as a consequence, adds to the credibility of the results. Greater use of external expertise is also being made in conducting evaluations, including the use of teams of external consultants for selected cases. For example, the Special Programme for Food Security was evaluated by a team of external consultants, and the

Codex Alimentarius and other FAO/WHO Food Standards Programmes was evaluated by a team led by a senior consultant and comprised of a mix of consultants and FAO and WHO evaluation staff. This, accompanied by the practice of a separate management response, has been helpful in enhancing the sense of transparency, independence and credibility of individual evaluations.

5. The Programme Committee has continued to play a very active role in guiding evaluation work. The Committee advises the Director-General in selecting topics to be included in the rolling biennial plans on programme evaluations and, as the primary recipient of evaluation reports, reviews and comments in depth on individual evaluations. It also seeks and receives progress reports on follow-up actions regarding key evaluation recommendations. The latter has proved to be an effective way of promoting feedback from evaluation to programme planning and implementation, which can be a serious weakness in many evaluation systems.

6. As indicated in the Director-General's Foreword, this edition of the Programme Evaluation Report contains the six evaluations considered by the Programme Committee during 2002-03. Given the favourable reception to the format of the last report, it has been used in this report as well: each chapter contains a summary of the evaluation report, the report of the external peer review panel, the management response and the Programme Committee's report.

7. In looking at the substance, the Programme Committee found that the activities evaluated were largely relevant to the needs of the FAO member countries and provided them with useful services. It discussed weaknesses and remedial action with the concerned managers in the light of the evaluation recommendations and the management responses. The Committee also expressed overall satisfaction with the way in which the evaluation function has progressed in FAO. In particular, it has appreciated evaluation's strategic and forward-looking orientation and agreed that increasing emphasis be given to thematic evaluations in the context of the Strategic Framework and the Medium-term Plan. In recent meetings, the Committee also:

- a) appreciated the increasing utilization of external experts and, in particular, the use of external peer review panels to validate evaluations;
- b) in commenting on the external evaluation of the SPFS, suggested that the additional cost could be warranted either by the need for special competencies or to enhance the credibility of the evaluation;
- c) welcomed positive and proactive management responses;
- d) welcomed the increasingly candid evaluations, with their greater degree of "frankness" and "constructive criticism";
- e) welcomed precise and operational recommendations but also warned against excessive detail and lack of prioritization in recommendations;
- f) highlighted the importance of follow-up to evaluations, including timely action on those recommendations accepted by management;
- g) appreciated efforts to enhance the dissemination of evaluation results in the interests of sharing experience and increasing transparency; and
- h) recognized the cost implications of comprehensive evaluations but emphasized the importance of quality and integrity rather than quantity of evaluations.

8. In considering the last Programme Evaluation Report 2001, the Conference "... expressed general satisfaction with the progress being made in evolving an appropriate evaluation system in the context of a more strategically-oriented planning, programming and budgeting approach recently introduced..." and "that it would be appropriate to consider the creation of an independent evaluation service".²

9. The expression of general satisfaction by the Programme Committee and the Council provides strong encouragement to sustain the momentum for strengthening the new evaluation system. The effort will continue. Apart from developing and refining more appropriate

² Report of the Conference of FAO, C 2001/REP, paragraph 82.

methodologies and approaches to evaluation, the focus will be on enhancing evaluation feedback to the programme process as well as on promoting organizational learning from various forms of evaluation, including auto-evaluation.

10. On the question of the possible creation of an independent evaluation service, the Joint Meeting of the Programme and Finance Committees considered the issue in May 2003 and concluded that the independence of evaluation is both important and complex and that the issue will be addressed again at another Joint Meeting of the Committees in September 2003.

11. Nevertheless, one point bears highlighting. This concerns the cost of evaluation in two ways. The direct cost of evaluations is increasing, reflecting a greater use of external inputs, both as part of the evaluation teams and for external peer review panels. Field visits and questionnaire surveys also add to the cost. More indirectly, assessing results requires more systematic monitoring by the programme staff, particularly for such results as outcomes and impact of programmes through the auto-evaluation process. This makes a demand on programme resources in terms of staff time and funds for collecting and reviewing the evidence of such results. In the context of general resource constraints faced by the Organization, this presents a real challenge, requiring a strategy for cost-effective use of evaluation as a management tool.

Chapter One: Evaluation of the Animal Health Component of Programme 2.1.3³

I. INTRODUCTION

12. The livestock sector is growing in importance more rapidly than any other agricultural sector. Livestock are particularly important in the developing world, where they contribute to the livelihood of 70 percent of the world's rural poor. Sustained livestock production depends on the maintenance of healthy animals which, in developing countries, means paying particular attention to the problems of both endemic and introduced animal diseases. FAO has been playing a well-established role in animal health work, increasingly as part of its broader objectives related to reducing poverty, ensuring food security and preserving natural resources. Since 1994, the Organization has given priority to transboundary animal diseases through the Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRES),⁴ while still continuing its work on parasitic diseases, particularly trypanosomiasis.

13. FAO's animal health activities were evaluated for the first time in 2001. The present evaluation focuses on the animal health activities under Programme 2.1.3 (Livestock) that were ongoing between 1995 and 2001, with particular attention to country-level work carried out with Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) funding. Although the evaluation was carried out by the FAO Evaluation Service (PBEE), it received considerable external input through independent experts' participation in field missions to 15 countries⁵ and a subsequent external peer review of the evaluation reports by an independent panel (see below).

II. OVERVIEW OF FAO'S ANIMAL HEALTH WORK

14. Within the institutional architecture for international cooperation in animal health, the options for programme interventions by FAO are fairly broad. Since 1994, FAO's animal health programme has focused on transboundary animal diseases (TADs) through EMPRES. Work has centred on four specific aspects of strengthening veterinary services at the country level.

- *Early warning.* This encompasses disease control initiatives (based predominantly on epidemiological surveillance) that lead to improved knowledge of disease distribution, so that further evolution of an outbreak can be anticipated.
- *Early/rapid reaction.* This involves the rapid and effective containment of disease occurrences, which limits their spread and impact. It also includes contingency planning and emergency preparedness.
- *Enabling research.* Collaboration between FAO and scientific centres of excellence directs research efforts towards solving problems in transboundary disease control.
- *Coordination.* This relates to international and regional disease control activities that are coordinated through a variety of mechanisms, the most important of which is the Global Rinderpest Eradication Programme (GREP).

15. Particular priority under EMPRES has been given to TADs of strategic importance, which may be subject to global or regional eradication programmes, such as rinderpest, foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP); those of tactical importance, which may cause very serious epidemics from time to time but are not at a stage at which they

³ PC 87/4 (b).

⁴ The EMPRES programme comprises two components: one for livestock (implemented mainly by the Animal Health Service [AGAH]) and one for plant pests (implemented by the Plant Protection Service [AGPP]).

⁵ Afghanistan, Benin, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mali, Pakistan, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Uganda, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. Iraq was also included on the original list, but technical reasons made it impossible for the mission to be carried out.

could be considered for global or regional eradication campaigns, such as Rift Valley fever (RVF), lumpy skin disease, peste des petits ruminants (PPR), African swine fever (ASF) and Newcastle disease; and emerging diseases, such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). Efforts in the last two categories of diseases have largely been through field projects funded by TCP. In particular, the main focus has been on GREP, which has the goal of verified worldwide elimination of rinderpest by 2010.

16. In addition to EMPRES, FAO has continued its work on parasitic diseases, particularly trypanosomiasis, which are of concern as a major development issue in many parts of the world, especially Africa. Much of FAO's work in this area is channelled through the Programme against African Trypanosomiasis (PAAT). Trypanosomiasis is a disease that renders large areas of Africa unsuitable for livestock and has emerged as a significant problem. FAO's work on parasites has become increasingly oriented towards problems of drug resistance, particularly to anthelmintics and acaricides.

17. FAO work on animal health that falls under the responsibility of the Animal Health Service (AGAH) is divided into three distinct areas:

- infectious diseases (including EMPRES, GREP, the Transboundary Animal Disease Information System [TADInfo] and the Regional Animal Disease and Surveillance Control Network [RADISCON] for North Africa, the Middle East and the Arab Peninsula);
- parasitic diseases (including PAAT); and
- veterinary services.

18. Regular Programme (RP) resources devoted to animal health work are estimated to account for about 45 percent of the Livestock Programme's resources, where total allocations were US\$18.8 million for 1996-97, US\$17.2 million for 1998-99 and US\$16.8 million for 2000-2001. In the context of declining resources for the programme as a whole, the share used for core work on transboundary diseases appears to have remained the same or increased slightly during the period. At the same time, resources for work on insect-borne diseases (tsetse and trypanosomiasis), parasitic diseases and drug resistance and veterinary services all tended to decline.

19. The majority of animal health field projects were funded by TCP. From 1995 until 2000, 90 TCP projects were approved for a total value of US\$22.2 million. Those that dealt with FAO's response to a disease outbreak were generally classified as emergency projects and comprised slightly more than half of the total TCP animal health portfolio. AGAH has technical responsibility for only a few non-TCP projects, reflecting a general decline in the FAO Field Programme as a whole. Between 1995 and 2001, 17 non-TCP projects were approved, for a total value of almost US\$28.5 million.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

20. EMPRES has achieved important results in its four main areas of activity, particularly in GREP.

- *Early warning.* Software for TADInfo has been developed and adopted by several countries for their national animal disease database. Disease surveillance systems have been promoted and countries assisted in the development of early warning systems. RADISCON for North Africa, the Middle East and the Arab Peninsula has been established by an FAO/International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) partnership.
- *Early reaction.* Guides to contingency planning and Good Emergency Management Practices (GEMP) have been prepared, and workshops held in Africa, Central Europe and Asia. Some countries have undertaken improved contingency planning.
- *Enabling research.* Research into priority diseases and vaccine development has been promoted. A list of world reference laboratories and other institutes allows EMPRES and member countries to identify sources of technical and scientific support. Diagnostic capabilities have been introduced and expanded in developing countries.

- *Coordination.* GREP has converted separate regional eradication initiatives into a global programme with a valuable rapid response capability. The GREP Secretariat has drawn up an action plan to achieve the goal of global freedom from the disease by 2010, and partial or complete successes have been achieved in several locations; however, the essential programme for the international verification of worldwide freedom lacks assured funding. The Regional Animal Production and Health Commission for Asia and the Pacific (APHCA) and the European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EUFMD) act as fora for the regional coordination of activities in their respective areas of operation.
 - *Field projects.* A large majority of projects supported EMPRES in the above areas. In particular, 23 projects provided direct support to EMPRES. All were considered to be relevant to national needs and, in general, were well implemented. The evaluation missions gave particularly high scores to the seven projects related to rinderpest.
21. The main results in other (non-EMPRES) areas included:
- *Environmental management of insect-borne diseases.* Science-based standards for tsetse and trypanosomiasis control are the most important element here. PAAT was started in 1995 as the forum through which control and eradication efforts are coordinated. PAAT supports the Pan African Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Eradication Campaign (PATTEC) initiated in 2000, but harmonization between PAAT and PATTEC needs to be improved.
 - *Integrated parasite control and drug resistance.* A Working Group on Parasite Resistance (WGPR) was established in 1997 to assist FAO in preparing guidelines on the subject. Two regional reference laboratories and three information networks concerned with ticks and helminths were established, and FAO is acting as a forum for the coordination of resistance issues.
 - *Veterinary services.* RP work has aimed at helping governments to reinvigorate public veterinary health programmes by focusing them on World Health Organization (WHO) initiatives that increase the benefits that national livestock industries can derive from global trade. However, the recent privatization of many clinical veterinary services has led to changes in FAO's veterinary health work and now only very limited RP funds are available for public veterinary health work.
 - *Field projects.* Seven of the nine non-EMPRES TCP projects that were evaluated were not judged as highly as the EMPRES ones. The reasons for this include the greater government support that EMPRES projects attract and the two-year time limit imposed on TCP projects, which is not long enough to bring significant results for tsetse and parasite interventions. In other cases, projects had not taken sufficient account of local conditions and other limiting factors.
22. The evaluation concluded that in the priority area of EMPRES significant progress has been achieved, with main successes in the implementation of GREP and the dissemination of TADInfo. Within the overall aim of eradicating rinderpest by 2010, GREP has largely maintained its targets in its action plan for 1998-2003, and TADInfo represents an important achievement in improving disease reporting. While some good work has been undertaken in the promotion of contingency planning and emergency preparedness, early reaction has been less successful, requiring closer collaboration with countries. With the exception of tsetse and trypanosomiasis, most non-EMPRES activities have a low profile, and many of FAO's veterinary service activities have been phased out. PAAT has been a useful umbrella for FAO's work on tsetse and trypanosomiasis and should play an important role in the implementation of PATTEC. It is also found that FAO's animal health work addresses gender in an integrated fashion.
23. The evaluation offers a set of recommendations with a view to encouraging limited resources to be directed towards addressing the needs in areas of FAO's comparative advantage in orienting future animal health work.
- a) FAO should continue to promote the improvement of disease surveillance systems, particularly at national level, through dialogue with partners in the donor community.
 - b) There is a risk that GREP's successes with the control and eradication of rinderpest may lead to unrealistic expectations of success against other diseases that are more difficult to control.

- c) In encouraging emergency prevention planning for transboundary diseases other than rinderpest, while strategic diseases for global or regional elimination can be recognized, it may be a more useful criterion for most interventions, rather than disease lists, to recognize transboundary disease situations and events in which the threat to a country comes from an outside source.
- d) AGAH should clarify the EMPRES mandate in order to establish whether it embraces, beyond “emergency prevention”, the promotion of improved disease surveillance, epidemiology, control and eradication planning and policies for disease situations with transboundary implications.
- e) The shortage of staff in the EMPRES-Livestock Group should be redressed, or greater discrimination should be applied to accepting TCP requests. Furthermore, FAO should intensify its efforts to obtain extrabudgetary funding for EMPRES activities.
- f) FAO’s work on veterinary services may be absorbed within EMPRES with key focus on work related to contingency planning.
- g) More concrete arrangements should be made among the various agencies involved in PAAT and PATTEC.
- h) FAO should clarify its perceived medium- and long-term role in integrated parasite control and drug resistance and how it intends to interact with other concerned bodies in this area.
- i) While FAO’s collaborative working arrangements with other agencies have been generally good, there are still potential conflicts of interest with the Organization of African Unity Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (OAU-IBAR) regarding PAAT and PATTEC activities and this relationship needs to be carefully nurtured.
- j) For field activities, the main lessons identified in the review of animal health projects should be taken into account in formulation and implementation.

REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW PANEL⁶

24. The Panel met in Rome from 17 to 19 December 2001, when consultations were conducted with PBEE staff, with the Assistant Director-General (ADG) of the Agriculture Department (AG), the Director of the Animal Production and Health Division (AGA) and the Chief and senior staff of AGAH. The Panel considered the draft Evaluation Report, in the context of the current Strategic Framework for FAO 2000-2015, the Medium-term Plan (MTP) 2002-2007, the Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2002-2003, the AGA Mission Statement and priorities as outlined by senior management.

Panel findings

- a) The external Review Panel appreciates the evaluation process and endorses, with one exception, the conclusions and recommendations presented within the Evaluation Report.
- b) The Panel recognized that there is a high demand for assistance in animal health from member countries and this is reflected in an active RP of activities and also in a high level of participation of AGAH in TCP activities.
- c) The Panel was impressed by the commitment demonstrated by the Chief of AGAH and by the professionalism and dedication of his staff. The team is highly competent and productive and has responded well to the heavy demands placed upon it by RP activities and the substantial load of TCP and other unplanned activities.
- d) While the heavy contribution of AGAH to TCP represents a particular challenge, it has also been an opportunity, which the staff have utilized extremely well, to undertake operational

⁶ The members of this independent panel were: Dr. Philippe Vialatte, Principal Administrator, European Commission, DG Development B/4; Dr. Jim Pearson, Director, Scientific and Technical Department, International Office of Epizootics (OIE); Dr. Subhash Morzaria, Head, Animal Health Programme, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI); Dr. Raja Rafaqat Hussain, Animal Husbandry Commissioner, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, Pakistan; Dr. Stuart Hargreaves, Director of Veterinary Services, Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement, Zimbabwe; and Dr. Tony Forman, independent consultant and participant in missions to East and Southern Africa and Asia.

aspects of their work programme in the field, and to maintain a presence and appropriate balance between normative and operational activities.

- e) The current structure of AGAH was established in 1994 and includes an Infectious Diseases Group, a Parasitic Diseases Group and a Veterinary Services Group. The EMPRES programme has become a major element of the Infectious Diseases Group, reflecting the priority placed on it by FAO. In particular, its coordination of GREP, which is its main operational focus, has played a pivotal role in the success seen in controlling the disease and is on target for achieving disease freedom in 2010.
- f) Rapid changes are occurring globally in the context of livestock trade and the recognition of the importance of livestock in food security and poverty alleviation. These changes are reflected in the changing priorities of FAO and the Panel believes that it is important for AGAH to position itself strategically to meet these changing demands.
- g) The Panel has, however, identified some key concerns. In particular, it believes that the human resource limitation is so acute, and the unprogrammed demands on staff so great, that AGAH is severely constrained in the implementation of its RP activities. Key areas that need to be addressed are indicated in the recommendations below.

Recommendations

Strategy

25. The Panel notes that AGAH participates in the strategic planning and prioritization process that has been adopted by FAO.

- AGAH needs to define and articulate its strategy more clearly within the MTP.
- Given the limited resources available, the next medium-term planning exercise needs to be followed by a process of eliminating the lowest priority activities.

Resource allocation

- Despite the potential for alleviating the workload by eliminating low-priority activities, much of the demand placed on AGAH comes increasingly from unscheduled activities, including technical cooperation projects (TCPs). The Panel finds it difficult to see how an appropriate level of service can be sustained without the allocation of additional staff. The Panel therefore recommends that FAO give serious consideration to increasing the staff of AGAH.
- The EMPRES programme is one area that clearly requires such additional resources. The Global Trust Fund for the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) and EMPRES, currently being established, would appear to present one opportunity for funding such an initiative.
- Other extrabudgetary sources of long-term, secure funding should also be explored. Responsibility for pursuing this action needs to be clearly identified.
- Consideration should be given to redefining the responsibilities of some regional animal production and health staff, to place a greater emphasis on the areas determined to be of highest priority.

Strengthening linkages

26. The Panel recognizes that AGAH staff have a range of diverse and highly developed skills that equip them to address complex animal health issues. However, the strategic direction of FAO and the donor community is to exploit the benefits of an integrated multidisciplinary approach to livestock development, in the context of rural development and poverty alleviation. AGA has already embarked on this process.

- The Panel notes that policy elements in the EMPRES programme need strengthening and recommends an enhanced interaction between AGAH and the Livestock Information, Sector Analysis and Policy Branch (AGAL).
- AGAH has a particular strength as a source of expertise. This should be better utilized by providing new concepts to address current and future issues in the livestock subsector such as technical issues (disease surveillance, reforms of veterinary services) and policy analysis formulation and implementation.

- AGAH also has a communication and advisory role that should be more effectively exploited to enhance the importance of animal health for poverty reduction strategies in developing countries.

Structure

27. It is recommended that AGAH redefine the structure and responsibilities of the groups in order to be consistent with their broader objectives.

- In particular, the activities of the Parasitic Diseases Group need to be more focused and directed towards achieving the objectives of the division.

The Veterinary Services Group

28. The structure and function of this group drew the attention of the Panel and was the one recommendation within the Evaluation Report with which the Panel disagreed. National regulatory veterinary services are the basis for animal disease surveillance and control. It appears that much of the emphasis of the Veterinary Services Group has been on the delivery of clinical veterinary services and the Panel believes that this focus needs to be changed. What is a higher priority is the promotion of institutional reform involving core function analysis to reposition veterinary services to focus on essential disease control activities such as legislation, surveillance, epidemiology, diagnostic support and disease reporting.

- It is recommended that the Veterinary Services Group remain as a separate entity and its role redefined. It should have a broader role in support for reform and strengthening of regulatory veterinary services to underpin national disease surveillance and control at all levels.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

29. Management welcomes the methodology applied for this evaluation, which involved consultation with member countries and the involvement of an external expert panel. It also recognizes that the evaluation tabled is fair and objective.

30. The evaluation initially focused on TCPs managed by AGAH, and then expanded to cover the performance of the EMPRES-Livestock programme and eventually the entire animal health component of Programme 2.1.3 Livestock. It is noted that the numerous member countries visited expressed high appreciation of the EMPRES-Livestock programme activities. Management is committed to continue focusing attention on EMPRES in all its elements, including GREP, as suggested on various occasions by the review.

31. However, Management finds that, because of the initial focus on TCP and then EMPRES, the review should have given greater coverage to other important areas addressed by the programme. In recent biennia, FAO's animal health programme has addressed not only the spread of transboundary animal diseases (primarily dealt with by the EMPRES programme), but has also provided support and advice to member countries in zoonotic diseases, food safety related to food of animal origin, quality and safety of drugs, biological products and pesticides, insect-borne diseases and the adjustment of animal health policies and services.

32. While very high priority will continue to be accorded to the EMPRES-Livestock programme, Management will also address other areas, such as veterinary public health, environmental management of insect-borne diseases and the support to policy and institutional reform in livestock services. The MTP 2004-2009 will continue to reflect this balanced programme thrust for which a concerted effort is being made to attract extrabudgetary support.

33. The following specific comments are made.

- a) For the EMPRES programme the Evaluation Report detected a weakness in the early reaction element which it attributes to: (i) the complexity of the concept of contingency planning; (ii) the newness of the concept; and (iii) lack of resources, both staff and non-staff. All three reasons are valid. Even after the decision to devote more time and resources to the development of TADInfo, to undertake some modelling initiatives, and to promote the advancement of GEMP, much more is still to be achieved. Such progress is also required in

the FAO Regional Offices where necessary strengthening of professional presence will help EMPRES develop competence in its twin technical pillars, i.e. surveillance (early warning) and contingency planning (early reaction).

- b) The Evaluation Report and the report of the external Review Panel differ in their recommendations with respect to the Veterinary Services Group. The Report recommends that it be folded into the EMPRES programme, particularly to strengthen disease early reaction. The Panel, on the other hand, recommends that the Veterinary Services Group be maintained and strengthened so as to enable it to provide greater assistance to member country veterinary authorities, noting that "what is a high priority is the promotion of institutional reform involving core function analysis to reposition veterinary services to focus on essential disease control activities such as legislation, surveillance, epidemiology, diagnostic support and disease reporting".

Management supports the Panel's recommendation for two reasons. First, FAO is expected to assist member country policy-makers in rationalizing the delivery of veterinary services between the public and private sectors, based on the recognized responsibilities and competencies of each. This is of particular importance given the pressure on governments to downsize public services further. FAO is required to articulate principles for rational delivery of public and private veterinary services that go well beyond early reaction to epidemic infectious diseases. Second, the national veterinary services are one of the platforms for building the diverse public sector functions demanded by producers and consumers. These include broad outcomes such as poverty reduction through enhancing trade (World Trade Organization [WTO]/ Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures [SPS] Agreement); protecting public health through limiting food- and feed-borne zoonotic diseases (veterinary public health); and a general shift in public management towards facilitating private sector growth while protecting public health, natural resources and the environment. During the elaboration of the MTP 2004-2009, it is intended to re-examine the linkage between the work of the Veterinary Services Group and AGAL in matters of veterinary policy and pro-poor livestock policies in order to enhance the role of the animal health programme in the issues mentioned above.

- c) The Evaluation Report states that "the work on resistance features little in FAO's programme planning documents" and has a valid point when mentioning that "work in parasitology is not mentioned in the MTP 2002-2007 and work on parasites is given only a passing general reference in the PWB 2002-03". AGAH is working towards improving and consolidating the activities of the Parasitic Diseases Group. This group is increasing its presence in the field of veterinary public health, in particular of parasitic zoonoses. The consequences of such shifts will be evaluated carefully, both in terms of programme priorities as indicated above and in terms of resource allocation.
- d) The Evaluation Report documented a generally satisfactory impact of animal health-related TCPs and Trust Fund (TF) field projects, which is noted with satisfaction. It found, however, that the non-emergency TCPs received a generally lower rating than those related more directly to acute animal disease emergencies and falling under the EMPRES mandate. AGAH recognizes opportunities to lift these broader, more development-oriented TCP projects to higher levels of impact.

Management agrees with the recommendation of the external Review Panel to sharpen the focus of the animal health programme further in the MTP 2004-2009. The recommendation of the Panel to allocate more resources, in particular personnel resources, to the animal health component of the Livestock Programme in order to respond to ever increasing requests by member countries is noted. The implementation of this recommendation will have to be a combination of gradual expansion of the regular resource base of the animal health component and of aggressive acquisition of extrabudgetary programme resources.

REPORT OF THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE⁷

34. The Committee appreciated the concise and informative Evaluation Report as well as the clear comments of the external Review Panel and the responsive reaction from departmental management. It noted with satisfaction that management was already addressing many of the suggestions made by this evaluation through the development of MTP proposals.

35. The Committee recognized the growing global importance of animal health issues and the role FAO plays through this programme. It agreed with the overall findings of the evaluation, and commended the staff for the excellent progress made under the EMPRES-Livestock programme, especially in the implementation of GREP. It also endorsed virtually all the recommendations of the evaluation, including those for addressing the human and financial resource constraints of AGAH, the required extrabudgetary support for EMPRES-related field operations, and the need to review animal health programme priorities in the context of medium-term planning. The one area where the Committee did not accept the recommendation of the evaluation concerned the work on veterinary services. Here, the Committee was in favour of the position taken by the external Review Panel and departmental management that the Veterinary Services Group be maintained, but that it refocus its work on the role of public veterinary services, particularly in essential disease control activities. The Committee underscored the need to practise caution when privatizing veterinary services, which produce public goods not easily replicated by the private sector. It also stressed the importance for FAO of working closely with international partners in animal health.

36. The Committee noted the reservations concerning the results of TCPs/non-EMPRES projects in relation to the follow-up and interest of governments in these projects.

37. Finally, the Committee recommended that, in future, evaluation reports include in an annex the terms of reference for the evaluation as well as the names of the evaluation team and the external review panel.

⁷ PC/87/REP, paras. 29-32

Chapter Two: Programme Evaluation of EMPRES-Desert Locust⁸

I. INTRODUCTION

38. Building on work undertaken by FAO to combat the scourge of epidemic animal diseases and plant pests, in 1996 the Organization launched the Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRES). The programme has two components – one on animal health and the other on plant pests, specifically Desert Locusts. The Desert Locust (DL), *Schistocerca gregaria*, is recognized as a transboundary pest of particular concern that merits priority attention under EMPRES. The DL component of EMPRES (EMPRES-DL) aims to prevent plagues by strengthening national, regional and international locust management. It also aims to improve, through research and technology development, the safety and environmental impact of the chemical pesticides at present in use.

39. The DL component of EMPRES covers three regions: the Central Region (EMPRES/CR, covering the Red Sea area), the Western Region (EMPRES/WR, North Africa and Sahelian countries) and the Eastern Region (EMPRES/ER, four countries in Southwest Asia). It was decided that the initial focus should be on the Central Region, in which many locust plagues were thought to have originated. The EMPRES/CR programme, formulated during 1994-95 for multiphased implementation, began operations in 1997 after an extended period of consultations with locust-affected countries and donors. The EMPRES/WR programme was originally formulated in 1997, following the Conference recommendation in 1995 for the extension of the EMPRES-DL component to the region. The EMPRES/WR programme envisaged substantial donor support of some US\$8.5 million; however, this did not initially materialize and the programme was revised, with the participation of countries concerned, in 1998 and 2001. Negotiations are continuing with potential donors.

40. This evaluation was carried out within the context of a general review of the EMPRES programme after six years of operation and, in particular, it examines the implementation achievements and results under Phase I in the Western Region and Phase II in the Central Region. An evaluation team comprising PBEE staff and a consultant visited six participating countries⁹ between July and September 2001. A summary of this evaluation was presented at the FAO Conference as an information document in November 2001, and a full report was presented to the Programme Committee in May 2002. As the mission could not visit all EMPRES/CR and EMPRES/WR countries or donor agencies, the evaluation also reflects responses to questionnaires sent out to EMPRES collaborators, donors and DL researchers prior to the mission. Another evaluation of the EMPRES/CR programme is scheduled for early 2003.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE EMPRES-DL PROGRAMME

41. The EMPRES-DL programme is a collaborative one among participating countries, donors and FAO, with AGPP providing the technical secretariat. EMPRES/CR is steered by a Consultative Committee comprising senior representatives from participating countries, other organizations (including the Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa [DLCO-EA] and the FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region [CRC]), donors, AGPP senior staff and the EMPRES Coordinator. The EMPRES/CR Programme Coordinator, located in the region, is responsible for general management under the supervision of AGPP. EMPRES Liaison Officers (ELOs) are appointed by participating governments and the DLCO-EA for planning, implementation and coordination of activities in their respective countries and normally meet once a year with EMPRES and AGPP staff. The role of ELOs is to assist in the planning, implementation and coordination of activities. In addition, they are

⁸ PC 87/4 (c).

⁹ Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mauritania, the Sudan and Yemen.

involved in reviewing priorities and progress and participating in the development of the work plan for the following year. EMPRES/WR envisages a complete integration of the programme with a new (expanded) regional commission (the FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Western Region [CLCPRO]), which is to replace the FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in Northwest Africa (CLCPANO) and the Organisation commune de lutte antiacridienne et de lutte antiaviaire (OCLALAV). The secretary of CLCPRO is expected to serve as the EMPRES/WR Programme Coordinator.

42. The EMPRES/CR programme, reformulated to reflect the experience of Phase I, has the objective “to strengthen the capabilities and capacities of national, regional and international components of the Desert Locust management system to implement effective and efficient preventive control strategies based on early warning and timely, environmentally sound early control interventions”. In particular, one priority in capacity building is to address some key gaps in the knowledge of DL ecology and management, and covers four components aimed at:

- increasing the level of coordination of DL monitoring, survey and control activities in the Central Region by facilitating networking among national, regional and international organizations and by strengthening information exchange systems;
- establishing an improved DL early warning system based on meteorological forecasts, remote sensing and the collection and analysis of field information;
- strengthening and improving national preventive control capacities through improved planning, training, provision of equipment and operational resources, and the field testing of new control technologies;
- formulating improvements in the DL emergency prevention strategy through evaluating the effectiveness, efficiency and economic and environmental soundness of current approaches and new technologies.

43. Phase II of the EMPRES/CR programme commenced in 2001, following the end of the first phase in 2000. Funding for the three-year period comes from FAO, CRC, the Desert Locust Control Committee (DLCC) and several donors (Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the United States) for a total of US\$4.3 million: in addition, bilateral assistance is also available from Sweden and the United Kingdom for research-related activities.

44. The EMPRES/WR programme is at an evolving stage – the institutional arrangements for its management and operation as well as an outline of the work programme were prepared during 2001. Although some US\$8.5 million of funding was originally anticipated, no major donor support has materialized so far. Some pilot activities have been undertaken with FAO Regular Programme (RP) resources (US\$0.6 million), supplemented by funding from DLCC and CLCPANO. In addition, several TCP projects have been implemented, mainly in response to an outbreak in Mauritania. The most significant source of support has been the Norway/FAO project (GCP/INT/651/NOR – Improved Pesticide Application Techniques for Desert Locust Control) which, although intended to be a regional project covering the Western Region, has been primarily active in Mauritania as a result of the absence of significant DL populations in other countries. This project has made an important contribution to developing and introducing safer and more cost-effective procedures for control operations.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

45. Phase II of EMPRES/CR is essentially one of consolidation and, since 1999, substantial improvement has been made in programme management (which was a critical issue identified by the preceding evaluation mission). Rigorous work planning and enhanced internal monitoring and evaluation procedures have been significant factors in this regard. Collaboration with CRC has been strengthened through joint work planning and some shared training activities, and the key communication network among the countries has been upgraded. EMPRES/CR has also substantially improved the expertise of DL staff in the region through a series of focused training courses, and has also created a cadre of national (master) trainers who can pass on their expertise to a large number of DL staff.

46. However, the evaluation mission was concerned as to whether it would be possible to achieve the objectives of Phase II fully in the remaining time available, given the significant delays in implementing early warning and control systems. While some countries have gone ahead in reviewing and transforming their DL systems with the support of EMPRES/CR, others are still – for various reasons – reluctant to commit themselves to the kind of systematic analysis and planning envisaged by EMPRES.

47. Nevertheless, the countries visited by the EMPRES evaluation mission continue to regard preventive DL control as a high national priority with social, economic and environmental benefits that governments consider to be in the national interest. In some countries, the importance of preventive DL control has been reflected in the increased financial resources allocated to it by national governments since the implementation of the EMPRES programme. Likewise, regional collaboration in the form of joint surveys has increased among countries. These are seen as significant steps towards the development of a sustainable preventive control programme.

48. At the strategic level, important measures have been taken towards the development of a sustainable DL preventive control programme. Signs of progress in this regard include:

- increases by some governments to their resource allocations for preventive control;
- more intensive cooperation between EMPRES/CR and the CRC;
- the effective reinstatement of a full-time post of CRC Secretary at FAO;
- the likely expansion of CRC membership to fit the distribution of the DL outbreak areas (Djibouti joined in 2001);
- the creation of a unified regional DL structure in the Western Region (CLCPRO).

49. The mission was concerned about delays in the implementation of Country Focus Programmes (CFPs), which were introduced in three countries during Phase I. The CFP exercise analyses the main features of a country's DL management system and development plans and strategies for future action. CFPs serve as an important analytical tool to improve survey and control procedures and also as a mechanism to build ownership within EMPRES. Since 2001, there has seemed to be less priority given to CFPs by the EMPRES/CR programme in the countries concerned.

50. Another source of concern was the programme staffing level. The mission considered that the staffing level in the field (two international staff, one Associate Professional Officer [APO] and two National Professional Officers [NPOs]) was at the minimal required level. In the light of the planned workload for the remaining period, additional staff resources would be strongly desirable in the areas of campaign evaluation, strategy development and economics.

51. Donor support for EMPRES/CR is adequate and confirmed until the end of Phase II (late 2003), but is not sufficient to finance additional positions.

52. EMPRES/WR's objective is the strengthening of early warning and preventive control in the Sahelian countries. One important outcome for EMPRES/WR is the establishment of CLPRO, which will create a unified institutional structure for the preventive control of DL in the Western Region. The Maghreb countries have their own Desert Locust Units (DLUs) which are, in general, adequately funded and operational. Exceptional progress has been made in the development of an effective DL survey and control system in Mauritania, with support coming from a Norwegian-funded project. The Mauritanian DLU has developed into a very effective and efficient organization that can be regarded as a "best practice" model. However, apart from Mauritania, the EMPRES/WR programme cannot be considered operational in other Sahelian countries owing to a lack of financial support from donors. The general absence of significant DL populations in the past few years may have reduced the perceived threat from DL, and the lack of clearly demonstrated socio-economic benefits may be another reason for waning donor interest.

53. Recommendations made are the following.

- a) Regarding programme management, FAO and EMPRES/CR should monitor progress carefully in countries where delays have occurred. If delays in progress continue, they should

- be brought to the attention of higher-level FAO management and the EMPRES/CR Consultative Committee, and solutions should be sought with the concerned authorities.
- b) FAO should consider revising existing terms of reference and establishing an additional technical position to assist in the implementation of EMPRES/CR activities. In the event of EMPRES/WR becoming operational, the Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP) should review whether AGPP's staffing resources are sufficient to manage and administer two major regional field projects effectively while continuing with other routine activities. In the same context, FAO should consider using external experts to assist with the technical monitoring of EMPRES field activities.
 - c) FAO should engage in dialogue with donors to clarify the possible reasons for their apparent reluctance to fund EMPRES/WR activities. FAO and EMPRES/CR should also undertake more detailed appraisals of proposed bilateral research activities to be implemented under EMPRES/CR and, where required, liaise with the bilateral agencies concerned to ensure that these activities align with core EMPRES/CR objectives.
 - d) FAO should consider widening the mandate of EMPRES-DL to include other relevant plant pests and additional locust-affected regions.
 - e) Research should be initiated on the economic benefits of preventive DL control, and on the political and social implications of DL outbreaks and possible control or remediation measures.
 - f) The development of CFPs is regarded as an important tool and EMPRES/CR should renew efforts to assist countries to develop and implement their CFPs.
 - g) EMPRES/CR, CRC and FAO should give consideration to the longer-term sustainability of the research grant scheme. FAO and EMPRES/CR should also develop research contingency plans and establish priorities to facilitate field research in the event of an outbreak of DL populations in the Central and Western Regions. The development of joint research activities and joint training programmes between EMPRES/WR and EMPRES/CR should be considered in order to ensure the efficient use of resources, the standardization of approaches and a more general exchange of ideas.
 - h) Regarding the future technical support of the Natural Resource Institute (NRI), it may be useful for EMPRES management to initiate an issues paper which would serve as the basis for discussions to define the future use of the Reconnaissance and Management System of the Environment of *Schistocerca* (RAMSES), including the possible development of additional modules. If possible, the issues paper should also include indicative costings.
 - i) FAO should arrange for additional technical inputs to be provided to the Desert Locust Information Service (DLIS) so that satellite images can be provided to some countries and ground-truthing surveys carried out. The results should be analysed and written up as a guide to the advantages and limitations of using satellite images when planning locust surveys.
 - j) There is further scope to involve the countries of the Eastern Region in such EMPRES activities as training and access to research information, especially through the creation of additional EMPRES Web sites as envisaged by the FAO/Norway project. Web sites are a very useful tool for the dissemination of EMPRES results. A joint CRC/EMPRES/CR web site should be considered, especially in view of the recent co-location of management personnel in Cairo. As well as information, results and reports, FAO should also consider making training materials on DL available via the web.

REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW PANEL¹⁰

54. The external Peer Review Panel met from 9 to 12 December 2001 in Rome to review and comment on the Evaluation Report of the EMPRES-DL component. The Panel's comments on this evaluation and the EMPRES-DL programme are summarized below.

Quality of the evaluation

55. The evaluation exercise was conducted with the necessary analytical rigour through a well-balanced approach which ensured that all major issues were duly addressed, while the findings and conclusions were the result of sound judgements made by the team.

56. Unforeseen circumstances and prevailing conditions in some EMPRES member countries limited the geographic coverage of the evaluation and this, together with time constraints, precluded comprehensive discussions with every stakeholder. These constraints were to some extent offset, however, by the prudent use of questionnaires. While this evaluation was too early in Phase II of EMPRES-DL to provide requisite information to support negotiations for future funding, it allowed propitious assessment of responses of member countries and FAO headquarters to the recommendations of the previous evaluation in 1999. It also enabled assessment of the performance of member countries, albeit against programme- rather than country-specific criteria.

Panel findings and recommendations

57. The Panel endorses the findings and recommendations in general, and highlights the following points.

- a) The concept of EMPRES-DL is technically, economically, strategically and politically sound and should be implemented as expeditiously and vigorously as is practically possible.
- b) The outcome of EMPRES/CR as the first operational programme is that, in terms of emergency prevention systems, the essentials are in place. Expertise, techniques, technicians, materials and equipment, information and communication services, and regional networking have been upgraded and the Central Region Commission Secretariat is established and operating. EMPRES/CR is a success and thus, with adequate external support, similar success can be expected with EMPRES/WR and, in due course, with EMPRES/ER.
- c) There is an urgent need to mobilize donor funding for regional programmes in both the Western and Eastern Regions. With the trend for thematic orientation in donor approach, including the recent establishment of a global trust fund (TF) at FAO, it is apposite to explore the most appropriate funding arrangement for this programme. It is suggested that, because the programme is expected to operate in various regions (Central, Western and Eastern) with distinct regional activities, a dual system of funding may be considered, whereby EMPRES core, mostly normative activities are funded by a "Pool Fund" (FAO RP budget and TF with matching contributions by bilateral donors), while region-specific activities will be financed mainly by bilateral donors with FAO technical support.
- d) The issue of inadequate staffing levels at FAO headquarters and in the field is of critical importance, especially in ensuring adequate technical support to the programme and technical monitoring in the field, and the recommendations are strongly supported.
- e) The programme for training trainers is an essential element in capacity building and the Panel endorses the need to monitor the impact of training. Furthermore, it highlights the need

¹⁰ The members of this independent panel were: Dr. Graeme Hamilton (Australia), Director, Australian Plague Locust Commission, Canberra; Dr. Roger Price (South Africa), Manager, Locust Division, Plant Protection Research Institute, Pretoria; Dr. Mohamed Zehni (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), retired ex-Director of AGP and the former Research and Technology Development Division (AGR); Prof. Tecwyn Jones (United Kingdom), University of Wales and former Deputy Director of NRI, Department for International Development (DFID); Dr. Tayeb Ameziane El Hassani (Morocco), Professor of Agronomy and Director of National Drought Observatory; Dr. Mohammed M. El Hannan (the Sudan), Under-Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; Prof. Hermann Waibel (Germany), University of Hanover.

for performance assessment of trainers and a longer-term strategy for sustaining and improving expertise at all appropriate levels. The CRC/EMPRES-sponsored diploma course at Khartoum University is seen as a valuable initiative that should be developed elsewhere in the regions, and the plan to produce training manuals is strongly endorsed. Joint Central and Western Region training programmes would enable more efficient use of resources and harmonization of training methods and standards.

- f) Information and its dissemination are also an important issue and the recommendation for updating the Web site and for the networking of timely information on the Web site is endorsed. A stronger EMPRES Web site with relevant country Web links is necessary, and help needs to be provided to countries to create and sustain national Web sites with topical information.
- g) Economic consideration is essential in developing and sustaining the most cost-effective and efficient strategies for the prevention of DL emergencies – the programme should be more proactive on this issue. To date, mostly academic studies have been undertaken and largely on an ad hoc basis without the benefit of guidance of the EMPRES programme regarding the broad spectrum of issues to be considered in such studies. EMPRES has a role in reviewing and evaluating any relevant studies undertaken and in commissioning more comprehensive studies as it moves from crisis to risk management.
- h) CFPs are fundamentally important to the successful implementation of EMPRES, as the primary vehicle for programme implementation is the DLU in the member country. The evaluation mission suggests there has been a de-emphasis of CFPs in EMPRES/CR Phase II, although AGPP staff consider this to be an oversight rather than a deliberate action. The Panel considers that not only should the importance of CFPs be re-emphasized, but that they should receive greater attention than in the past, as they are critical to the successful implementation and sustainment of improvements made under EMPRES. For each member country, the CFP needs to consider the best way to develop and maintain locust control capacity within the context of the organizational and policy framework of that country. A “one size fits all approach” will not support effective implementation.
- i) The research function is integral to the programme, including promoting improved technologies and methods – not least those for greening control regions through use of biopesticides. The research needed to address all these issues is beyond the capacity of EMPRES and, therefore, FAO should enhance its advocacy role to make known what research is needed and encourage response by relevant research organizations and/or through externally funded projects, especially for joint regional research.

Additional suggestions for the future

58. The Panel emphasizes that, while the programme might to its advantage commission the necessary in-depth and comprehensive study to provide direct economic justification for its implementation, it is important to note that the socio-economic benefits, not least in terms of prevention of famine, human suffering, deprivation and poverty, and the maintenance of political stability and order are central to the sustained development of EMPRES member countries. The potential contribution of EMPRES to the public good in the widest sense is beyond evaluation in purely economic terms.

59. In the context of the programme’s significant contribution to creating emergency prevention capacities for the DL in member countries, one concern arising is how best to sustain and improve the capacity throughout the long recession periods that are characteristic of this species. Experience elsewhere strongly indicates the need to ensure that capacities are kept active and operational if they are not to lose efficiency, skills, effectiveness and, not least, motivation. Experience has shown that operational efficiency of dedicated units such as the DL Emergency Prevention Services can be assured by the prudent and temporary redeployment of these services for other pest-oriented operations of concern within DL countries (e.g. other locust spp., armyworm, quelea and grasshoppers).

60. The initial restriction of the programme’s scope to the DL was a deliberate and prudent decision: it focused on the pre-eminent migrant pest in the critical points of its recession areas and

provided the very sternest test for the concept and its successful implementation within the variable and contrasting situations of member countries. However, its implementation progress to date suggests that broadening of the target pest species under the programme could make it even more effective and beneficial to its member countries than it is already. The contingency planning exercises, as well as early warning, early reaction, training, research and coordination strengthened under the programme could be put to optimum use if applied not only to DL but also to other transboundary pests.

61. Expansion of coverage to species other than DL would not in any way change the concept or its implementation but rather would build on the concept. Expansion is a logical step in the development of the EMPRES programme and would contribute effectively to making EMPRES the best possible strategy for management of transboundary pests and for prevention of pest emergencies. The consensus among Panel members is that other pests that the EMPRES programme might address in the future, in order of pest status (severity of their outbreaks), are Central Asian Locust spp. (Migratory, Moroccan and Italian); Red Locust; armyworm; quelea; and grasshoppers. The appropriate juncture for expansion from DL to other candidate species would seem to be at the start of Phase III of the programme, i.e. in 2004. Temporary redeployment of the DL capacity to prevention exercises would involve little extra cost – if any. In essence, all that is involved is the application (with due adjustments) of planning and management capabilities for prevention of emergencies from DL to other pest species.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

62. Management notes with satisfaction that there is a general agreement on the concept of EMPRES and on the success of the programme in the Central Region. It is satisfied that the evaluation has been based on a sound methodology, including consultation to the extent possible with stakeholders.

63. Management recognizes the limitations of funding at present available to EMPRES, which also translates into limitations in technical supervision and a cautious extension to regions other than the Central Region. As continuation of funding by donors beyond 2003 is far from secure, Management is seeking further pledges for funding to complement the resources that the Organization devotes to this programme.

64. Management recognizes that EMPRES/CR requires further staffing and technical inputs, in particular in the field. If such expertise were available in the field, the need for technical support from headquarters (AGPP) would be greatly reduced. In any case, the number and variety of activities covered by the programme inevitably mean that AGPP cannot provide detailed technical advice on all aspects. It follows that EMPRES/CR should seek technical advice from expert consultants as required and, within resources, this was included in the PWB 2002-2003. Management also accepts the recommendation that when the EMPRES Western Region develops a fully fledged field programme, additional staffing resources at headquarters will be needed to provide the necessary technical supervision.

65. Management agrees to the importance of economic considerations in the development and sustainable implementation of cost-effective and efficient strategies for the prevention of DL emergencies. Management also notes that detailed socio-economic studies on the control of other plant pests, even non-migratory ones, are very rare and costly. It considers that the present emphasis given to DL economics, including the sociological impacts of DL attacks, is sufficient with studies being conducted by EMPRES/CR and bilaterally by several agencies. In this respect, it notes that there is a limit to the number of socio-economic studies that can be carried out when locust populations are at very low levels. When the next locust outbreak occurs, it will be essential to collect data on crop and pasture damage, and the sociological side-effects of the locusts. Management fully agrees to the statement of the Peer Review Panel that the potential contribution of EMPRES to the public good in the widest sense is beyond evaluation in purely economic terms.

66. Management notes that some EMPRES studies are examining ways in which the costs of control can be significantly reduced, and it considers that an expansion of studies on this subject would be of great value.

67. Management notes the comments on information exchange of both the evaluation mission and the Peer Review Panel. It agrees that information dissemination needs more attention and that the EMPRES Web site needs to be strengthened.

68. Management recognizes the importance of research. It agrees to the recommendations of the evaluation mission on long-term sustainability of the research grant scheme. It notes that long-term support to research programmes has indeed been very difficult and it is considering ways to support such programmes further.

69. The suggestion of the Peer Review Panel to consider redeploying EMPRES Emergency Prevention Services for locusts to other transboundary pests needs to be considered very carefully. A number of services are also required in recession periods, while others may only be required during upsurges and plague situations. EMPRES-DL is built on the creation of sustainable national capacity to monitor locust populations as part of an early warning system. Any tendency to redeploy these resources during periods when the locust situation is calm may undermine the early warning capacity and lead to undetected locust outbreaks developing. Historically there are several examples of such scenarios, including the last major plague in 1986. On the other hand, resources for intervention during upsurges and plagues should be identified in countries' emergency plans but may be in part or completely redeployed during recession periods.

70. Management notes that there are three issues related to the extension of EMPRES. First, there is the extension of EMPRES in relation to the DL to cover more fully the Western Region and also to include the Eastern Region. Second, in some countries covered by EMPRES-DL, an enlargement of the EMPRES mandate may cover other migratory pests such as other locusts, armyworm and quelea. Third, the extension of EMPRES to other migratory species may also include geographic regions different from those covered at present by EMPRES. The first two issues have been considered by the evaluation mission; in addition, the third issue was discussed by the Peer Review Panel. Management agrees with the Panel that in future an extension to include other migratory pest species covering other geographic areas is highly desirable. The extension of EMPRES to coordinate and improve the management of locust species in Central Asia, including Afghanistan, is considered to be a first priority and would incorporate environmentally friendlier integrated pest management (IPM) approaches. The Panel's observation that an expansion to other species would involve few extra costs would hold for costs in countries in which EMPRES is already active, or for other countries where there are ongoing DL control activities. However, it would not necessarily apply, for example, to locusts in Central Asia. Furthermore, any enlargement cannot be achieved without additional resources both to cover required technical posts at headquarters and to fund field activities.

REPORT OF THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE¹¹

71. The Programme Committee found this evaluation useful, providing a concise assessment of progress being made in the implementation of the DL component of the EMPRES programme. It appreciated the informative comments of the external Peer Review Panel and the clear management response, noting that there was broad consensus between them on the main findings and recommendations. The Committee also agreed with the conclusion of the Panel that the concept of the programme was technically, strategically and politically sound and that it should be implemented as expeditiously as is practicable.

72. The Committee recognized the need for securing adequate extrabudgetary resources to ensure continuation of the activities in the Central Region and to provide effective support to the nascent programme in the Western Region as well as other priority areas, such as the Eastern

¹¹ PC/87/REP, paras. 33-35.

Region. While noting with satisfaction the recent progress made in the Central Region under difficult conditions, the Committee shared the evaluation's concern about the inadequate level of donor support to the programme in general. It stressed that extrabudgetary resources were essential to help the countries concerned in modernizing and in making best use of their existing national capacity, thus ensuring sustainability of DL management. The Committee noted that in setting relative priorities for countries to be assisted with the very limited resources available, the transboundary nature of DL made it essential to address groups of neighbouring countries for effective control and prevention. In this respect, the Committee noted with satisfaction the inclusion of funding for EMPRES in the FAO Trust Fund for Food Security and Food Safety. The Secretariat was making efforts to maintain close cooperation with various international research and technical organizations in developing alternative control methods that would respond better to growing environmental concerns, including biopesticides.

73. The Committee endorsed the main recommendations of the evaluation, including the need to ensure adequate RP and extrabudgetary resources to enable AGPP to perform its work. It also considered that it was desirable, as additional resources become available, to expand the coverage of the programme, both in terms of geographic areas and other pests with priority for locust species, so long as such expansion would not jeopardize the operations already initiated. In this respect, the Committee agreed that a first priority would be on countries in Central Asia to address locust problems in Afghanistan in a sustainable manner.

Chapter Three: Independent External Evaluation of the Special Programme for Food Security¹²

I. INTRODUCTION

74. The evaluation took place some six years after the initiation of country-level work under the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS). It was undertaken both in response to the request of the Governing Bodies and to meet internal management needs, and was designed with two aims, namely to (i) provide a credible accountability report on the SPFS, containing in-depth analysis and assessment of its continuing relevance, effectiveness in achieving results and overall cost-effectiveness; and (ii) consolidate and enhance the knowledge base of the SPFS for the future by learning from the experience to date, especially by identifying emerging issues, strengths and weaknesses.

75. A representative team of nine senior external consultants¹³ undertook the evaluation. The FAO Evaluation Service provided operational support. The evaluation team visited FAO Regional Offices and 12 SPFS countries from each of the developing regions (i.e. Bangladesh, Bolivia, Cambodia, China, Ecuador, Eritrea, Haiti, Mauritania, the Niger, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia). Countries for visits were selected by the evaluation team from a shortlist prepared by FAO of 18 countries representing each of the developing regions. In the shortlisted countries, work had been ongoing in the field for at least three years, with at least three of the four components of the SPFS. The criteria for selection ensured that the team would be evaluating on the basis of substantial experience in implementing the SPFS. Approximately one week was spent in each country by groups, which normally consisted of four consultants. In each country the team held discussions with government, donors and FAO staff, and visited a sample of project sites using a checklist of points based on the terms of reference to facilitate their inquiries with farmers, national development agencies and SPFS staff.

76. The full text of the report, as contained in document PC 87/4 (a) Independent External Evaluation of the Special Programme for Food Security, is divided as follows. Chapter 1 of the report is the Introduction that summarizes the Terms of Reference and discusses evaluation modalities and arrangements. Chapter 2 provides some background on the SPFS covering the rationale for a focus on food security and the development of the programme concept. Chapter 3 deals with the planning and design of specific SPFS programmes and the actual process of project formulation. Chapter 4 is focused on SPFS implementation and management and considers the role of FAO, the organization and management structures, the effectiveness of national inputs, South-South Cooperation (SSC) and the roles played by other international agencies and donors. Chapter 5 is devoted to assessing pilot field operations in terms of selection of sites, target beneficiaries and technologies for testing. The approach used in implementing the SPFS field initiatives is also discussed, as are the results achieved. Chapter 6 considers the impact of SPFS on national policies and the donor community, and also briefly deals with the cost-effectiveness of SPFS initiatives. Finally, Chapter 7 brings together the material presented in the earlier chapters by summarizing the background and strengths of the SPFS as viewed by the evaluation team. This provides the foundation, which the evaluation team uses to propose the approach to be applied in planning and implementing the SPFS in the future.

¹² The full text of the report and the Senior Management Response is found in document PC 87/4 (a).

¹³ Mr Dunstan S.C. Spencer, Team Leader (Sierra Leone); Mr Pierre Spitz (France); Mr Frank Anderson (Australia); Mr Manuel Contijoch Escontria (Mexico); Mr Antanas Maziliauskas (Lithuania); Mr David Norman (USA); Ms Maija Sala (Finland); Mr Vijah S. Vyas (India); Mr Mahgoub G. Zaroug (the Sudan).

II. OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE SPFS

Lessons from the past

77. When the SPFS started it had what the evaluation team feels was a rigid design. It was also required initially that it be implemented in those areas where there was the potential for rapidly increasing production. These areas were characterized as being where there were irrigation possibilities. It was envisioned that the production focus would help solve food security problems both at the household and national levels.

78. It soon became apparent that the early “micro”-oriented production focus was insufficient to ensure progress in solving the food security problem and that “macro” and “meso” type issues were important in enabling production increases to occur, and in ensuring benefits accrue to the producers. Over time, the implementation of the SPFS has become less rigid and more flexible as exemplified in the evolutionary table provided by the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. Thus, practical realities in implementation have compelled SPFS programmes to incorporate elements in the early part of Phase I that were previously conceptualized as being dealt with in Phase II or at the earliest during the expansion part of Phase I. Such initiatives have been found to be particularly appropriate when they can be addressed at the local level without requiring changes in policy.

79. In addition to the design flaws, which became apparent in implementing SPFS activities, another problem of a more conceptual nature became apparent to the evaluation team during the visits to the case study countries. This relates to the likely trade-offs between fulfilling the goals indicated in the guidelines for the SPFS for addressing food security at both the national and household levels. In general, the stipulation of initiating SPFS activities in higher potential areas is likely to be better in addressing the issue of improving national food security. Poverty, and hence individual household food insecurity, is likely to exist in such areas but by the same token it is likely to be less acute than in less promising agricultural areas.¹⁴ As a result, in the case study countries, in general the sites selected for SPFS activities have been of relatively high productivity, compared with the more marginal areas where the degree of malnourishment in rural areas is higher but the potential for increases in agricultural productivity is lower. Thus, although in the opinion of the evaluation team the areas selected for SPFS activities are likely to be the best as far as potentially improving national food security, in terms of improving individual household food security, the impact of SPFS would probably have been higher in more marginal areas. This suggests trade-offs between the stated laudable goals of improving both household and national food security.

80. The rigid type design that characterized the SPFS at its inception had another downside in the sense that, because it was not flexible, it was not amenable to being adjusted to the specific priorities and strengths of countries and consequently sometimes probably inhibited the development of collegiate relationships and a sense of ownership on the part of some SPFS countries. It was also introduced as a stand-alone programme not linked to other ongoing or planned activities of other agencies including NGOs.

81. Another issue which became apparent during the visits to the case study countries was that the time initially planned for the pilot part of Phase I of the SPFS, namely two or three years, was far too short, and the number of selected sites was too small to have any major impact on production and food security strategies. Participatory approaches, if they are to be effective, take time, and this combined with annual variations in climatic and socio-economic conditions and the time required to develop sustainable input distribution and product marketing outlets, obviously all imply the anticipated time period was too short. In fact, in the visited countries, where explicit

¹⁴ While the numbers of relatively poor may be fairly high in high potential areas, the type of strategy that the SPFS focuses on, namely improving agricultural productivity, may at best only benefit such households indirectly (i.e. through creating seasonal employment opportunities since many are likely to be landless). Some types of diversification activities may provide some direct benefits but the most useful strategy for helping such households is likely to be outside the remit of specific SPFS activities, e.g. creation of off-farm employment.

SPFS activities were still being implemented (i.e. excluding Zambia), the major focus, except in Senegal, was still on the sites and communities where such activities were initiated up to five or six years earlier. Success of the SPFS type of approach is very dependent on the strength of the institutional structures, including extension, input distribution, marketing and credit systems. Where there are deficiencies in this, it is very unlikely that a two to three year period will be sufficient to demonstrate impact. Evidence of implementing the expansion part of Phase I (i.e. extending SPFS activities to all agro-ecological zones in a country) was only found in Senegal, although plans do exist on paper for other countries. Also, there is no country that has entered Phase II of the SPFS.

82. Given the above issues, what can be done to improve the design and implement SPFS activities in the future that will improve their potential efficacy, impact and acceptance to both national programmes and potential donors? To address this, the evaluation team first assessed what the current strengths are of the SPFS, which help provide a useful foundation on which future initiatives can be built. Based on this, the team then agreed on what should be the major focus of the SPFS. This then led to a consideration as to what might be the optimal strategy for the SPFS to adopt.

Strengths of the SPFS

83. The SPFS, as it currently exists, has a number of positive characteristics or strengths, not always shared by other donor and FAO-supported programmes, that deserve recognition and can be usefully built on in designing and implementing future SPFS-related initiatives. The major characteristics of the SPFS are as follows.

- It helps nurture national consciousness about food security and in principle encourages national ownership and responsibility for SPFS-related initiatives.
- It focuses attention on agriculture, food and nutrition, which have often tended to be eclipsed in discussions concerning poverty, ignoring the fact that agriculture is the backbone of most poor countries, and certainly of the rural sectors, and that countries, not only individual households, often do not have adequate means to purchase food.
- It recognizes, at least in theory, that the most efficient approach to dealing with food security issues is using a participatory approach at all levels and establishing linkages from the national to the field level and that empowerment of people (i.e. particularly farming households) to seek information and options, to make and take responsibility for their decisions and to influence outcomes, both individually and collectively, is facilitated/nurtured via the use of farmers' organizations, groups and farmer field schools.
- It recognizes and gives priority to the fact that in many low productivity systems, water availability is the primary natural constraint to agricultural development, but in doing so it also recognizes that solving the problem of food security requires a multifaceted and integrated strategy not only involving water management but also intensification and diversification. It has also in recent years increasingly recognized the importance of water-use efficiency and water harvesting related initiatives in situations where water is not readily available, for example in semi-arid/arid areas, particularly where the potential for irrigation is limited or non-existent.
- Diversification activity to supplement household incomes during food-insecure parts of the year is particularly important in helping women, who often have the major responsibility for raising the children and feeding all household members.
- South-South Cooperation (SSC) initiatives have strong political and financial support among countries in the South, and have received some funding from donors in other parts of the world.

Alternative future approaches for the SPFS

FAO should prioritize countries for SPFS-related initiatives

84. The SPFS is currently being implemented in 62 countries. However, a major concern of the evaluation team is whether, given the limited resources (i.e. financial and human) available to FAO, it has the capacity to deal adequately with all the countries currently eligible for SPFS.

Currently, the criterion for eligibility to participate in/benefit from the SPFS is generally based on being a low-income food-deficit country (LIFDC), although a few of the countries currently included in the SPFS do not fit that criterion.

85. The advantages of using this criterion are that:

- FAO has the mandate and the responsibility to serve all its members (i.e. rich and poor), with an accepted emphasis on the needs of the poor;
- the LIFDC criteria are clear-cut, verifiable and are an internationally agreed definition also used for eligibility for non-emergency food aid; and
- it covers most of the food-insecure countries.

86. On the other hand, the problems of using this criterion are:

- there are currently more than 80 LIFDCs that are FAO members, which relates to the issue raised above about very limited resources available to FAO. In addition, even non-LIFDCs can opt to participate in the SPFS;
- the LIFDC category does not reflect the extent of malnutrition, although such figures are published annually by FAO in *The State of Food Insecurity in the World (SOFI)*.¹⁵ Also, the LIFDC category includes relatively prosperous net agricultural exporters such as Egypt and excludes relatively poor countries, such as Viet Nam and Uganda that have a comparative advantage in the export of cereals, coffee, etc.; and
- no account is taken of the political will for rural development that is reflected in the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative or of the extent to which needs are already being addressed by other programmes.

87. After consideration of the above factors, the evaluation team has come to the conclusion that some form of prioritization of LIFDC countries is necessary in order to prevent the limited resources of FAO being spread too thinly and to improve the prospects for impact of the SPFS. The issue is what criteria should be used in the prioritization process. The evaluation team feels the criteria would differ according to whether the country is planning an SPFS project or whether the country is desirous of continuing an SPFS activity started earlier.

88. ***For a country wanting to initiate an SPFS activity.*** The evaluation team suggests that four criteria should be considered once a country (i.e. usually an LIFDC) has expressed interest in an SPFS activity:

- a) incidence of hunger and malnutrition in the country;
- b) potential institutional infrastructure in place to support an SPFS initiative (e.g. are extension and support services adequate in the public and/or private sector, can governmental policies allow an essentially bottom-up farmer driven participatory approach to addressing food security);
- c) availability of unexploited developmental opportunities (e.g. availability of appropriate technology options, diversification possibilities, accessibility to relevant marketing opportunities), especially for marginal areas; and
- d) potential for complementing, or integrating with, planned or ongoing national or donor initiatives.

89. ***For a country wanting support for continuing an SPFS activity initiated earlier.*** This would be based on the same criteria as those for initiating an SPFS activity given in the preceding paragraph, plus three others, specifically whether:

- a) an explicit national commitment has been made to addressing food security issues;
- b) government has assumed “ownership and leadership” for the SPFS; and
- c) satisfactory progress has been achieved in terms of adoption of the principles of the SPFS approach, the results obtained, and there is potential for national and/or donor support.

¹⁵ However, such data do not cover all countries, are not as reliable as LIFDC data, and are not as widely accepted as LIFDC data.

90. Because of the position of FAO, as a global organization, needing to be sensitive to, and equitable in its treatment of FAO member countries, particularly the poorer ones, the evaluation team suggests that this prioritization exercise should not be viewed as a means of excluding certain countries. Rather, it is suggested that low priority as far as FAO-supported SPFS type initiatives are concerned should be translated into high priority for other FAO initiatives (e.g. help in strengthening and/or upgrading of the extension service), particularly for those that could help rectify the deficiencies identified as reasons for the country receiving low priority for SPFS. Also, in some situations, prior to proceeding further to continue SPFS-related initiatives (i.e. in the SPFS terminology, the expansion of Phase I) it may be appropriate for FAO to assist food security development in other ways including the policy setting, institutional capacity building for development in marginal areas, and assistance in such areas as early warning, disaster preparedness and organization of targeted food safety net programmes.

SPFS should give greater priority to household food security

91. The evaluation team fully supports the emphasis placed on food security by the SPFS but as indicated earlier, it is concerned about the possible trade-offs between household and national food security. To resolve the issue, the evaluation team suggests consideration is given to the following:

- *For countries that are not food self-sufficient*, it is proposed that SPFS should give equal priority to areas within countries that have good potential for increasing production as well as more marginal areas. The team appreciates that the expansion part of Phase I is supposed to address all agro-ecological areas in the country but it is likely that the expansion strategy will need to be implemented in steps and hence in the process the more promising areas would receive major priority. Although generally food security is interpreted by the international community in broader terms (i.e. ability to produce and/or purchase food), the team is sympathetic with the notion that poor highly indebted countries often lack the necessary foreign exchange to purchase the necessary food quantities to supplement domestic food production. Consequently, national food self-sufficiency is a legitimate concern as it contributes to insulating the countries from the vagaries of the market place.
- *For countries that are self-sufficient or nearly self-sufficient in food production* (e.g. Bangladesh, Cambodia and China), the evaluation team proposes that the SPFS focuses on agricultural areas where the greatest degree of household food insecurity exists – that is if the conditions outlined in the preceding section can be met. This means that attention will be focused on the poorer agricultural areas of the country.

Factors to consider in designing specific SPFS initiatives

92. Based on the evaluation team's observations earlier in the report, it recommends that three basic principles should underlie the initiation or extension of SPFS initiatives in specific countries. These are:

- a) The design should build on the strengths or characteristics of the SPFS as it currently exists, and outlined earlier.
- b) The shift in design from a rigid or package-driven approach to one that is more flexible and "people driven" based on meeting needs, grasping opportunities and alleviating constraints, should be further reinforced. Specifically, this means moving away from a focus on production to also include economic, financial and social dimensions, input/product marketing and credit related initiatives. These would be approached through giving farming households the analytical tools and means to become empowered and to be able as far as possible to influence and control their own destinies.
- c) In the design exercise, the priorities and comparative advantages of national governments and donors should be recognized and, as a result, ways should be sought to develop SPFS-related initiatives congruent with, and in partnership with, national governments and donors rather than trying to focus on marketing a fixed approach and modus operandi. This would allow SPFS designs to benefit from the experiences of development partners who would be fully associated in the programmes rather than seeking their support ex post.

93. In the design exercise itself, there are six specific areas that the evaluation team believes should receive greater attention since they impact not only on the way strategies for household food security are developed but also on the potential degree, sustainability and multiplier impact of SPFS-related activities. These are discussed below.

94. ***Explicit consideration of seasonality.*** For poor households heavily dependent on agriculture as a means of livelihood the degree of food security varies seasonally. Technological recommendations have to take into account the “normality” of good and bad years. For the rural poor household, food security is influenced by the agricultural production cycle, the amount of food stored, and the cash flow. This clustering of factors is most pronounced in seasonal rainfed marginal areas, but even in irrigated areas, it is a crucial issue for farming households with very limited resources. In both rainfed and irrigated areas, diversification activities not so dependent on water availability are important in cushioning households from the negative impacts of seasonality, and increasing their resilience to shock and negative trends through diversification of their production systems and income sources. The evaluation team believes it is extremely important to use the seasonal nature of food security, as a rational systematic starting-point for designing strategies to improve household food security during all periods of the year. The components, which might appropriately be termed “counter-seasonal strategies” (CSS), consist of:

- increasing food production at different times of the year (CSS1);
- increasing the capacity of local/community/household grain storage, with due attention given to post-harvest losses, and grain banks in order to counteract seasonal price differentials (CSS2);
- increasing household income-purchasing power through income-generating (i.e. diversification) activities, particularly at recurring/predictable times of food shortages (CSS3a), and through the improvement of farmers’ terms of access to inputs, of the processing and marketing of agricultural produce (CSS3b); and
- introducing/supporting self-help savings/credit groups in order to reduce the impact of resource/expenditure time lags, to allow small-scale investments, and to ensure sustainability (CSS4).

95. In the countries visited by the evaluation team, SPFS has mainly dealt with CSS1, not very much with CSS2, to a certain extent with CSS3a (but not in the most food-insecure areas), only sporadically with CSS3b (i.e. a few food-processing activities), and in a few cases with microcredit support (CSS4). If future SPFS-related initiatives are to have a clearly visible identity and boundaries sharply defined around the issues of seasonal hunger and counterseasonal strategies, this will require continuation of efforts to increase food production at different times of the year, to improve implementation of strategies relating to food storage, post-harvest losses, grain banks, marketing, processing and credit, and to enter into partnerships with other agencies that have relevant experience/expertise, for example in income-generating activities (i.e. including off-farm) and rural financial institutions. Mutually satisfying partnerships with other agencies require that FAO does not claim ownership and most of the limelight, and will enable FAO to focus on areas in which it has more experience. Also, much greater effort should be made to work with farmers’ organizations (i.e. such as in Senegal), farmers’ groups and communities.

96. ***More explicit consideration of environmental issues and ensuring congruency between production and ecological sustainability.*** Although the concept of the SPFS emphasizes the importance of increasing production without undermining ecological sustainability, the evaluation team believes, at least in the case study countries, it has not always received much explicit attention. The explicit emphasis has tended to be very much on yield-increasing technologies. Although in a couple of countries (e.g. Ecuador and Cambodia), there was some attention to IPM and organic production methods, there was less attention to environmental issues than the evaluation team would have anticipated. Therefore, the team recommends that in the future more explicit attention is given to designing strategies that will ensure congruency between production and ecological sustainability than has been the case to date. Attention to this issue will become even more critically important as SPFS-related activities are extended into more marginal areas.

97. ***More explicit attention to gender equality.*** The evaluation team believes mainstreaming gender equality in a location-sensitive manner in the SPFS country programmes needs to receive more explicit attention. The recently developed FAO Gender and Development Plan of Action provides guidelines for the SPFS to mainstream gender equality, partnership with country government gender policies.

98. ***More explicit attention to linkages.*** It is desirable for the SPFS to use a more systematic, explicit and planned approach to establishing linkages, not only with donor agencies but also with other developmental actors/agencies (e.g. NGOs). Moves towards doing this need to be initiated even at the design stage since they can play a potentially important role in determining the specific character of the strategies that are planned and are feasible, and in increasing the scope and potential impact of SPFS-related activities that are implemented. Examples of two specific and potentially very useful linkages are with developmentally oriented NGOs and with research institutions. Development-oriented NGOs could sometimes provide support in implementing savings/credit schemes, grain banks, community marketing and processing facilities, and supporting diversification in terms of types of activities not mainstreamed into SPFS diversification initiatives (e.g. crafts and off-farm employment). FAO, because of its mandate, has to concentrate on agriculturally related activities, but potentially important contributors to household security or the sustainable livelihoods of poor households are non-farm sources of incomes that could be facilitated through the development of creative linkages with other agencies that are focusing on such areas. This would be coherent with the right to food, as discussed in the documentation for the World Food Summit: five years later.

99. ***More explicit attention to macro and meso-level institutional and policy issues.*** At the macro level this relates particularly to public distribution of food, pricing policies, subsidies and WTO issues. Meso-level type issues include credit, finance, input distribution, market identification, and development, community negotiation, agreement and action in terms of watershed development and land tenure related type issues. All such issues will often need to be dealt with in partnership with other agencies.

100. ***Acceptance of a longer time period for achieving impact.*** A more realistic time period (e.g. up to five years) is required to develop and incorporate the above considerations adequately.

Implementing the proposed design of SPFS initiatives

101. Given earlier comments about a more flexible design with reference to SPFS initiatives, the evaluation team believes there would be merit, before the design exercise *per se*, in implementing one or two activities, namely:

- a) if the SPFS is already in the country, having a detailed independent evaluation undertaken, which would not only evaluate impact but would include suggestions/proposals for the future; and
- b) *at the start of the SPFS in a country*, mounting a spearhead (i.e. exploratory) mission which would make no firm commitments about the future, but would informally explore the merits of initiating SPFS type initiatives based on considerations discussed earlier. If the prognosis arising is promising, then the next step would be to mount a formal design mission, which should be, to the extent possible, led and controlled by the host country, consisting of nationals, FAO representation, and potential donor representation.

102. An exit strategy as far as FAO is concerned in terms of handing over responsibility at the end of the implementation period has to be thought through in advance and gradually implemented. It is recommended that a participatory log-frame approach is used in the design exercise and that during the implementation phase it becomes a *participatory dynamic log-frame*, which is periodically revisited to facilitate monitoring and evaluation with respect to the objectives, indicators, means of verification/measurement, and hypotheses/assumptions/risks associated with the project. The latter column is of particular importance since it relates to the policy environment and offers a bridge with the constraints analysis.

103. Finally, four complementary strategies need to be developed. These are to:

- a) increase the effort devoted to food security mapping (FIVIMS) in order to facilitate the identification of food insecure areas;
- b) introduce systematic, simple and efficient monitoring systems to improve management at different levels and independent evaluation at the project level, to glean and share/disseminate with national and partner agencies experiences with, and lessons from, implementation of the SPFS, that can help in improving later initiatives and enhance FAO credibility;
- c) assist countries in organizing training and capacity building programmes in planning and project formulation; and
- d) after carefully assessing the true needs of each country in terms of the level of expertise needed (i.e. low, medium or high), and matching those needs with available technical and human resources of other countries in the South, introduce SSC programmes that use small numbers of cooperants with adequate language skills, to give hands-on training to, and mentor local experts and technicians.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

104. We commend the independent external evaluation team for preparing a succinct, helpfully critical and constructive review of the Special Programme. From the outset, when the SPFS was launched in 1994, we have seen the need to adapt the Programme to respond both to the lessons emerging from experience gained in its implementation as well as to changes in the broader development environment. We welcome this report as a most important contribution to this learning process.

105. The report provides a wealth of useful observations on the Special Programme that will facilitate a well-informed debate on its achievements and its future. We expect that the representatives of those countries which are hosting SPFS activities, financing them or contributing to their implementation through providing SSC will have much to say in this debate, and we will be particularly interested in their observations.

106. The evaluation team's work was deliberately focused on countries which had entered the SPFS early in its existence because it would be here that there would be the longest track record for review. Many of the concerns expressed in the report about the design and implementation of these early SPFS projects have, we believe, been largely addressed both in later projects which were not covered in this evaluation as well as in SPFS Phase I Extensions. We accept, however, that there is room in the SPFS for further improvement and evolution. Some of this is a matter of closing the gap – which exists in any large-scale development programme and from which the SPFS is not immune – between intent, as set out in guidelines, and what actually happens on the ground. But there is also a need for more fundamental adjustments.

107. In responding, we do not wish to burden the FAO Governing Bodies with detailed comments on the team's analysis but to concentrate mainly on the report's recommendations as to how the SPFS might be further improved in future. While we need to learn from the past and take note of the team's observations, especially when these are critical of certain aspects of the Programme, it is on the future that we need to focus our efforts. Should members, however, wish to seek our views on specific comments and statements in the analytical sections of the report, we will be pleased to share them.

108. However, there are three broad themes on which our perception of the SPFS does not converge entirely with that of the independent review team.

- The first concerns the processes of innovation. A major purpose of the Programme is to foster creativity among farmers and to promote the testing and uptake of new and affordable ways of farming better, applying participatory methods. We feel that it is necessary, however, to make the point that, even in demand-driven projects and programmes founded on principles of people's participation such as the SPFS, the Organization, based on its technical competence, must retain the right to decide upon the purposes for which its resources – or those entrusted to it – are utilized. It must also be prepared to exclude the use

of funds for activities which it perceives are unlikely to be viable. FAO Management also believes that it needs to encourage the testing and uptake by farmers of innovations which could respond appropriately to their needs but which are not “demanded”, if only because they are not known to participants. Indeed, one of the Organization’s comparative advantages is its international character and ability to promote technology transfer between countries.

It is in this context that we feel that the results to date of the South-South Cooperation (SSC) initiative and its impact on the processes of innovation are encouraging, especially if compared with other more conventional modes of technical assistance. We believe that this justifies the continued application of the main principles and elements of the current guidelines, adapting them, as required, to country-specific situations. What distinguishes the SSC model being applied by FAO in the SPFS from more traditional forms of technical assistance is that it places strongly committed technicians with good practical skills as change agents out in rural communities where they can interact directly with front-line extension workers, local leaders and farmers. In this way, they can break the conservatism which often inhibits innovation, bring on a daily basis new and very practical ideas directly into the farming environment and encourage groups of farmers, fishers and animal producers to adapt and test approaches to livelihood improvement that have been found to work well.

To increase the multiplier effect of SSC and to avoid creating long-term dependence, all SSC technicians are expected to share their experiences after practical work in rural communities with national staff in training of trainers. This is a part of an exit strategy, which normally limits engagement periods to three years. The strategy, adapted to local conditions in each participating country, includes the training by SSC experts and technicians of trainers at the national level who in turn train other trainers at regional and community level, thus creating a snowball effect.

The costs per SSC expert and technician (about US\$12 000 and US\$7 200 per year respectively, shared between the source, host countries and FAO initially but later paid by bilateral and multilateral donors) are very low relative to conventional technical assistance (typically in the range of US\$120 000 to US\$200 000 per expert per year depending on funding source). This makes it possible to field in stages a critical mass of technicians under SSC arrangements, thereby stimulating a process of locally adapted change from below in many rural communities.

This formula is still new and we shall clearly need to make adjustments on the basis of feedback from the countries involved, but we see it as an exciting and affordable way through which developing countries can transfer successful experiences amongst each other, contributing in a very practical manner to food security and agricultural development. We, therefore, intend to continue playing a catalytic role in helping interested countries engage in SSC agreements and in assisting them in mobilizing the necessary financial resources.

- Second, the team has advanced a number of proposals on criteria that might be applied in prioritizing countries for SPFS participation. Their perception that there is, indeed, a need for selecting countries implies a recognition that there are many countries that wish to join the SPFS: this is especially evident from the requests from countries outside the LIFDC list that are committed to using their own national resources to finance SPFS implementation.¹⁶ The Programme Committee does not need to be reminded that the Organization’s field programmes, including the SPFS, are driven by the requests of member countries. To the extent that legitimate demands for assistance exceed the Organization’s financial and institutional response capacity, it obliges FAO to explore means of increasing its delivery. It is for this reason that the Organization is actively seeking resources in consultation with LIFDCs from bilateral and multilateral sources.

¹⁶ The fact that demand to take part in the SPFS is strong and not confined to LIFDCs would suggest that some of the team’s assertions about lack of national ownership might be questioned.

- Third, we feel that the evaluation team may have underestimated the impact of the SPFS on national policies for food and agriculture. This is, of course, difficult to judge because policies are determined through an amalgam of different influences including the broader political orientation of those in power, as well as the advice given to governments by external sources of funds. The direction of policies also tends to shift only slowly except when there are fundamental changes in power structures. In this context, however, we believe that there are signs that many developing countries, especially those engaged in the formulation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), are increasingly prepared to adopt policies that will lead to improved food security and to rapid growth in agriculture. This is already visible at the regional and subregional levels, whether one considers the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) or the understandings reached between FAO and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and other subregional bodies on regional food security programmes.

It would be presumptuous to imply that the SPFS alone has prompted a shift in policy orientation. We believe, however, that through its high visibility, its demonstration that it lies within the capacity of countries to bring about rapid improvements in the output of small farmers, and its links into the World Food Summit process, the Programme can claim some responsibility. At national level, the decisions of a number of LIFDCs to extend the programme nationwide (e.g. China and Pakistan) as well as of nine other countries to commit their own funds on a significant scale to implement the SPFS countrywide, would seem to indicate that it is beginning to impact on policies.

109. We agree fully with the team's assessment of the strengths of the SPFS and with the recommendation that it is on these that future SPFS activities should be built. We concur with their views on the importance of flexibility in the Programme and on the need to balance microlevel measures to improve production and livelihoods with addressing meso and macro issues, which could impinge on both the production and the distribution of benefits. We accept the case for a longer time horizon for pilot activities under Phase I and for larger and more sites, representative of all major agro-ecological regions of a country. Indeed, wherever resources allow, this is the direction in which recent SPFS initiatives, including those financed by developing countries from their own resources, are moving.

110. We also agree on the need to update and improve guidelines and to ensure that they are widely accessible and used. In line with the team's proposal, an SPFS Guideline Technical Committee will be established. Work is already in progress to develop cost-effective methodologies for impact monitoring, covering both production gains and their impact on household income and food security. FAO Management also accepts that subsidies, whether on inputs or on interest rates, should be avoided except where these are consistent with national policies or might be required to indemnify participants against pioneering risks (which would otherwise be met by the state through their funding of additional on-station research). The widespread use of subsidies noted in the report is not in line with the underlying concept of the Programme that it should promote replicable innovations. One of the practical problems faced by many farmers interested in taking up new practices, however, has been the collapse of credit, input supply and marketing systems in a large number of developing countries. In such situations, it has been necessary to intervene in a pragmatic way to bridge the gap between what should be done and what can be done to enable innovators to have access to the necessary inputs and equipment.

111. In considering options for the future of the SPFS, our observations are as follows.

- *Greater priority for household food security.* The SPFS is a household and community focused programme. It is built on the understanding that improvements in local food security, especially where these stem from production gains by large numbers of small farmers, will also contribute to a higher level of food security at the national level. We take the view that in all countries in which the SPFS is operational, whether or not they are close to self-sufficiency in food, the primary focus should be on communities in agricultural areas where the greatest number of food insecure households live. But we attach one proviso: this

is that the Programme should only go where it can offer practical, sustainable and viable solutions to the problems facing families, regardless of whether the areas have high or low agricultural potential. FAO Management, however, notes that in many countries, contrary to conventional perceptions, the largest numbers of households suffering from malnutrition and chronic food insecurity live in areas of high agricultural potential, and hence a focus on high potential areas is not usually incompatible with the improvement of both household and national food security.

For the future, the aim is to extend SPFS Phase I (pilot) activities to respond to demands from food-insecure communities in all agro-ecological zones of a country: the range of activities supported by the Programme would be progressively widened as institutional capacities grow. We also envisage that increasing attention will be given within SPFS operations to empowering communities to address the underlying factors which determine the distribution of food between households within the community. We see the need for a special focus on issues related to women and households in which, as a result of HIV-AIDS and other diseases, there have been adverse shifts in dependency ratios with disastrous effects on agriculture. Some experience is being gained (with funding from TeleFood sources) in targeting increases in food production where these are most needed and in linking these to nutrition education, particularly through promoting school and health centre garden programmes; these examples can be more widely replicated in future under the SPFS.

- *SPFS Design Considerations.* We welcome the team's recommendations and intend to make sure that they are all taken up in the design of future SPFS initiatives, including planning for the extension of existing Phase I activities. We share with the team the concept of a people-centred approach which is designed to empower food-insecure communities to analyse the constraints and opportunities that they face and to arrive at their own choices on strategies and actions for reducing hunger and for bringing about sustainable improvements in their livelihood systems.

FAO Management also strongly subscribes to the need for strengthened partnerships, building these up from the outset of project design. Furthermore we fully accept the recommendation that more explicit attention be given in project design to means of addressing seasonality issues, ecological sustainability, gender equality and linkages. Mainstreaming these approaches will require increased attention to capacity building at all levels, but with special emphasis on farm leaders and front-line extension staff, building particularly on the Organization's experience with farmer field schools which has been commended by the team.

In addition to revising SPFS guidelines to respond to these recommendations as well as those on design processes, the Organization will provide training for staff and government officials engaged in SPFS design.

- *Complementary strategies.* FAO Management concurs with the need to strengthen the capacity of FIVIMS to identify foci of food insecurity and to link this to the targeting of SPFS initiatives. We also share the team's view of the need both to improve monitoring systems, keeping these simple and cost effective, and to support training programmes in project formulation: this will be greatly facilitated by the Project Formulation Tool Kit, currently in its test phase.

112. The development context and environment in which the SPFS is now operating has changed considerably since it was launched almost eight years ago. The proclamation of the Millennium Development Goals, the expansion of debt relief programmes, the launching of the Comprehensive Development Framework and of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the thinking on new modes of development financing emerging from the International Conference on Financing for Development, all pose challenges and offer new opportunities for the SPFS which the Organization will address.

REPORT OF THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE¹⁷

113. The Committee welcomed this important evaluation, which it felt had been fully independent, thorough and objective, providing balanced and constructive criticism to strengthen the SPFS. Although the evaluation had been costly, the Committee suggested that independent external evaluations of other selected FAO programmes could be useful. The positive response of Senior Management and the intention of the Organization to draw on the evaluation in reinforcing the SPFS, were also appreciated. The Committee also found the explanations of the findings by the evaluation team leader useful and informative.

114. The evaluation had emphasized the potential role which the SPFS could play in overcoming food insecurity. Impact from the SPFS could only be assured when there was national ownership and when development occurred from the bottom up with broad stakeholder involvement. This required time and a flexible design responding to individual country requirements.

115. The Evaluation Report had pointed to examples of positive impacts from the SPFS as well as to many of the problems faced by the Programme. Several Members drew attention to their own experiences with the SPFS, which had been reflected in national policies and resulted in desires to expand the programme. The commitment of FAO Management to put in place a more effective and practical monitoring and evaluation system for national SPFS programmes was very much welcomed, with emphasis on assessing economic viability and replicability of approaches, as well as their immediate impact on household food security.

116. There was agreement on the primary importance of household food security, and the Committee discussed how this was to be best addressed within the context of the SPFS. Several Members stressed the priority need of the poor who cultivate marginal sites and who have limited access to food. Others noted that the poor were not restricted to marginal areas and that in LIFDCs a primary concern was to assure an adequate national food supply. The Committee emphasized the need for a better gender balance in the SPFS.

117. The Committee discussed the findings of the Evaluation Report with regard to the desirability of prioritizing cooperation under the SPFS. Several Members felt that it was essential to address the needs of all LIFDCs and noted that several non-LIFDCs had also demonstrated their desire for the programme by substantially funding work by FAO in their own countries. Other Members of the Committee emphasized that, in a situation of finite resources, prioritization to achieve real impact from Regular Programme resources was essential. In their view this would also facilitate the greater mobilization of donor funds.

118. The Committee agreed that SSC brought a valuable new dimension to technical cooperation. Some Members emphasized that the programme was playing a key role in extending experience between countries. Others also noted that there was a need to relate SSC closely to the specific needs and absorptive capacity of host countries and that greater engagement of national expertise could also be important. The Evaluation Report contained useful practical ideas to increase the efficacy of SSC, including the need for gender balance and family visits by cooperators.

119. The constructive criticism in the report provided valuable assistance to FAO Management as it sought to increase the impact of the programme. The Committee welcomed the information it received on the flexible and people-centred approach which, it was informed, had come to be a feature of the SPFS in more recent years. The Committee welcomed the initiatives now being taken by Management to strengthen the SPFS and implement recommendations of the evaluation team. The Committee was informed of the arrangements now being put in place to secure a fuller engagement of the technical expertise of the Organization and to ensure greater integration of environmental aspects, policies on food security and FIVIMs. Preparations were being made to

¹⁷ PC/87/REP, paras. 21-28.

set up a Technical Support Group, update the Concept Paper on the SPFS, revise guidelines and to train concerned staff in project design and implementation approaches, with an emphasis on participative methods. Preparation of a Monitoring and Evaluation Manual was in progress.

120. In conclusion, the Committee welcomed the commitment evidenced by Management to use the recommendations of the evaluation team to strengthen the SPFS and its approach. It requested a follow-up report at its May 2003 session on progress made in implementing the SPFS and in introducing the many positive changes that Management had referred to in its responses to the report.