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MOPAN Assessment of FAO (2024)

Management response and observations

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General observations

1. FAO is pleased that the MOPAN report has highlighted many positive areas of performance, and identified areas where the Organization can focus to inform continued improvement.
2. FAO appreciates the MOPAN findings as valuable, additional feedback that complements other recommendations from FAO oversight mechanisms – including evaluations, internal and external audits, and independent reports, such as the recent Joint Inspection Unit Management and Administration Review in FAO. These are all useful inputs that feed into the Organization's ongoing monitoring and refinement of its strategy and work programmes and discussions in its Governing Bodies meetings.

Areas of strength

3. The MOPAN report conclusion that FAO has retained its key strengths, and that these are well appreciated by its Members and partners is a welcome recognition. FAO has been acknowledged for having a clear mandate, solid core functions, strong partnerships and a strong commitment to strategic innovation.
4. FAO also welcomes the report acknowledgment that its mandate is central to global challenges, and its technical expertise is highly valued – and this has resulted in record breaking resources mobilized in 2022-2023.
5. In relation to the funding model, FAO wishes to highlight that its record level of voluntary contributions mobilized in recent years to achieve additional and more impactful results within the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 is a welcome sign of the trust placed in the Organization. Furthermore, the impact of our utilization of these resources has been remarkable, as noted in the MOPAN report. Indeed, FAO has been able to deliver significant, lifesaving support to its Members, in light of global challenges of great magnitude, including the impacts of COVID-19, the climate crises, conflicts and economic downturns.
6. Notably, resources have been used to respond to Members' needs, supporting country priorities directly through rapidly expanding modalities like Unilateral Trust Funds (UTFs). These UTF projects provide the highest level of national programme ownership, with Governments acting both as donors and key programming coordinators. FAO has also been responding to increasing countries' requests for emergency assistance, making the Organization one of the leading UN agencies contributing to humanitarian responses with agricultural aid and assistance, and a key interlocutor on food security.
7. The significant growth of FAO's emergency and resilience portfolio has been demand-driven and is a key component of helping countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). FAO notes that the positive aspects of this surge in voluntary funding might have been better reflected in the MOPAN report.
8. The report also recognizes that FAO has taken positive steps to address issues raised in previous MOPAN assessments, which are delivering improvements in organizational effectiveness, including greater emphasis on strategic risk management; integration of assessed and voluntary contributions in the programme and budget; improved corporate performance reporting against SDG targets; and many efforts to increase transparency, and monitoring and reporting of FAO's results and impact.

Areas for attention

9. The Organization has taken careful note of areas considered less satisfactory in the MOPAN report. It is noted that some of the issues raised in the report are areas where the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) and the wider UN system are prioritizing further action and greater impact, such as **human rights, Indigenous Peoples, gender equality and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**.

10. FAO wishes to stress that these are core matters that the Organization is committed to consistently improve and mainstream at all levels, especially in our interventions on the ground. For example:

- *Human rights* - several of FAO's key strategies and policy documents are based on human rights approaches. These documents promote women's rights, land tenure, rights to labour, the right to food, social protection, children's rights, and intellectual property rights. They also focus on vulnerable groups like women, young people, migrants, children, Indigenous Peoples, and the most in need. FAO has developed guidelines to address specific human rights issues, such as gender equality and gender-based violence, and FAO uses the guidelines of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on the Right to Food and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGTs).
- *Indigenous peoples* - FAO has a biennial work programme for Indigenous Peoples consisting of seven pillars and two thematic areas. This work programme is regularly updated and is reflected in several of the Programme Priority Areas (PPAs). FAO reports yearly to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues against the UN System Wide Action Plan on the rights of Indigenous Peoples pillars, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- *PSEA* - FAO has a zero-tolerance policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), reflected in the 2023 Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to SEA, building on previous action plans, and is dedicated to its widespread operationalization across FAO.

11. The Medium-Term Plan (MTP) 2026-29 will address the MOPAN comments on the need for clearer FAO indicators and targets in these areas of our work, aiming for better reporting and better representation of FAO's impact and achievements.

12. FAO recognizes the **challenges of its current funding model**, as evidenced in the MOPAN report, and together with Members is engaged in continuous dialogue toward improving the situation. There is concern in FAO and other multilateral organizations on the limited flexibility of earmarked contributions which is part of the root problems identified in the report. This challenge can only be tackled strategically with Members to find common solutions to reducing fragmentation, attracting increased funding to high-potential areas of work and mobilizing increased amounts of core extrabudgetary, pooled and unearmarked funding.

13. Further information in this regard will be provided in the MTP 2026-29 and Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2026-27, including on the measures proposed by the Organization to address the challenges and risks associated with supporting an expanded portfolio of voluntary-funded projects.

14. FAO also notes the MOPAN findings around the **need to strengthen its approach to Results-Based Management (RBM)**. FAO's results monitoring aims to connect the various levels of the Organization's theory of change towards the achievement of the SDGs. This begins with the delivery of outputs, continues with robust feedback from the Organization's stakeholders on the utility and use of these outputs, and follows with measurement to gauge the extent to which the

expected changes both at medium- and long-term outcome/impact level are realized, and to identify issues and recalibrate action as needed.

15. Adopting the 2030 Agenda to measure outcomes is the tool to focus on achieving longer-term goals, aiming for meaningful and lasting changes. By targeting results at outcome level, FAO drives progress and measures success more effectively, according to RBM principles.

16. FAO will continue to work to strengthen its RBM model in line with expert guidance and best practice. In order to reinforce accountability and better quantify FAO's contribution to the achievement of outcomes as requested by the FAO Council, the MTP 2026-29 and PWB 2026-27 will introduce baselines and milestones for the 20 PPA output indicators.

17. FAO acknowledges the findings suggesting the **need for improvement related to planning and intervention design** and particularly concerning **risk management**. While acknowledging that the observations are based on historical audit findings, FAO is confident that changes to management of the Project Cycle, including through the Framework for Environmental and Social Management (FESM), will see markedly improved results in future assessments that were not fully demonstrated in this assessment. Project Cycle policies, templates and systems have all been updated and are applied to all new projects. These ensure that all projects are derived from robust problem analysis and logical frameworks that fit appropriately within the country contexts where they are delivered.

18. FAO also has serious concerns with the highly unsatisfactory scoring of the Organization's performance related to **matters of sustainability** under KPI12 (Results are Sustainable). The scoring is based on a limited number of historical evaluation results on the assessment of the Project Cycle and risk management, covering interventions in earlier years, where issues have been carefully considered and are dynamically being addressed. Currently, FAO is focused on the long-term sustainability of its interventions by actively transitioning to programmatic and system change approaches. These efforts are not captured in the timeframes and scope of the current assessment, and the impact, scale up, and sustainability of those efforts will only be seen in the next assessment.

Conclusion

19. FAO welcomes the MOPAN assessment and is committed to continuing its path toward improving the Organization from all angles in support of the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems, for better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life, leaving no one behind.