

# **GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PRE-EVALUATION MONITORING AND ANNUAL ASSESSMENT AND PERIODIC AUTO- EVALUATION OF THE TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRAMMES**

*(Chapter 2 and Major Programme 3.1)*

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# **GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PRE-EVALUATION MONITORING AND ANNUAL ASSESSMENT AND PERIODIC AUTO- EVALUATION OF THE TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRAMMES**

*(Chapter 2 and Major Programme 3.1)*

*The guidelines will be revised in the light of experience during the initial period of their use. Questions and comments on the Guidelines should be addressed to the Chief, Evaluation Service( PBEE)*

## ***Purpose***

1. As envisaged in the Director-General's Bulletin on Evaluation No.2001/33, issued on 5 November 2001, an enhanced evaluation regime will be introduced throughout the Organization, starting in the 2002-03 biennium. Two essential components of the regime are (i) pre-evaluation monitoring and assessment of which the key output is the annual assessment and (ii) auto-evaluation for all the technical and economic programmes. These are conceived as decentralized participatory processes of rigorous review of programme achievements and outcomes by programme managers at each level in the Organization. At both headquarters and decentralized offices, they should facilitate systematic assessment of progress in the programme implementation, particularly with respect to achieving the targeted major outputs and planned objectives set out in the Medium Term Plan (MTP) and the Programme of Work and Budget (PWB).
  
2. The annual assessment and auto-evaluation processes will form an integral part of programme planning, budgeting, implementation monitoring and evaluation. By facilitating timely experiential learning and corrective action, these components of the evaluation regime should contribute to improved relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of FAO programmes and operations. More broadly, they should facilitate pro-active participation of the programme staff and their managers in the programme cycle. In particular the system will:
  - a) enhance programme managers' capacity to ensure the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of programmes by facilitating (i) timely in-course corrective action and adjustment and (ii) assessment of programme achievements and results as a basis for deciding upon their future at critical points in the rolling MTP cycle;
  - b) make assessment and auto-evaluation systematic and transparent, using a set of common criteria and procedures which can support programme planning and evaluation at the corporate level;
  - c) contribute to the preparation of periodic accountability reporting, such as the biennial Programme Implementation Report (PIR) and other progress reports to management and the Governing Bodies; and

- d) provide a strong basis for independent evaluation by the Evaluation Service and external evaluators.

### ***Definitions***

3. The framework for annual assessment and auto-evaluation will be the programme structure, as defined in the MTP, covering individual programmes and their programme entities as well as the Priority Areas for Inter-disciplinary Action (PAIAs). In particular, annual assessment and auto-evaluation will compare actual implementation against the biennial and major outputs planned (annual assessment) and the outcomes expected from the implementation of programme entities (auto-evaluation). Thus, the plans and the programmes of work proposed in the programme planning documents (i.e. the MTP and the PWB) and in annual workplans will form the baseline for both exercises.

#### **Annual Assessment**

4. The annual assessment process will focus on the implementation progress in the achievement of PWB biennial outputs and, where applicable, MTP major outputs and is designed to feed into the adjustment and updating of programme entity documents, annual work planning and biennially into the preparation of the PWB and MTP. It will also provide information for the PIR.

#### **Auto-evaluation**

5. Auto-evaluation will focus on the achievement of the major outputs and of planned objectives in the MTP as evidenced by the indicators and using the evaluation criteria given in the DGB on Evaluation (see further in paragraph 18 below). This will need to be supported by a systematic review of the use made by the users of the major outputs. The results will serve as an input to senior management decisions regarding the programme entity's future and the formulation of new programme entities, as well as feeding into independent evaluation.

### ***Overall Process***

6. While the system described below will entail systematic reporting at the corporate level at critical stages in the programme planning and budget cycle, especially for the MTP and PWB processes, formal documentation will be kept to the minimum. Quality of programme design and implementation plans, as well as systematic monitoring and review of the production of major outputs and their application towards achieving the planned objective (outcome), will be essential prerequisites to both effective annual assessment and auto-evaluation.

7. Annual assessment and auto-evaluation should be planned as part of the programme entity's design and built into the programme entity documentation and implementation

plans, including identification of the resources necessary. This should include both staff time and other resources including any external inputs or surveys needed to obtain information on indicators.

8. The respective managers will be responsible at each level of the process. For PAIAs, the annual assessment and auto-evaluation processes will be coordinated by the Chairperson of the PAIA (referred to as the “PAIA Manager” below).

9. In addition, it will be important that the processes are truly participatory, involving fully technical units at Headquarters and the Regional and Sub-regional Offices. While appropriate arrangements for this purpose should be agreed to between the Headquarters units and their officers in decentralized offices, it is suggested that where relevant (i.e. where the latter has contributed to the work in question):

- a) both annual assessments and auto-evaluations are planned and conducted with the full involvement of the regional technical staff involved;
- b) the results be copied to the concerned Regional Representatives;
- c) the Regional Representatives be invited to provide inputs into the review process of annual assessment and auto-evaluation at the departmental level (see paragraph 13 on reporting); and
- d) the Regional Representatives are encouraged to prepare their own synthesis assessments regarding FAO’s programmes in their respective region, primarily as internal review exercises but drawing attention of the relevant HQ units to issues arising from the review as appropriate.

## ***Annual Assessment***

10. All programme entities, excepting those which are subject to auto-evaluation during the course of the current biennium, will be reviewed each year according to the schedule in the table below:

Period of Implementation to be Assessed	Period in which the Assessment is to be undertaken	Application of the Results of the Assessment
1 <sup>st</sup> year of each biennium	Jan – Mar in the second year of the biennium	Adjustments to the annual workplan for the 2 <sup>nd</sup> year including review and, if necessary, revision of programme entity document in PIRES <sup>1</sup> . Input to Programme Implementation Report (PIR). Input to the development of the rolling MTP.
2 <sup>nd</sup> year of each biennium	Nov (2 <sup>nd</sup> year) to Jan (1 <sup>st</sup> year of the subsequent biennium)	Adjustments to the annual workplan for the 1 <sup>st</sup> year of the subsequent biennium including review and, if necessary, revision of programme entity document in PIRES. Input to Programme Implementation Report (PIR). Input to the development of the MTP and the PWB for the next biennium.

11. The assessment will be carried out by the programme entity manager, or in the case of PAIAs, by the PAIA manager. Managers will prepare the annual assessment that will compare the results against those planned in the programme entity document reflected in the PIRES and the MTP and report on:

- a) the continued relevance of the programme entity in the light of the evolution of priorities and, in particular, to the objectives established in the Strategic Framework;
- b) the performance of the entity on biennial and, where relevant, major output achievement (quantity, quality and timing versus targets) and an assessment of the likelihood of achieving the planned future outputs;
- c) progress towards achieving the expected programme entity objectives in line with the established targets and indicators and the likelihood of success in the period of the MTP; and
- d) an analysis of major issues and constraints, including main reasons for deviation from the plan.

12. On the basis of the assessments, programme entity and PAIA managers will make proposals for:

- a) an updated annual workplan for the subsequent year, including, if appropriate, proposals for the reallocation of resources;
- b) revisions as necessary to the existing programme entity documentation in PIRES; and
- c) amendments to be incorporated to the programme entity within the next rolling MTP and/or the biennial PWB as appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup> Programme Planning and Implementation Reporting and Evaluation Support System

13. The annual assessment reports should be submitted as follows:

- a) for programme entities, through the Division Director to the ADG of the Department together with the Director's comments and proposals. The relevant Regional Representatives should receive a copy of such assessments where their Regional Offices have contributed to the programme entities assessed, and will be afforded an opportunity to provide their comments. While such assessments do not need to be submitted to ODG or PBE, they should be kept available for access by the Evaluation Service for at least six years from the date they are produced;
- b) for PAIAs, to the Deputy Director-General with a copy to the Director, PBE.

14. The Division Directors and concerned ADG for each Programme and Major Programme will review the reported performance of programme entities as envisaged under paragraph 11 above and approve or disapprove the proposals made in accordance with paragraph 12 above, taking into account relevant comments of the concerned Regional Representatives as well as the entities' performance as compared to that of the other programme entities for which they are responsible and any change in programme priorities that may have occurred.

## ***Auto-evaluation***

15. All Technical Projects and Continuing Programme Activities will be subject to auto-evaluation by programme managers, at least once during the lifetime of the programme entity. For technical projects, this will tend to take place near or during the last year of their planned duration which can never exceed six years. For PAIAs and Continuing Programme Activities, an auto-evaluation will take place at least once in each six year period, at an appropriate time. The results of auto-evaluation will feed into the preparation of departmental proposals on programme entities for the subsequent MTP.

16. Auto-evaluation should, to the extent practicable, involve external inputs, such as review by an external peer group of the evaluation report prepared by the programme manager. Alternatively, external expertise may be used directly to assist the programme manager in conducting the evaluation. The use of external inputs will be especially important for those high priority entities. As indicated under paragraph 7 above, arrangements for auto-evaluation, including the use of external expertise, should be planned and budgeted in the PWB for the year in which it will take place.

17. During the first two weeks of January of each year, each department will prepare a schedule of auto-evaluations to be undertaken during the calendar year. The plan should be approved by the ADG and be submitted to PBE for information.

18. Auto-evaluation will apply the following criteria which are a sub-set of the criteria applied to full-scale evaluations:

- a) continuing relevance in terms of benefits to the target audience and FAO's MTP and Strategic Objectives;
- b) quality and coherence of programme design;
- c) the efficiency in output achievement in terms of quantity, timeliness and cost;
- d) effectiveness in achieving, or progress towards, the planned outcomes particularly against qualitative and quantitative targets and indicators for objectives (including thematic targets such as gender, etc.); and
- e) the extent to which the benefits realised are likely to be sustained in the future.

19. The auto-evaluation report should contain recommendations covering:

- a) strengths and weaknesses of the programme entity and proposals for corrective action; and
- b) specific proposals for action in the next MTP period:
  - i) for technical projects, on whether work should be continued on any aspect of the project, and if so, with a new project or by inclusion in an existing project;
  - ii) for continuing programme activities, on whether the entity should be continued, modified or terminated.

20. All auto-evaluation reports should be cleared by the relevant Division Director and then be submitted to the ADG of the Department for approval. The Regional Representatives concerned should receive a copy of the submission so that they may be able to provide the ADG with their own comments on those entities to which their Offices have contributed. Following the ADG's review, a copy of the report should be forwarded to PBE together with a note recording the ADG's decisions.

21. With respect to the auto-evaluation system, the Evaluation Service will:

- a) provide methodological support and advice in the continued development and operation of the system;
- b) monitor and periodically review the functioning of the system to ensure its utility and cost-effectiveness as part of the corporate planning, programming and budget, monitoring and evaluation process;
- c) facilitate complementarity and synergy between the auto-evaluation system and the other evaluation activities in the Organization, including the maximum use of the system's outputs in support of evaluations carried out by the Service;
- d) monitor to ensure that all PAIAs, TPs and CPs are being subjected to auto-evaluation and maintain a biennial plan of auto-evaluations at the corporate level, based upon divisional auto-evaluation plans; and
- e) review the reports to:
  - i) provide feed-back and comments as part of the MTP process;
  - ii) maintain a database covering the main findings, issues and recommendations arising from such auto-evaluations; and
  - iii) prepare a biennial synthesis report on auto-evaluations and their results for submission to ODG and the Programme Committee – such reports will include comments on the functioning and quality of the system.