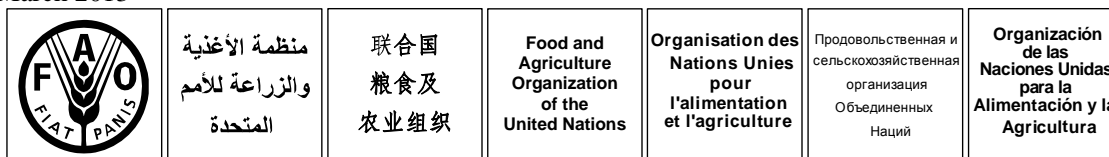


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DECENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZED OFFICES NETWORK

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Executive Summary

At the 144th session in June 2012, the Council endorsed proposals amongst which the need to improve the structure and functioning of the decentralized offices networks. The present document provides an update on improvements in the decentralized offices network under the governance of the Regional Office for Africa (RAF).

There has been good progress in the following areas: (i) country-level leadership and management capacity has been strengthened with the aim to improve the performance, results and impact of all of FAO's work at the country level; (ii) concerted efforts to increase the partnership opportunities with national and regional institutions, other UN and non-UN international agencies, the private sector, universities and research organizations, and civil society; (iii) efforts to increase the Organization's effectiveness through an improved programme and administrative management support processes; and (iv) reduced fragmentation through the integration of emergency, rehabilitation and development activities in line with FAO's resilience agenda.

The document also draws attention to a number of initiatives to fine-tune the structure and functioning of some of the decentralized offices in Africa in terms of location of staff and adjustments of responsibilities.

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Matters to be brought to the attention of the Regional Conference

While good progress has been made during 2012-13, additional efforts are planned for implementation during 2014-15. In particular, strengthened work-planning at country level will provide FAO Representatives with a framework to improve programme delivery, consolidate partnerships and support resource mobilization. In addition, the implementation of FAO's mobility policy is expected to have a positive impact on the functioning of the decentralized offices. Some initiatives are being considered for fine-tuning the location of staff taking advantage of the technical network of FAO staff funded by projects, and other adjustments of responsibilities of some of the decentralized offices in the region.

DECENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZED OFFICES NETWORK

a. Introduction

1. At the 144th session in June 2012, the Council endorsed proposals organized in three broad areas: (a) improved planning and priority setting (b) improvements in the decentralized offices network and (c) an integrated model for programme delivery, including the integration of development, emergency and rehabilitation activities, as well as more strategic use of TCP resources, and improved human resources management for enhanced performance, accountability and country-level impact. The present document provides an update on improvements in the decentralized offices network under the governance of the Regional Office for Africa (RAF).

2. There has been good progress in all the areas agreed, namely to: (i) strengthening country-level leadership and management capacity with the aim to improve the performance, results and impact of all of FAO's work at the country level; (ii) promote partnerships with national and regional institutions, other UN and non-UN international agencies, the private sector, universities and research organizations, and civil society; (iii) increase the Organization's effectiveness through improved programme and administrative management support processes; and (iv) reduce fragmentation and increase integration between emergency, rehabilitation and development activities in line with FAO's resilience agenda.

b. FAO Decentralized Offices in Africa

3. Africa, like the rest of FAO, has witnessed a significant turnover in FAO Representatives (FAORs). In 2012, there were three new FAOR appointments and fifteen in 2013. Seventeen of these eighteen FAORs have prior FAO experience, either at headquarters, in a regional or subregional office, as an emergency coordinator or as an FAO project coordinator in the field. Only one appointment was made from outside of the Organization, in 2012. Each newly appointed FAOR underwent a management competency assessment administered by an external firm. Following a Council Decision in June 2013 to establish a fully-fledged representative in FAO's newest member, South Sudan, the position of Head of Office has been converted into an FAOR position. This appointment brings the number of women appointed in 2013 to five out of the fifteen new FAORs in the Region. Currently there are seven women serving as FAOR out of thirty-seven in the Region.

4. In accordance with Council endorsement in June 2012, international Deputy FAOR posts have been established in Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Mali. Others are under recruitment in countries with sizeable programmes. These posts are fully funded through extra-budgetary resources and play an important role in the integration between emergency, rehabilitation and development operations. The posts have already proven to be beneficial for resource mobilization, programme delivery and engagement in interagency processes.

5. Other measures are being taken to also boost the leadership and management capacities of FAORs. A new training programme for FAORs is under development and will be launched in 2014.

6. Contacts have been established and negotiations are ongoing with a number of upper-middle income and high income member countries that requested a stronger in-country

presence of FAO and an expansion of activities through more partnership as well as liaison activities and new funding arrangements. Among these are Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria and South Africa.

7. It should be noted that this process is in line with the request from the governing bodies to ensure that member countries contribute in a significant manner to the strengthening of the decentralized network. This joint effort with member countries will be continued in the 2014-2015 biennium.

c. Promoting Strategic and Operational Partnerships

8. Partnerships enable the Organization to fulfil its mandate in a rapidly evolving environment in which there are a growing number of actors in FAO's areas of work, with specific comparative advantages in their knowledge and position within the local environment, technical expertise and access to resources. FAO's success through decentralization in strengthening its relationships with its major partners is described below.

9. In line with the approach endorsed by the Council in June 2012, considerable attention has been given to strengthening FAO's strategic and operational partnerships at regional and sub-regional levels. This is important to support the growing number of sub-regional and regional projects carried out by the Regional Office, Sub-Regional Offices (SROs) and Rome-based Headquarter divisions. A recent evaluation of the Regional Office and the SROs found that over half of the projects operated by the Regional Office and the SROs focused either on supporting policy work, addressing trans-boundary issues, and/or providing technical assistance to Regional/Sub-Regional Economic Communities (RECs), such as the African Union (AU), Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS), Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Comité permanent inter-États de lutte contre la sécheresse au Sahel/Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). Subsequently, the terms of reference and title of the Sub-regional Coordinator for Eastern Africa have been modified to include liaison to the AU and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and affiliated programmes. Similarly, the FAOR in Djibouti is now also the liaison official for IGAD. The placement of a Liaison Officer for the SADC is awaiting final agreement. Finally, the post of Liaison Officer with the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), based in Lisbon where CPLP has its headquarters, is already operational.

10. An important achievement was the establishment of the Africa Trust Fund for Food Security. The idea of the Fund was launched during the 2012 Regional Conference for Africa (ARC) held in the Republic of Congo. In 2013 important contributions were made: USD 30 million by Equatorial Guinea and USD10 million by Angola. Other African countries have also promised to allocate resources to the Fund. The Fund is administered by FAO, and will support Africa-led, Africa-owned initiatives such as the CAADP to boost agricultural productivity in the region. The Fund's Steering Committee, at its first meeting, agreed to approve a first batch of projects to support the most needy in the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Mali, Malawi, and Niger for an amount of USD 10 million.

11. In recent years, and in line with ARC recommendations, the FAO/AU collaboration has focused primarily on capacity strengthening and direct support to the AU Directorate of Rural Economy and Agriculture, and the NEPAD Planning and Co-ordination Agency/CAADP. Working within the framework of the Regional Co-ordination Mechanism

(RCM), and as co-ordinator and co-chair of the Agriculture Food Security and Rural Development Cluster, FAO has mobilized increased support for the CAADP agenda. Now that the CAADP initiative is moving into its implementation phase for many countries, FAO involvement will be all the more important, given its country-level presence. Initial steps to increase capacity at country and sub-regional levels in policy analysis and support to investment planning include the recent appointment of a senior staff member to the SRO in Addis Ababa with responsibility for liaison with the AU.

12. FAO has focused its work with RECs on those recognized by the AU as the main building blocks of economic integration on the continent. These are: ECOWAS, SADC, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and IGAD. The strengthening of RAF and the establishment/strengthening of the SROs as a part of the decentralization process has had positive results in strengthening partnerships with the RECs, as well as with AU and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). New Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) have been signed with a number of RECs.

13. FAO, primarily through the SRO for Eastern Africa (SFE) in Addis Ababa, works closely with UNECA in a number of technical areas, as well as collaborating on NEPAD/CAADP. FAO is a member of the Regional Co-ordination Mechanism, convened by UNECA and is also a member of the Regional Directors Teams based in Dakar and Johannesburg. FAO is a member of the UN Regional Management Team which has oversight of the Resident Co-ordinators in the region, and overall management of the Country Team process. Collaboration also occurs at the sub-regional level in the humanitarian hubs between the Sub-Regional Emergency Coordination Offices (SREOs) and other UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (UN/IASC) agencies with respect to food security monitoring, analysis and communication work.

14. The primary level of collaboration with the UN System is at the national level, through FAO's participation in the UN Country Team. FAO is seen as a valuable Country Team member that contributes substantively in important ways, such as leading the food security and/or agriculture theme groups, not only among the UN family but also in Development Partner groups.

15. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are an important partner for FAO, as they are able to bring together many of those most in need of support in the realms of food security and agriculture, and bring their perspectives to national and regional dialogue. Indeed, farmers' organizations are very familiar with FAO in many of the African countries. RAF has a Partnerships Officer post, supporting regional and sub-regional umbrella organizations.

d. Resources, office and programme management

16. In addition to these staffing changes, another major innovation has been the full roll-out of the Global Resource Management System (GRMS) in all country offices. Previously, FAO country office administrative and financial information was not part of the headquarters and regional office information system but handled separately. Up-to-date management information is a fundamental element of improved performance and vital for support to country-level operations from all parts of the Organization. The deployment of GRMS helps accomplish this. There is now complete information, for example, on the number of FAO employees, regardless of where their contracts originated. In the past, this had not been a

problem for Regular Programme-funded staff but there was a very incomplete picture regarding project employees, who are far more numerous. It is now possible to monitor much more effectively the financial and administrative actions of the offices, necessary for International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) compliance, as well as for overall performance management of the Organization.

17. The rollout of GRMS was conducted with staff from headquarters, regional offices and in some cases other country offices providing on-the-job training. The launch of GRMS was preceded by pilots in two countries, Nigeria and Benin and from January 2013 to June 2013, the RAF and Global Deployment Teams rolled out GRMS to the 47 countries in the Region. A support team from Kenya, Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo was established using country office staff working with a dedicated team in RAF to support countries once GRMS was rolled out.

18. This information is now part of the enhanced performance management process, along with other elements. Building on work undertaken as part of the IPA, a new system is being put in place to systematically monitor high-level measures of FAO effectiveness at country level. This new performance assessment system uses a combination of three elements. The first is the continuing review of country office finance, administrative and programme management by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). These reports provide a solid basis to gauge performance across a standard set of managerial and accountability compliance indicators, with a focus on eight key areas of internal control. These country audit reports also allow comparison across offices. The second element is analysis of quantitative data from other existing sources that provide performance benchmarks across countries, or groups of countries based on size and complexity of the country and the FAO programme. The third element is more qualitative, and draws heavily on the approach, and lessons learned from a number of recent external assessments and the methodologies used.

19. A skill mix review has been carried out by all regional offices including RAF and its sub-regional offices. The goal of the exercise is to ensure that their staffing structures matched the priorities of the countries and regions and are aligned with the work plans of Strategic Objectives. FAO management has continued work begun in 2012 to strengthen the capacity of regional and sub-regional offices to align staffing with the demands from countries, agreed regional priorities and the reviewed Strategic Framework and emerging work plans.

20. This follows the decentralized office post review undertaken after Council in June 2012. At that time, a series of budget-neutral adjustments to posts were made in all regions, including post establishment and abolition and changes in terms of reference, as reported to Council in December 2012. A further skills mix review was undertaken in regional and sub-regional offices following the June 2013 Conference and subsequent work planning by the Strategic Objective teams. This has gone further than the previous review in aligning technical expertise in regional and sub-regional offices with country and regional priorities on the one hand and the Strategic Objective work plans on the other. This has resulted in the creation of new posts, post abolitions and refocusing of the technical emphasis of posts.

e. An integrated model for programme delivery

21. In January 2012, the Organization decided to transfer operational responsibilities for emergency and rehabilitation programmes from headquarters under the lead of the

Emergency and Rehabilitation Division (TCE) to decentralized offices, under the overall responsibilities of the ADG/Regional Representatives. A time-bound plan for the transfer to decentralized offices was endorsed by the 144th session of the FAO Council implying a gradual transfer of the emergency portfolio, which has been completed by June 2013 in all regions.

22. The decentralization process was carried out in a progressive manner, through a consultative process with decentralized offices, to ensure a smooth transition. Action was taken to review the structure of the recipient offices and gradually build the capacity of the concerned FAO Representations, particularly those with a large volume of operations including through the establishment of Deputy FAO Representative positions in selected countries, as mentioned above.

23. The capacity of the Regional Office for Africa has been strengthened with additional operational staff based in Accra to provide the FAORs in the region with the necessary support and to maintain the capacity to adequately respond to current and future emergency situations. Countries with sizeable programmes have also taken measures to strengthen their operational capacity by hiring additional staff.

24. A new interim model for the distribution of project servicing costs (PSC) of emergency projects has been implemented which will feed into the comprehensive review of the policy regarding project support costs which is being undertaken at the request of the Finance Committee.

25. These changes also relate to the implementation of the new Strategic Objective 5 on Resilience. TCE holds the corporate responsibility to enable decentralized offices to assist member countries to prepare for, and timely respond to food and agriculture threats and crises. A number of other technical divisions at headquarters also play key roles, as do the administrative and financial support service centres and the regional and sub-regional offices. Following the integration of emergency operations into the common programming framework, these units are already working together well. Nevertheless, the new model of decentralized management of the emergency responses will require close monitoring and backup support to decentralized offices over the next 12-18 months until adequate capacities are in place in all locations.

26. Good progress has been made during 2012-13. More remains to be done and further enhancements will be implemented during 2014-15. In particular, strengthened work-planning at country level will provide the platform for improved impact and effectiveness and more strategic resource mobilization. In addition, the implementation of FAO's mobility policy is expected to have a positive impact on the functioning of FAO's decentralized offices.

27. Management looks forward to feedback from Members on progress that has been made and looks forward to providing updates on further progress.

f. Strategic fine-tuning to provide better support to member countries

28. The efforts of the Organization will continue to further fine-tune the structure and functioning of the decentralized offices in Africa. This relates in particular to the location of staff funded by Regular Programme resources, taking full advantage of the technical network

of FAO staff funded by projects, and other adjustments of responsibilities. These changes are based on the recommendations of the Evaluation of the Decentralization in Africa, the Strategic Framework and, more importantly, the experience of the last biennium and the lessons learned. This will be done with a view to finding the optimum solution to issues and challenges on a region-wide basis, with the goal of having an impact on the ground in support of member countries. A number of initiatives are currently planned in this regard.

29. In addition to the Regional Office in Accra and the three Sub-regional Offices (SROs) in Libreville, Harare and Addis Ababa, there is a wealth of FAO technical staff funded by projects located throughout the Region. Many of these are concentrated in a few locations, notably Nairobi, Dakar and Johannesburg where over time hubs have been established for work on resilience, emergency assistance, rehabilitation and donor relations. It is considered necessary to review and undertake some readjustments to the organization, roles and functions of these offices and technical teams.

30. The Regional Office in Accra will need to be reinforced to ensure that it has the capacity to effectively oversee and supervise the FAO Representatives in the region and provide the required support to the FAOR Network, which are essential for the effective and optimal functioning of the Country Offices. The Regional Office will continue to provide, and further strengthen, its support to regional activities and the development of Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs). Technical officers in the Subregional Offices and, in some cases, in the Regional Office, will support technical networks of related FAO staff in the Region, irrespective of their funding sources, drawing on the expertise that exists across the specializations represented. These technical networks will also draw on the knowledge and expertise of other partners in national, regional and international institutions in the Region.

31. Based on the needs and requirements of Central Africa, an effort will be made to fine-tune the technical team in the SRO in Libreville to focus more on natural resources and related technical areas, including forestry, fishery, land and water, as well as investment.

32. While no major change is envisaged for the Sub-regional Office in Harare, it is considered necessary, for achieving further synergy and effectiveness in providing technical support in southern Africa, that the emergency and rehabilitation technical team stationed in Johannesburg be integrated into the SRO.

33. The Sub-regional Office in Addis Ababa, in view of its strategic location, will specialize in its important liaison function with the African Union and also the UN Regional Commission for Africa, and it will also provide support to the Ethiopia country programme. With a view to assisting the SRO to focus its attention on this major responsibility and in order to achieve synergy and effectiveness in providing technical assistance in eastern Africa, the terms of reference may change for some of the technical staff and others may shift their location while maintaining their responsibilities for their technical network.

34. Besides hosting the Country Offices for both Kenya and Somalia, Nairobi has been hosting an increasing number of project-funded technical staff of the Organization who have been brought under the leadership of the FAO Representative. Although the FAO Somalia Office is expected to move to Mogadishu as conditions allow, the substantial technical capacity in Nairobi will retain its specialization in resilience and related areas, in response to

the needs and demands of the member countries, as well as relations with the Nairobi-based donor community. The FAOR Kenya will be the Head of this recognized Resilience Hub.

35. With a similar approach, the resilience technical team located in Dakar, which is currently not a part of the FAO Representation, will be merged with the Country Office and brought under leadership of the FAO Representative. The resulting synergy under one leadership will enable the Office to work more effectively in achieving the desired results and the corporate goals of the Organization.

36. The Country Office in Djibouti has been strengthened to play a larger role with IGAD, with the FAO Representative serving as the first liaison and contact point for the Organization.

37. With these initiatives having a region-wide impact, FAO will be able to better utilize the existing staff, irrespective of their source of funding, to support country and regional objectives and to interact fully with national, subregional and regional institutions. The formalization of this larger network recognizes the role of the existing Sub-regional Offices and the Technical Hubs, each of which has some specializations in technical capacity. With re-focused SROs in Addis Ababa and Libreville, some strengthened country offices, and a reinforced Regional Office in Accra, FAO will be much better placed to provide its support and services to member countries in Africa in conformity with the Strategic Framework.