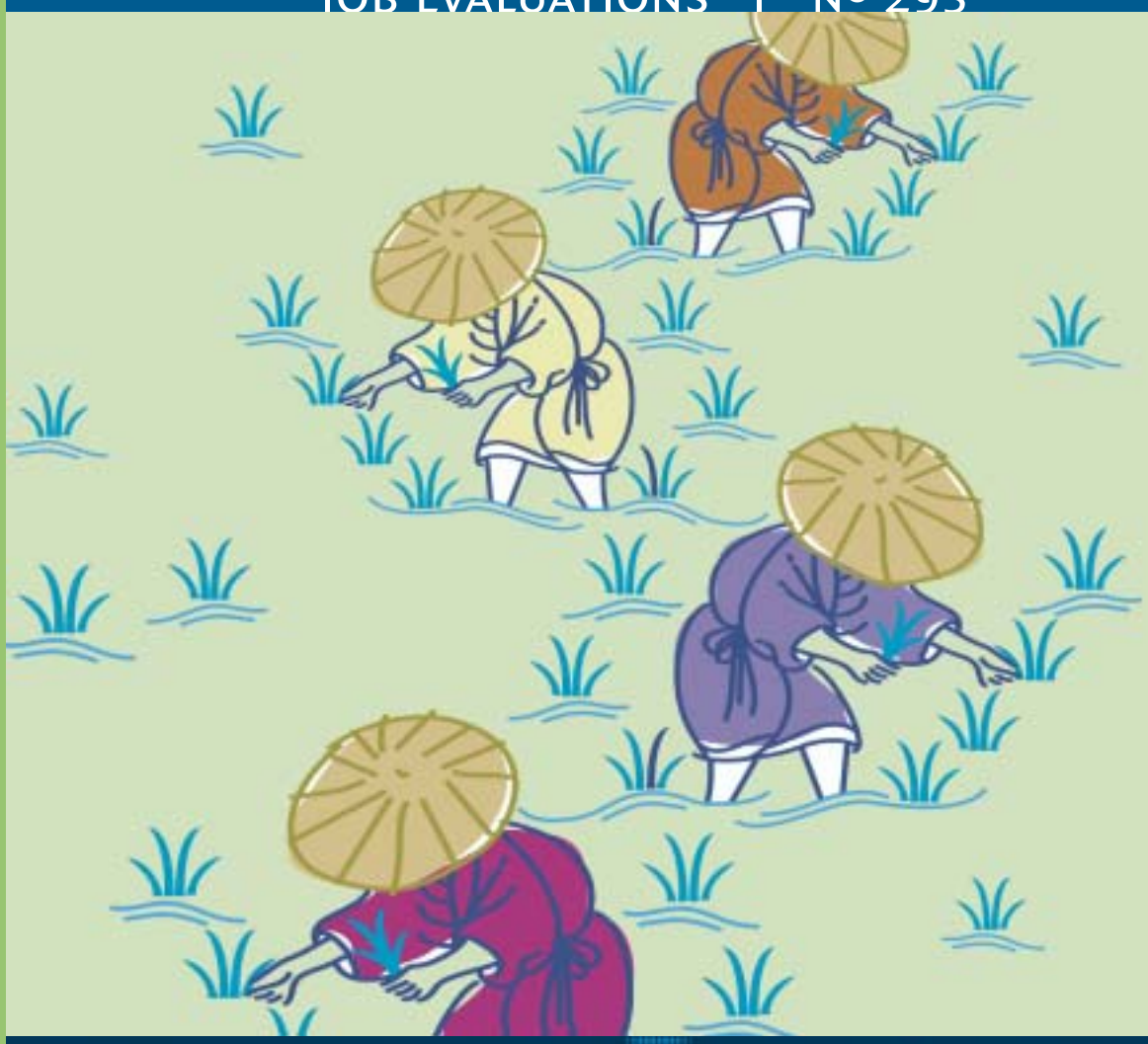

Netherlands -FAO Trust Fund Co-operation

1985 - 2000

POLICY AND OPERATIONS EVALUATION DEPARTMENT | MAY 2003

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Preface

Over recent decades, co-operation with FAO has played an important part in Netherlands rural development policy. Dozens of projects of varying size and scope were funded in such fields as food security, agricultural development and forestry. This extra-budgetary funding was in addition to the Netherlands' regular contribution as a member of FAO. For several years, the Netherlands was in fact the largest contributor of such funding to the organisation. Although many of the individual projects were subjected to evaluations, the overall co-operation was never evaluated. In 1991, as part of an evaluation of the Rural Development Programme, IOB did review projects that were executed through FAO. But an assessment of the overall co-operation with FAO was not on the agenda at that time. In the last few years, a number of statements have appeared about Netherlands development co-operation through multilateral channels. These paint a generally critical picture of the efficiency and effectiveness of such organisations, especially FAO. However, this picture is not really based on broad, in-depth analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. This evaluation tries to fill this gap by an assessment of the co-operation with FAO over recent decades. To that end a representative sample of projects was subjected to thorough analysis by means of research into the files and field studies. In addition, changes in Netherlands policy, and their influence on co-operation with FAO, were assessed. The evaluation reveals a relationship that lacked continuity and direction, with the result that projects' performance was modest and, in particular, opportunities were missed.

Since 2000, the co-operation with FAO has changed. The funding of individual projects, which was such a strong feature of recent decades, has been largely replaced by support at the sectoral level. The era assessed by this evaluation is thus coming to an end. The challenge now is to find a place for the valuable elements of past co-operation in the co-operation of the future. This report contains many findings that can be used to that end.

The evaluation was carried out by Dr Henri Jorritsma, inspector and Deputy Director of IOB, together with Dr Stephen Turner, an external expert based at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Consultants Wiert Flikkema, Roland Rodts, José Blanes Jimenez, Souleymane Gueye and Dennis Wood contributed to a reconstruction of policy history and to field missions. Researchers Els Rijke, Susan Muis, Paul Hospers and Cindy Klompenhouwer undertook analysis of project files and participated in field missions.

The open and constructive attitude of FAO and the Netherlands Permanent Representation to the United Nations agencies in Rome was greatly appreciated during this study. We owe a special word of thanks to Bart van Ommen of FAO and to the staff of the Permanent Representation in Rome for their hospitality and support.
Although assistance was received from many quarters in the course of this study, responsibility for the evaluation rests entirely with IOB.

Rob D. van den Berg
Director, Policy and Operations Evaluation Department.

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Abbreviations

APO	Associate Professional Officer
APS	Agricultural Production Systems
CARP	Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme
CCP	Committee on Commodity Problems
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CILSS	Comité Interétats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans les Pays du Sahel
COAG	Committee on Agriculture
COFI	Committee on Fisheries
COFO	Committee on Forestry
CRPPPF	Centre de Recyclage Permanent pour la Promotion des Programmes Forestiers
CTA	Chief Technical Adviser
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FAOR	FAO Representative
DGIS	Directorate-General for International Co-operation
FFS	Farmer Field School
FNPP	FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme
FSD	Farming Systems Development
GCP	Government Co-operation Programme
GAVIM	good governance, poverty reduction, women in development, institution building and the environment
GIEWS	Global Information and Early Warning System for Food and Agriculture
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department
IPM	integrated pest management
IPNS	integrated plant nutrition systems
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MTF	multilateral trust fund
MTR	mid-term review

na	not applicable
NFAP	National Forest Action Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSRO	Office for Special Relief Operations
PDF	Programme Development Facility
PDR	People's Democratic Republic
PIC	prior informed consent
PPP	People's Participation Programme
PREVINOBA	Programme Reboisement Villageois dans le Nord du Bassin Arachidier
PROGONA	Projet Bois de Village et Reconstitution des Forêts de Gonakies
PROWALO	Projet d'aménagement des forêts et gestion de terroirs villageois du Walo
RAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
RNE	Royal Netherlands Embassy
RWEDP	Regional Wood Energy Development Programme
SARD	Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SOWACO	Soil and Water Conservation
SPFS	Special Programme for Food Security
TA	technical assistance
T&V	training and visit
TCP	Technical Co-operation Programme
TFAP	Tropical Forestry Action Plan
TOR	terms of reference
TOT	training of trainers
TPR	tripartite review
TSARRD	Technical Support to Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
TSS	Technical Support Services
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDGO	United Nations Development Group Office
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UTF	unilateral trust fund
WCARRD	World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
WID	women in development

WRI	World Resources Institute
ZFAP	Zambia Forestry Action Programme

Main findings and issues for the future

Introduction

In the 1990s, the Netherlands and FAO continued to work together to support agricultural development in Africa, Asia and Latin America. During the decade, some US$ 324.4 million of Netherlands development funds were spent on this so-called multi-bilateral co-operation. For some years, the Netherlands was the largest contributor of this type of development funding through FAO. These resources – distinct from the country's assessed contribution to FAO's regular budget as a member country – were held by FAO as trust funds for use in approved projects. Between 1990 and 1999, 110 such projects were undertaken in 50 individual countries. The Netherlands also funded 58 FAO trust fund projects that were regional or global in scope. Despite the volume of this development spending through FAO, the overall trust fund activity has never been reviewed in any detail. A systematic assessment of the character and quality of this substantial joint co-operation, and of its implications for future Netherlands co-operation with FAO and developing countries, is long overdue. The purpose of this evaluation is to undertake that assessment based on a representative sample of projects that was financed by the Netherlands government during the period under consideration.

It is important to recognise that this is not an evaluation of FAO. It is an evaluation of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation. As such, it comments on strengths and weaknesses in the performance of the Netherlands, as well as FAO. It makes less direct comment on the performance of the third party in this co-operation – the governments of the recipient countries. But the institutional and economic circumstances of these countries were an important part of the context in which the activities reviewed here took place.

Main findings

1. Character of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation

During the annual co-operative programme meetings, the Netherlands repeatedly underlined the importance of FAO as an organisation in its own right and with its own (normative) functions. Nevertheless, the trust fund co-operation was basically built on the perception of FAO as an implementing agency facilitating the execution of parts of

Netherlands aid policy. Several efforts were made during those years to reformulate the co-operation with FAO on programmatic terms guided by an explicit overall Dutch policy. However, in the end, all these efforts failed. So one cannot speak of a Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation *programme*. What this evaluation covers is a ten-year assemblage of projects, designed and delivered on the basis of a spectrum of common understanding and interest – but increasingly hindered towards the end of the decade by growing confusion and lack of confidence.

2. Impact

The most fundamental measure of project performance is the extent to which it proves itself relevant to its intended beneficiaries by achieving positive impact for them with respect to poverty alleviation. There are almost no systematic data or studies on which to base an assessment of this impact of the sample projects. The four field missions undertaken as part of this review focused on this aspect of the assessment but found few signs of positive impacts on beneficiaries from the 19 projects that they investigated.

3. Sustainability

In the assessment of the sample projects, considerable attention was paid to the likely sustainability of the outcomes achieved. Overall, the sample trust fund projects showed severe shortcomings with respect to economic, financial and institutional sustainability, with only 31% of the sample achieving 'satisfactory' or better scores in this regard.

4. Achievement of objectives

A crude measure of effectiveness is whether intended outcomes – that is, the project objectives as designed – were achieved. On this measure, the sample projects score fairly well, with 65% assessed as 'satisfactory' or better. Performance on gender is adequate, and on environment it is good. Project characteristics found to be strongly linked with overall effectiveness include good design, good management, and strong participation in design and execution by host authorities and target groups. Overall, this study has found that that there is wide variation in effectiveness between projects of similar types, and between projects undertaken in the same regions and countries. There is an important degree of project specificity influencing scores in this sample: such factors as politics,

personalities, policies, macro economic and climatic events all make a major difference to a project's fortunes.

5. *Efficiency*

In the mid 1990s, growing pressure from its member countries and the deteriorating financial position led FAO to embark on a substantial reform programme covering decentralisation, planning, programming and budgeting. The recent decentralisation has not yet achieved an optimal use of all FAO's human resources; but the organisation can no longer be accused of being a wasteful bureaucracy. Nor are conventional criticisms of FAO inefficiency still fully justified, although there have certainly been many failings during the 1990s trust fund projects reviewed here. The size and global nature of the organisation inevitably impose some transaction costs on its work. So does the fact that it depends on public funding, which is bound to require rigorous accounting scrutiny. Chains of reporting often impose delays, and the time taken for financial reporting to be finalised has been a serious cause of concern (although recently much improved). The fact that this large multilateral bureaucracy was interacting on the projects reviewed here with another large bureaucracy in The Netherlands did nothing to enhance efficiency. Delays on desks in The Hague and Netherlands embassies often created problems for FAO and recipient countries. These difficulties are represented by the fact that only 58% of sample project phases were assessed as 'satisfactory' or better on a broad, composite index of efficiency.

6. *FAO's comparative advantages*

The special value of FAO is rooted in its global, multilateral scope and character, which means that one notable field of FAO's comparative advantage is in activities that cover more than one country. Projects that operated at regional or global scale did significantly better in terms of outcomes and likely impact than those undertaken at national or sub-national levels. Although this comparative strength of FAO as a multilateral organisation was repeatedly acknowledged by the Netherlands, it did not explicitly guide the country's funding through FAO and, due to changes in Netherlands development policy during the 1990s, it has been increasingly ignored. The newly established FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme is only a partial answer to this neglect.

Issues for the future

Overall, one can perceive a trend in FAO back towards the normative activities that are at the heart of its mandate. It is worth recalling that FAO is a specialised UN agency, not a development fund. After decades when extra-budgetary funding overshadowed members' assessed contributions and operational activities such as trust fund projects seemed to eclipse the largely normative work of the Regular Programme, the organisation is now slimming back down towards a greater focus on normative work and the Regular Programme. This trend reflects the growing disappointment with 'classic' projects, the structural and substantive reforms made to the Regular Programme, the evolving demand for more policy-oriented FAO support from developing countries and the continuing insistence by many richer member countries that the organisation focus on its core business. Nevertheless, FAO rightly emphasises the necessary interaction between normative and operational activities. Too much emphasis on them as separate categories of work is unhelpful. FAO support is still often called for at field level, and FAO will always need exposure to field realities. But it is clear that operational work will not continue on the scale of earlier decades.

The challenge to the Netherlands now is to take a clearer look at the mandate, capacity and strategies of FAO, and to define more clearly how they can match up with Netherlands development policy and resources. This evaluation aims to support that assessment. Perhaps, some 20 years after trust fund projects started, it can contribute to a first clear policy statement on how co-operation with FAO can help achieve Netherlands development policy objectives. This greater clarity should extend to the further development of the FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme, which has yet to realise the full potential of this new model of collaboration. Any new policy statement should acknowledge and plan to exploit the comparative advantages that FAO offers, notably in supranational work, normative activities and regional projects. Regional projects have been a particularly successful field of Netherlands-FAO co-operation that current Netherlands policy makes it particularly difficult to fund. There is scope for the Netherlands and FAO to work together in tackling some of the Millennium Development Goals, notably the first of those goals that deals with eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. Water and climate change are other fields of mutual interest. In all their joint endeavours, the two partners need to do more to achieve accurate and feasible planning and to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation.

1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the objectives of this evaluation. Next, the approach, key questions and methodology are presented. Finally, the main problems that confronted the evaluators are mentioned.

1.1 Objectives

In addition to its regular assessed contribution to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Netherlands government has made considerable additional voluntary funding available over recent decades for specific technical co-operation projects. This type of relationship between a funding bilateral donor and an executing multilateral organisation is known as multi-bilateral or trust fund co-operation. In fact, the Netherlands was for a long time FAO's largest contributor in this field. Although many individual projects have been the subject of tripartite evaluation (by recipient, donor and executing agency), there has never been a comprehensive evaluation of the entire trust fund co-operation with FAO. In recent years, however, changes in Netherlands development co-operation (delegation of decision-making to embassies, cuts in core budgets, deferment of routine policy consultations and a critical "quick review" of aid via United Nations (UN) channels in 1999), have led the Policy and Operations Evaluation department (IOB) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to undertake a thorough evaluation of this kind. The primary concern of such an evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of Netherlands-FAO co-operation, as much as possible, from the perspective of the recipients (in particular people and institutions in developing countries). Although this exercise is not an evaluation of FAO as such but only of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation, it may also serve as a contribution to FAO's initiative to improve quality and increase efficiency, which began with its decentralisation process in the mid 1990s. It should also provide an input for future policy discussions between FAO and the Netherlands government, in particular with respect to their recently established FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme (FNPP) and its further development. The recent start of the new partnership, of course, excludes it from this evaluation. However its preparation in the late 1990s has had at least some impact on developments in the trust fund co-operation during the period under evaluation. This makes it useful to offer a general assessment of its preparatory phase.

1.2 Scope: from projects to partnership

With regard to analysis of the policy dialogue with the FAO, this evaluation covers the period between 1985 (the year in which the Netherlands established its Rural Development Sector Programme) and 2000. Where the analysis of the project portfolio is concerned, however, the evaluation has confined itself to the 1990-1999 period due to the fact that the available project information prior to 1990 is rather scanty. Besides, it is fair to assume that the 1990 project portfolio at least partially reflects policy developments between 1985 and 1990. The volume of the portfolio is substantial. Total expenditure during the 1990-1999 period was US$ 324,4 million, split among 168 projects of widely varying scale and duration.[1] All projects that ended or started in the period 1990-1999 are included if as at least one entire phase of the project, with its own objectives, was completed within that time span. In 2000 hardly any new projects were approved. That year can be considered as the transition phase between the old trust fund co-operation on a project basis and the new form of co-operation, which focuses on the Partnership Programme.

To obtain an overview of total Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation during the 1990-1999 period, it was necessary to combine data from a variety of sources. The annual financial reports of the FAO were taken as the basis. They provided an overview of the entire annual income of the organisation, broken down by donor and by project. A new database was constructed by supplementing this information with data derived from the project documentation held at the Netherlands Permanent Representation to the United Nations Agencies in Rome and from the DGIS project database (MIDAS). This overall inventory showed that Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation has provided support for projects in a wide range of fields. The database offered the opportunity to analyse the composition of the total project portfolio in terms of sectoral and geographical characteristics and was also used as a basis for the selection of the particular countries, sectors and projects for more detailed analysis.

When the analysis is extended from the focus decade of the 1990s up to 2002, it becomes obvious that the number of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation projects is rapidly declining. There were 80 such projects operating in 1995. In September 2002, there were 48 ongoing (excluding the growing number of emergency projects executed through FAO). On current commitments there will be only five non-emergency projects running in 2004. (Presumably some new projects will be started by 2004, and there will be a second tranche of the FNPP.) Many of the more recent projects are smaller and of shorter dura-

1 Emergency aid and APO (Associate Professional officer) programmes were excluded.

tion than the 'classic' trust fund projects of the 1990s and earlier, which typically ran for about five years and had budgets exceeding € 1m. Since 2001, the FNPP has replaced individual projects as the only mode of trust fund support from central resources in The Hague.

1.3 Key questions

As indicated in the Terms of Reference (TOR)(see Annex 2), the aim of this evaluation was to assess the performance of the Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation. The evaluation was intended to focus on the policy relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the activities undertaken through this co-operation.

In order to achieve a systematic assessment of the performance of Netherlands-FAO co-operation, concepts from the logical framework model were applied in the analysis of sample projects. Inputs were considered as the resources put into a project, such as money, staff, facilities and technical expertise. Outputs were seen as the services or products that were achieved. They are a quantifiable (though not always measured) result of the project's activities. Outcomes refer to the changes brought about by the project. Finally, the longer-term consequences of the project are considered to be its impact. Typically, desired impacts refer to goal attainment. In most cases it was difficult to obtain a clear insight into the impact of the projects reviewed here.

Despite these difficulties, the most fundamental concern in examining the **relevance** of the trust fund co-operation should be whether the intended positive impact, or goal, has been attained. During its execution, the approach of this evaluation evolved beyond the original concern with relevance in the TOR, which was restricted to policy relevance. Using the strict logical framework terminology, relevance is a relational concept, qualifying the relation between outcomes and impact. This means that relevance is the extent to which outcomes lead to impacts that are normally defined in terms of overall development goals. One can argue that the question of the relevance of the projects from the perspective of the priorities and needs of the recipient population in fact reflects the impact question. The problem here, of course, is one of attribution. Furthermore, impact studies and empirical data on impact are very hard to find. Nevertheless, the study tried to find signs of sample projects' impact during its four field missions (sections 1.4, 6.2).

Interpretation of the relevance concept in terms of policy, as envisaged in the TOR, did not turn out to be very useful. Policies on all sides are formulated in such a way that irrelevance is hardly imaginable. Nevertheless, the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD uses a similar interpretation: "to what extent are the objectives and mandate of

the program still relevant? Are the activities and outputs of the program consistent with its mandate and plausibly linked to the attainment of objectives and the intended impacts and effects?"[2] In earlier IOB evaluations (e.g. Bolivia, Co-financing with the World Bank) the threefold definition of relevance to Netherlands, partner agency and recipient country policy was also used. In IOB's co-financing study policy relevance "refers to the degree to which the co-financed activities reflect the priorities of the Government of the Netherlands and of the respective recipient country and the extent to which they address the problems of the recipient country."[3]

The relationship between outputs and outcomes is seen as **effectiveness**. Issues with regard to effectiveness related both to the trust fund co-operation as a whole and to the effectiveness of the projects both at individual level and aggregated in the various sectors. The evaluation of effectiveness investigates to what extent their effectiveness depended on the quality of the FAO as an executing agency, as opposed to other causative factors such as quality of design, quality of Netherlands involvement, local circumstances, and so on. By addressing the issue of the effectiveness of the trust fund co-operation, the evaluation tries to establish whether its aims were actually achieved. Here, once again, the problem is one of different levels. In principle, answers can be sought at the level of individual projects, of groups of projects relating to specific sectors and of the trust fund co-operation as a whole. Based on an analysis at individual project level, the evaluation comments on the effectiveness of projects relating to each sector. This allows comparisons to be made between the different sectors and may offer a basis for a conclusion on the co-operation as a whole. Special attention is given to how effective projects have been in achieving aims relating to gender and environment.
The evaluation adopted a broad interpretation of effectiveness, based on the belief that simply measuring the extent to which outcomes were achieved is inadequate. Outcomes that are not sustainable cannot achieve the intended positive impacts that are a project's ultimate goal. Objective and accurate assessment of sustainability is almost as hard as the measurement of impact. Nevertheless, it was decided to try to assess the economic, financial and institutional sustainability of the sample projects' outcomes as part of the overall assessment of these projects' effectiveness (section 7.5). This meant that most projects' effectiveness scores were lower than they would have been if effectiveness had

2 DAC, 2002. Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results based Management. Paris: OECD.
3 IOB, 1999. Co-financing between the Netherlands and the World Bank. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p. 9.

just been measured in terms of achievement of outcomes. It is harder to assure that outcomes are sustainable than simply to accomplish the outcomes themselves.
The project's **efficiency** determines the relationship between its inputs and its outputs. Outputs are the basic requirement for the achievement of outcomes, which are the effects or results of the outputs. Issues with regard to efficiency were dealt with on the level of individual projects, with respect to project cycle management and in relation to the way in which the policy dialogue was organised by the Netherlands and the FAO. Questions about efficiency of individual projects relate to budgets, cost-effectiveness, comparative weight of different budget-lines, changes that occurred in these during implementation and what conclusions can be reached on this. Although efficiency indicators may vary between one type of project and the next, an effort was made to reach general conclusions on each sector.
With respect to project cycle management, questions that were raised relate to how project preparation was organised within the FAO and whether the procedures offered adequate safeguards for the quality of proposals (referring, for example, to the role of headquarters and regional and country offices). Special attention was given to adequate quality safeguards in relation to crosscutting themes (environment, gender) and multidisciplinarity. The issues of the quality of project monitoring and evaluation and reporting were raised, and especially the question of whether sufficient feedback of the conclusions into implementation and policy was guaranteed.
With respect to the policy dialogue the evaluation considers how consultations between the FAO and the Netherlands were organised in view of the stated objectives and whether they helped to improve quality.
Answers to the questions concerning efficiency almost automatically led to the more fundamental question of the efficiency of FAO as the executing agency. Although the evaluation offered no scope for any well-founded comparison with alternative methods of implementation, it was possible to examine to what extent and how persuasively the trust fund co-operation demonstrated the specific values of the FAO as formulated by the Netherlands government.
Following the review of the institutional and policy framework that is presented in Part I of this study (chapters 2 – 4), a detailed assessment of sample projects is presented in Part II. In that assessment, following an introduction to the Netherlands-FAO trust fund portfolio (chapter 5), the sequence of analysis follows the set of key questions just outlined. It begins with what matters most: the relevance of these projects, defined in terms of attainment of their intended positive impacts (chapter 6). It goes on to assess effectiveness: the achievement of sustainable outcomes (chapter 7). Then, it identifies operational

reasons for these projects' performance, by assessing their efficiency (chapter 8). An overview is provided in chapter 9, using a composite index of effectiveness and efficiency.

1.4 Methods

Three types of activity were undertaken in order to collect the necessary information for this evaluation. In the first place, an extensive inventory was made of all the relevant non project-related documentation from FAO as well as the Netherlands from 1985 onwards, including parliamentary documentation. This inventory was used as the basis for the reconstruction of the policy history with respect to Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation.[4] Moreover, it gave guidance to the second type of activity, which was a series of in depth interviews with a large number of stakeholders on both sides. The results of these activities are presented in Part I (chapters 2, 3 and 4) of the evaluation.

The third type of activity formed the core of the evaluation. It comprised an in-depth desk study of documentation (identification, formulation, approval, progress and evaluation reports) of a sample of projects. The procedure for selecting the projects was as follows. The total project portfolio was split up according to specific sectors. It showed that the vast majority of projects fell into five sectoral categories: food security and nutrition, agricultural policy and production, pest management, forests and forestry, and institutional development. All the projects in these five categories were used to form the population from which the sample would be drawn. Out of this project population a 45% weighted sample was taken, reflecting the division of the population between these five sectors. The sampling also took into consideration the distribution of the population among continents (a few operated worldwide) and the availability of documentation.

This process initially resulted in the selection of 76 projects out of the total population of 177 projects. However, during the desk study it was found that the population of 177, although based on the official accounts of FAO, still contained errors due to wrong project numbers and intermittent changes in project titles. In fact it consisted of 168 projects. Deletion of these errors reduced the sample to 67 projects (40% of the total population).[5] Finally only 58 projects (35%) turned out to be assessable due to the fact that, for the other nine projects, crucial documentation was lacking. In the desk study of these projects, the project phase was taken as the unit for most analysis. The 58 projects assessed comprised 86 project phases in total (section 1.5). The main argument was that several projects started well before the evaluation period, having only a second or third

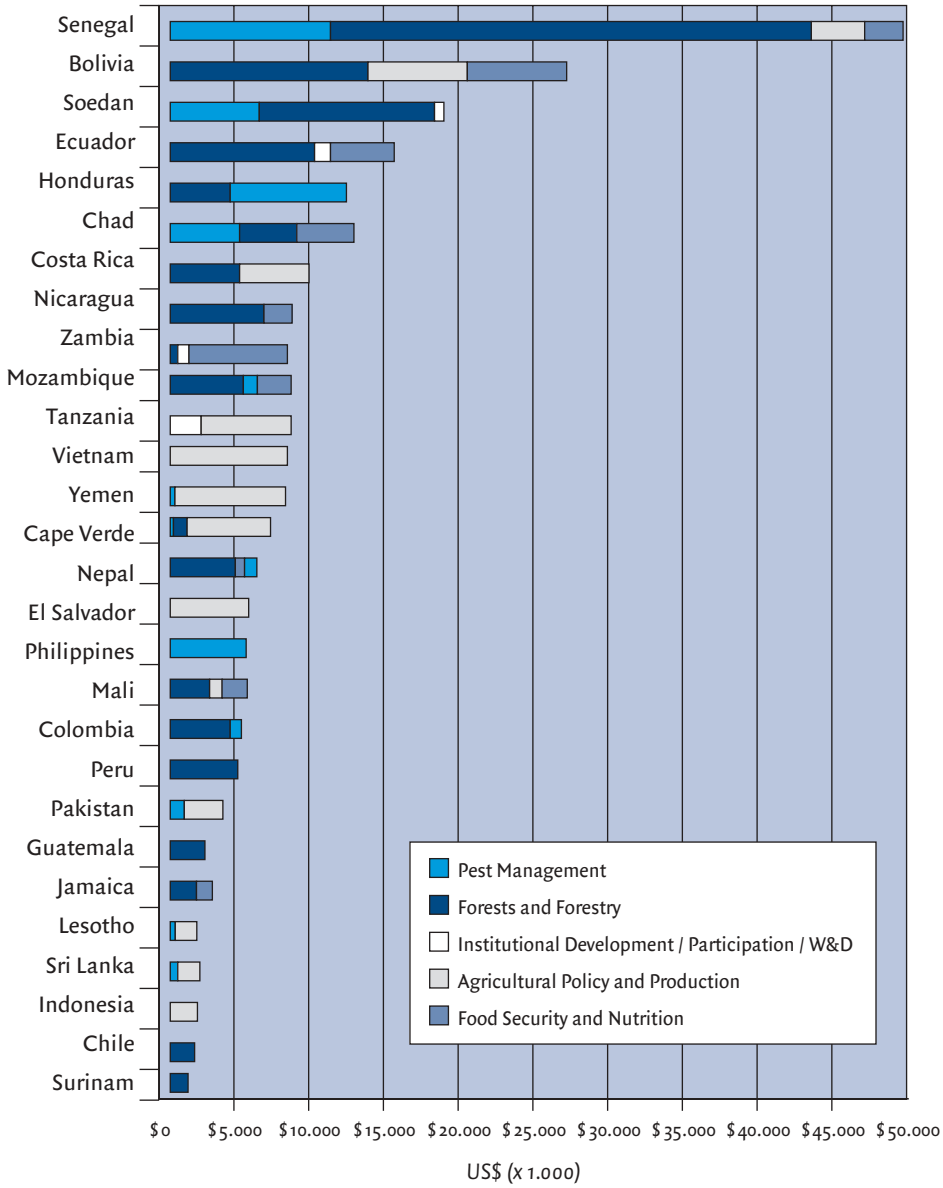
4 See References.
5 See Annex 4.

phase within the margins of the evaluation period, while others started in this period but were continued in new phases well beyond the evaluation period. The desk study concentrated on aspects of the background to the selection of the project, the decision-making process, project objectives, methods of implementation, the timetable (and any changes in it), and project results. It thus investigated the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the projects. In order to work as systematically as possible an assessment form including a project rating system was developed.[6] In the design of this form, methodological inputs from FAO's own evaluation department were used.

The desk studies were supplemented by field studies. The Terms of Reference for these field studies were largely based on relevant issues emanating from the desk study. Although the field studies involved various methods of investigation (including interviews with representatives of the recipients and project staff and observation of particular project results), it would be unrealistic to expect that real insight could be gained into the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the whole portfolio of projects in the selected countries in the short time available for each mission. The field studies did, however, produce a deeper understanding of the quality of the selected projects from the point of view of the recipients. The primary concern of this evaluation being the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects from the perspective of the recipients (in particular people in developing countries), the field studies were of critical importance for getting a better understanding of these perceptions. They made it possible to judge the reputation, image and profile of the FAO in developing countries and regions. The projects visited were assessed in the light of the problems in a particular country/region. The issues examined were the relevance of the projects to the country concerned or sections of the population involved, the extent to which the latter were involved in formulating and implementing the project, and the institutional integration of the project. Attention was also paid to the extent to which the FAO's regional or country office played a part in enhancing quality at different points in the project cycle and how technical backstopping, monitoring and evaluation were organised.
Apart from efficiency considerations (i.e. focus on geographic concentration of projects), major factors in the choice of countries for field studies were the size of the project portfolio and the sectoral distribution of projects in each country. As a result field research was carried out in Senegal, Zambia, Bolivia and South East Asia.
The field studies performed three main functions:

6 See annex 3.

Figure 1 Major recipients of Netherlands-FAO trust funds during study period
(This table excludes regional and global projects.)



- to the limited extent possible, they enabled the evaluation team to hear what project beneficiaries themselves had to say about the performance of the activities under review;
- more generally, they provided the best opportunity that the study had to assess the impact of projects. The findings made in this regard are summarised in section 6.2 below;
- finally, data were gathered during the field missions to complement what was already known about sample projects undertaken in the countries visited during the missions. After each field mission, and as part of the mission report, a check was then made on the desk assessments already done on these projects (Annex 3). Although this verification exercise generally found the desk assessments to have been reasonably accurate, some minor adjustments were made to the scores on the basis of observation during the field mission. In particular, scores on sustainability were often revised downwards.

The field missions suffered some limitations. First, it often proved difficult to find out much about projects that ended some years ago. Staff had moved on, institutional structures had been dismantled, absorbed or revised, and direct evidence of project activities on the ground was often hard to identify or to attribute (section 6.2). Secondly, the limited time and resources of the field missions meant that it was not possible to go into great detail on each of the sample projects that had taken place in the countries in question. The mission to Senegal, for instance, had three weeks in which to review seven projects, several of them comprising more than one phase.

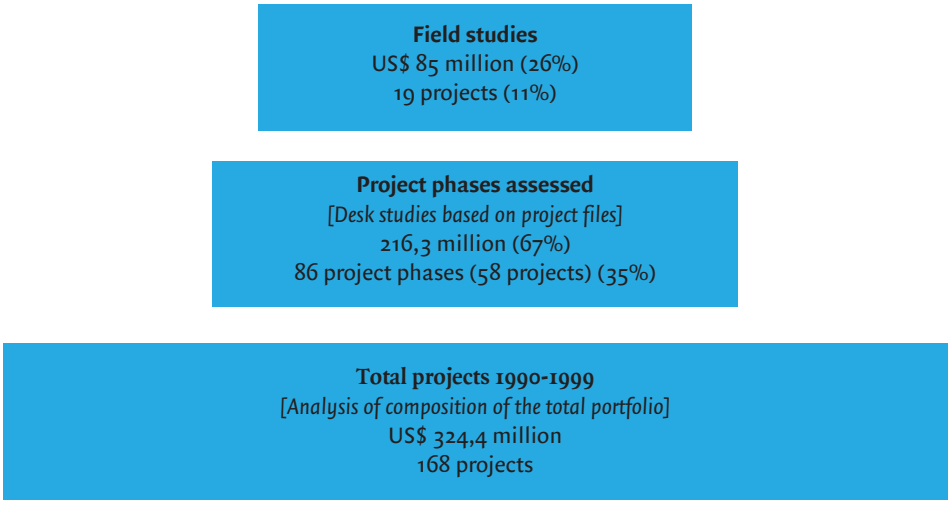
The selection of field study sites reflected the intercontinental distribution of the entire project portfolio and ensured a spread of projects between the sectors selected for this evaluation. The project portfolio in the countries selected consisted of 19 projects (11% of the entire portfolio) involving expenditure over the 1990-1999 period totalling US$ 85 million (26%).

In addition, an analysis was made of the Programme Development Facility (PDF), which gave an impression both of the Netherlands contribution to project preparation and of those initiatives that never produced a completed project. Tripartite evaluations conducted by the FAO, the Netherlands and the recipient party/ies were also reviewed, to assess the quality of project monitoring and evaluation.

The results of both desk and field studies are presented in Part II of the evaluation.

In an evaluation of this size, particular care must be taken to ensure that the results are representative. This is all the more so when the total population of projects on which the

Figure 2. Structure of sample



evaluation is expected to reach conclusions exhibits such sectoral and geographical diversity. The projects were located in over 50 different countries and in some cases spanned regions of the world. In addition, some of them were global projects. To add to the difficulty, the scale of project funding varied from less than US$ 50,000 to more than US$ 10 million. Although an attempt has been made to order the total project portfolio by sector, it must be stressed that the projects funded under the different sectors were still extremely varied. For example, the heading 'agricultural policy and production' covered such diverse matters as agricultural extension, support to fertiliser deliveries and farming systems development. It was therefore an ambitious undertaking to attempt to reach any general conclusions on the entire trust fund co-operation. Even so, in designing the evaluation an attempt was made to create the best possible conditions to enable representative conclusions to be reached. The scope of the various sub-studies, their weighted distribution over sectors and countries and the extra data collection via interviews permit the identification of patterns, if not for the entire trust fund co-operation then certainly for the individual sectors. The fact that the field studies relate to projects that were also included in the desk studies meant that it was possible in a number of cases to check whether the patterns identified in the files could be observed and confirmed on the ground. It is fair to conclude that the sample projects and the findings drawn from their

analysis are representative of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation during the period under review.

1.5 Methodological problems

The most important (and partly unforeseen) methodological problems that arose during the execution of the evaluation were the absence or poor quality of project documentation, and the extreme diversity of the project portfolio.

The analysis of the projects in the sample was based on all the relevant reports and correspondence available in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague, the Permanent Representation in Rome, Netherlands Embassies and FAO Headquarters. The collection of these documents was not only time-consuming, because many documents were not available in The Hague, but also often turned out to be disappointing because crucial documents could never be traced. Especially for the projects that continued after 1996 (that is after the delegation of project management to the Embassies) there is a substantial lack of information. Although many of the files concerning these projects were partly in the different Embassies, partly in The Hague, they were almost never complete. In particular pre-1996 files were often completely lost. Furthermore, the DGIS information system, MIDAS, turned out not to be very trustworthy with respect to important pieces of information about project management. For example, it turned out that reference to evaluations in the system merely meant that they were once planned (probably in the memorandum of approval), not that they were actually executed.

In particular the lack of key documents such as the project document, the memorandum of approval and above all project reviews and evaluations turned out to be an important handicap in the execution of this evaluation.

As was explained in section 1.4, the final sample for this study comprised 58 projects. However, many of these projects went through more than one phase. Data were not always available for all known phases, and some phases were excluded from the study because they fell outside the period under review. In total, the analysis of the 58 projects covers 86 phases. It was therefore necessary to decide whether the study should assess projects or phases of projects. Much of the relevant documentation – notably proposals, budgets, appraisals and evaluation reports – was produced separately for each phase. Evaluations that give equal attention to all phases of a project are very rare, although it is usual for evaluations of later phases to make some reference to the experience of earlier phases. In many ways, each phase of a project is a distinct enterprise. There are often gaps between phases. There may be substantial turnover of staff from one phase to the next. The plans for each phase are separately formulated and may take the project in new

directions. It was therefore decided to use the project phase, and not the project, as the basic unit of analysis. The tables and discussion in Part II of this report therefore refer to the characteristics of project phases.

It could be reasonably expected that multi-phase projects would show steadily improving performance from the first to the last phase. While there is some evidence of this, the common differences in design and targets between successive phases of the same project, as well as many other factors, mean that such progress is by no means universal. There is not even a statistically significant difference between the scores on sustainability that are achieved by final phases and by earlier phases (section 7.5).

The assessment form developed for the analysis of the projects was based on the assumption that for most projects one or more evaluation or review documents would be available, given the fact that reference was made to these evaluations in the MIDAS data base. However, this was unfortunately not always the case. For some projects the only evaluative sources of information were back to office reports of Chief Technical Advisers (CTAs) and correspondence between the different stakeholders. This led to the exclusion of some projects from further analysis. In other cases, any assessment beyond the output level was hardly possible. In many cases, judgments on project performance had to be based on subjective interpretation of the available information. Bad record keeping over the last 15 years may have had some influence on the overall assessment of the project portfolio in that exceptionally poorly documented projects were left out.

Annex 3 gives further details on methodology and how the assessment form was used. It emphasises that, although professional estimates had to be made in many aspects of the project assessments, consistency and accuracy were enhanced by keeping the assessment team small; assigning a senior evaluator to check each assessment made; and double-checking assessments for 19 of the sample projects during the four field missions. Although the field mission checks led to some minor adjustments, they generally verified the findings of the desk assessments.

1.6 Final remarks

The exercise is not an evaluation of FAO. Nor is it a series of full-fledged evaluations of the sample projects. Many (although not all) of these projects underwent evaluations during their execution. The findings of those evaluations were a key input to this study, which did not have the resources to investigate each project in detail. As these tripartite exercises were carried out under the supervision of the stakeholders, a word of caution is due with respect to their independence. As much as possible the findings of these evaluations were checked with information from other sources, including the field missions.

What this study tries to do is to trace, explain and assess the results of the development co-operation relationship between FAO and the Netherlands. To help assess the experience of the 1990s, reference is made to the history of the relationship in earlier decades. To make the study more useful for current decision-making, the most recent developments are also assessed to the extent possible.

Part I The institutional and policy framework

2 FAO: organisation and trust funds

This chapter gives a short description of the origin and character of FAO. It also highlights the organisational changes that took place during the 1990s and analyses the financial developments during those years because of their impact on the organisation's performance in general and on Netherlands-FAO co-operation in particular.

2.1 Origin and mandate

The FAO was established as a specialised agency of the UN on 16 October 1945 during the first session of the FAO Conference in Quebec City, Canada. In 1951 FAO headquarters was moved from Washington DC to Rome, Italy. Today FAO employs 3,700 people worldwide, comprising 1,400 professional and 2,300 general service staff. It maintains five regional offices, five sub regional offices, five liaison offices and 78 country offices. Although FAO is not a development institution, a considerable part of FAO's working programme is geared towards developmental issues. In particular, technical co-operation with developing countries is an important role of the organisation.
The biannual Conference, attended by all member countries, is the highest governing body of FAO. It constitutes the main forum in which the overall policy of FAO is discussed and decided. Between conferences an elected Council of 49 member countries acts as an interim governing body. Select and open Committees operate to conduct to a large extent the operations of the Council (and the Conference), the most important ones being the committees dealing with Programme, Finance and Constitutional and Legal matters. Membership of the committees rotates among the member countries. The Council also has five committees covering the activities of the organisation, each non-elective and open to all member countries. These are the Committees on Commodity Problems (CCP), on Fisheries (COFI), on Forestry (COFO), on Agriculture (COAG) and on World Food Security (CFS).

The overall aims of the member countries establishing the organisation, as formulated in the preamble to its Constitution, were:

- raising levels of nutrition and standards of living of the peoples under their respective jurisdictions;
- securing improvements in the efficiency of the production and distribution of all food and agricultural products;
- bettering the condition of the rural populations;
- and thus contributing towards an expanding world economy and ensuring humanity's freedom from hunger.

In article 1 of the Constitution three main functions of the organisation are mentioned:
- collection, analysis and dissemination of information;
- promotion of research and policy at national and international level, and
- provision of technical assistance to governments on request.

In a new strategic framework (2000-2015) the following three interrelated global goals that the organisation is specifically supposed to help member countries to achieve, were reconfirmed:[7]
- Access of all people at all times to sufficient nutritionally adequate and safe food, ensuring that the number of chronically undernourished people will be reduced by half by no later than 2015.
- The continued contribution of sustainable agriculture and rural development, including fisheries and forestry, to economic and social progress and the well being of all.
- The conservation, improvement and sustainable utilization of natural resources, including land, water, forest, fisheries and genetic resources for food and agriculture.

A key feature of the new Strategic Framework is its focus on five overarching strategies:
- contributing to the eradication of food insecurity and rural poverty and addressing food, agriculture and natural resource emergencies;
- promoting, developing and reinforcing policy and regulatory frameworks for food, agriculture, fisheries and forestry;
- creating sustainable increases in the supply and availability of food and other products from the crop, livestock, fisheries, and forestry sector;
- supporting the conservation, improvement, and sustainable utilization of land, water, fisheries, forest, and genetic resources for food and agriculture;

7 The strategic framework for FAO: 2000-2015. Rome: FAO, 2000.

- improving data availability and information exchange, monitoring, assessing and analysing the global state of food and nutrition, agriculture, fisheries and forestry, and promoting a central place for food security on the international agenda.

The Strategic Framework, although not fundamentally deviating from the original objectives of the organisation, quite clearly shows the influence of a new paradigm for sustainable development that emerged in the early 1990s. This paradigm was based on the outcomes of a series of international conferences and summits convened in the nineties that emphasised the need for action to combat poverty and environmental degradation. The most important of these, according to FAO, was the World Food Summit of 1996, which resulted in a Declaration in which participating governments pledged "our political will and our common and national commitment to achieve food security for all and to an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015". The World Food Summit Declaration represents a commitment by countries to work on their own initiative and in concert to achieve its goals. However, FAO's role is also clearly underlined in that the organisation is supposed to assist countries in the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action in ways that fall within its original mandate and to monitor overall progress in achieving the stated goals. In addition FAO has significant responsibilities to assist countries in implementing those chapters of Agenda 21 adopted by the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) of 1992 as they relate to agriculture and food. Most recently FAO has related its mandate explicitly to the so-called Millennium Goals, of which the first refers to poverty alleviation and freedom from hunger.

2.2 Decentralisation of FAO

During the mid 1990s, FAO came under pressure from member countries to embark on a process of reform in order to increase efficiency and improve management. Moreover, several years of a decreasing or zero-growth budget forced the organisation to reflect on its functioning, and more specifically on how to refocus its activities on priorities and areas where it has a comparative advantage given its original mandate. In an effort to adapt the organisation to the new external environment, FAO embarked in 1994 on an extensive reform of its structures, policies and programmes [8].

8 Reforming FAO: into the new millennium. Rome: FAO 2000.

The three main aspects of these efforts to change FAO were decentralisation in the 1994-97 period; strategic planning from 1997 to 1999; and changes to programming and budgeting which have accompanied the strategic planning process.
Conscious of criticism that it was a top-heavy bureaucracy, the organisation sought to slim down its operating costs world wide and to move more of its technical and operating capacity to existing and additional regional and sub regional offices. Overall, the objectives of the FAO decentralisation that began in 1995 were:

- to bring the Organisation's technical and operational expertise much closer to those countries and regions where the need is greatest;
- to reduce costs; and
- to make the best use of national capacities.[9]

It is not the objective of this evaluation to assess the execution of the reform process. However, some of its components, i.e. the decentralisation, had an impact on Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation and will therefore be touched upon when necessary. Technical staff from various departments at the Rome headquarters were relocated to regional offices. There they took greater responsibility for the support of national and regional level projects being undertaken in their region, and also for some of the general thematic work of the organisation. Meanwhile, as a second stage of FAO decentralisation the organisation's representatives (FAORs) in countries became the budget holders for projects undertaken at national and sub national levels. However, while regional offices have seen some increase in budgets, staff and other resources to match their increasing responsibilities under decentralisation, this has been less true for FAO country offices. There, decentralisation has significantly increased the planning, management, budgetary and administrative load on representatives and their handful of staff, without a concomitant increase in operating resources. The annual reports of the FAOR in Bolivia, for instance, frequently refer to "heavy pressures" to deal with the many functions of the office. The management of the project cycle for the many activities is an arduous task which fuels a vicious circle: staff members who are overburdened with administrative tasks, which reduces their capacity to make a substantive contribution and obtain a decisive role among donors at the policy level. Because of the limited professional presence, supervision and monitoring of ongoing projects suffered and the country office never realised its originally intended role as international centre of excellence with respect to agriculture. In many countries, this role is played by the World Bank in the context of agricultural sector loans. Meanwhile, the small number of Rome-based

9 Reforming FAO: into the new millennium. Rome: FAO 2000, p. 14.

planning officers who used to handle most project management have now been replaced by a larger number of FAORs and their support staff. Many of these officers do not have the experience that the old planning officers had acquired.

The latest stage in the decentralisation to country level is the introduction of annual and multi-annual planning of FAO activities at country level. So far this has only been done at some of the larger country offices. The FAORs are faced with a fundamental problem here. Taking the example of Bolivia again, the FAOR heads a relatively small technical assistance office. All its projects have been funded by external donor agencies, the Netherlands being the most important one. Its dependence on these external resources to fund field activities naturally has a considerable impact on both the size and composition of its programme. The composition of projects and programmes is basically a reflection of the availability of funds and the priorities set by the funding agencies. Due to its lack of control over the necessary funds, FAO cannot prepare integrated country programmes, which could ensure co-ordinated and focused planning and implementation of projects and programmes in accordance with the agency's particular international comparative advantages. It is of concern, however, that FAO seldom prepares explicit country strategies on the optimum exploitation of its comparative advantages in relation to the country's needs. The field mission reports indicate an agency operating very much on an *ad hoc* basis, with insufficient overall guidance concerning the fields and aspects of agriculture where its assistance is most needed and where use of its global networks could have the greatest impact.

The absence of a country strategy implies that FAO does not always have a strong profile in the donor community in the countries visited during this study and, especially, that it may not be seen as a strategic partner by the national authorities. In general FAO seems not to pursue its basic comparative advantage: the capacity to link the most advanced and up-to-date international experience to assistance for capacity-building and innovative policy-making at country level. As a consequence, in most countries, the national authorities seldom draw on FAO's expertise for the preparation of general agricultural policies. For instance, in Bolivia, Thailand and the Philippines the FAO is never called upon for policy issues in the field of agriculture. In other countries, like Senegal, the situation is slightly better. Here, after many years of support from the technical co-operation budget, FAO has been able to gain the position of technical adviser to the Senegalese authorities in sectors like food security or forestry. In Zambia, the field mission found that FAO occupied a respected position as policy adviser and interface between the Ministry of Agriculture and donor agencies.

Apart from the predictable stress and occasional tensions between Rome and the field that the decentralisation has caused for FAO, the results for project planning and support have been uneven. For example, the regional office in Bangkok has some 65 professional officers, of whom about 40 are engaged in technical support to projects and policy. However, depending on the sector, supervision and support of some activities are still shared with Rome. Integrated pest management (IPM), for instance, still receives much of its support from Rome, whereas wood energy and forestry activities are largely handled in Bangkok. Meanwhile, authority (especially budgetary authority) does not appear to have been decentralised as much as responsibility. Country and regional offices still have to seek clearance on many issues from Bangkok and Rome respectively. The organisation's planning framework also remains partially centralised. The plans of its national and regional offices are required to conform to the priorities and formats of the global organisation, notably its Medium Term Plan.

2.3 FAO's normative and operational activities

From its beginnings, FAO has had to collect and analyse information, to promote national and international policies and research agendas, and to provide direct technical assistance to governments in the areas of nutrition, food and agriculture (including forestry and fisheries). There have always been both a normative and an operational dimension to FAO's mandate. As a consequence there has always been a debate between FAO and member countries as to what should be the balance between these two basic dimensions of the mandate and how to best structure the organisation to meet them. This debate has been on the agenda of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation as well, and continues into the present.

Much, but not all of FAO's normative work is funded by member countries through their contributions to the organisation's regular budget and programme (section 2.4). The Netherlands, like many other donors, continues to emphasise the central role of normative work in the mandate of FAO, being a specialised agency of the United Nations rather than a development fund. In their extra-budgetary contributions, too, the Netherlands and some other countries have been placing increasing emphasis on support to normative work. It should be noted here that the Netherlands, for instance, has played an important role, through the provision of trust funds, in making possible the international negotiations for the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, when such negotiations, responding to the member countries' call to draft a new normative framework, were not covered under regular budget allocations. Meanwhile, throughout the whole period under review the distinction between the

normative and operational functions of FAO has led to confusion and debate amongst the member countries as well as within FAO itself. In order to bring some clarity in the debate, in 1998, FAO published a booklet describing what according, to the organisation, is meant by "normative work".[10] According to this publication, the work that FAO carries out under its mandate falls broadly into six categories, five of which may be described as normative and one, the provision of technical assistance, as operational. FAO conducts normative activities of global importance to all member states, and provides normative support to industrialised countries in highly specific areas. Some normative functions important to developed countries, such as the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Code of Conduct on Responsible Fisheries, the International Plant Protection Convention, and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, are equally important to developing countries. Others are more regional in focus. Normative activities cover: setting up, maintaining and constantly updating databases of statistical information; providing a world centre of knowledge, information and expertise; providing a neutral forum for policy dialogue among countries and for the preparation of international agreements; developing international norms, standards and conventions; and disseminating information in support of member countries. FAO's operational work, on the other hand, covers a wide variety of activities, including capacity-building initiatives that allow countries, amongst other things, to fully use or take part in normative work. The spectrum of operational activities currently includes those that are supposed to inform and enrich normative work, and those that are not clearly linked, or poorly linked, to FAO's normative work. The latter are largely supported by trust funds from individual donors.

It seems that the publication by FAO did not end the discussion on the distinction and relation between the two categories. Especially in the technical departments of FAO, staff tend to consider the distinction too artificial and confusing. Many of the so-called operational activities have clear normative dimensions, such as the development of new extension paradigms or the formulation of policies on thematic or sectoral levels, while much normative work, such as the development of rules and regulations, is only possible on the basis of, and in open communication with, the organisation's aggregate experience in operational activities.

10 FAO's normative role. A review for members and partners. Rome: FAO, 1998.

2.4 Organisation and funds

There are two different sources of funds available to FAO. In the first place, being a specialised agency of the UN, the organisation receives contributions from its member countries. Every two years the Conference determines FAO's Regular Programme as detailed in the Programme of Work and Budget. The Regular Programme covers mainly internal operations, including work on normative and legislative issues, support for fieldwork and advice to governments on policy and planning. Since the 1970s, it has also included a wide range of technical co-operation projects (TCPs) and, more recently, country level projects in the context of the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS). All these activities are financed from the contributions of the member countries, the size of which is set by the Conference.

Since the early 1960s, apart from these regular assessed contributions, FAO has received so-called extra-budgetary resources from a number of donor countries and other agencies. There exist quite fundamental differences of opinion as to whether an organisation like FAO should receive extra-budgetary funding for development activities. Some donor countries argue that FAO, as a specialised UN agency, should stay away from operational development work, while others use FAO as an executing agency for their own development programmes. Moreover, the positions of individual donors have changed over time. For example, the UK, which for a long time was strongly opposed to making extra-budgetary funds available to FAO, is nowadays one of the bigger donors to the organisation. Extra-budgetary funds are mainly (but not exclusively) meant to support operational activities. Governments or agencies allocate trust funds for particular programmes or projects for which FAO acts as executing agency. FAO has proven itself to be highly flexible in terms of the types of trust fund activities it assumes and the arrangements it makes. It accommodates a wide range of project activities. Originally these extra-budgetary funded projects were mainly operated by the organisation at the country or regional level and were commonly referred to as the 'field programme'. Over time, however, some of the extra-budgetary resources received were also used to finance normative work performed primarily at headquarters, and to fund Associate Professional Officers (APOs), etc. So today some trust fund projects are closely linked to normative work – expanding or accelerating the progress of normative activities, developing institutional capacity and human resources, testing hypotheses, methods or processes, and/or providing feedback to technical officers to improve or inform normative work. Other trust fund projects are more of a stand-alone nature and are sometimes even clearly donor-driven and thus not necessarily strongly related to FAO's normative work. Most of these projects are straightforward development interventions, managed by staff recruited by FAO.

For technical assistance, three sources of funding are available to FAO: unilateral trust funds, donor contributions and the core budget. Unilateral trust funds are funded by the recipient country either directly or indirectly as loans from financial institutions, such as World Bank, IMF, Regional Banks or grants from EEC and bilateral donors. In essence they are bilateral arrangements through which countries choose FAO to manage all or part of the implementation of a given programme or project. An increasing number of donors (the Netherlands being one of them) think this to be the ideal formula, given the fact that the work comes to FAO because of its clear comparative advantage. The essence of most donor contributions to technical assistance is that they are tripartite: in other words, there is a recipient country whose government has officially made the request, FAO who may have formulated the project, and a donor. Most of these efforts are carried out under 'Government Co-operation Programme' projects, whereby funds are given in trust to the organisation for the implementation of projects. This evaluation deals with the funds given in trust by the Netherlands government. Lastly, part of the core budget is earmarked for small technical co-operation projects, for pilot programmes in the field of food security and for technical support services to donor-funded activities.

Donor contributions to emergency assistance are often tripartite, although there are cases where no recognised national authority is available or widely recognised for an agreement. Occasionally, the core budget is also used for technical assistance in the field of emergency aid.

Most resources for normative programmes and other Regular Programme activities come from the regular or core budget, with some notable exceptions such as the work on the code for responsible fisheries. However, there is increasing interest among donors in directly contributing additional, extra- budgetary resources to normative activities approved in the regular Programme of Work and Budget. This category includes the various commissions which FAO services (e.g. on Desert Locusts, on Plant Genetic Resources, on Animal Genetics and on Foot and Mouth Disease). Part of this work is also financed under cost sharing arrangements with other UN agencies, the World Bank, IMF, Regional Banks, CGIAR, and so on.

In recent years FAO has had to face an evolving set of demands relating to sustainable development and food security, but also a declining resource base. It has experienced cuts in both its core budgetary resources, as reflected in the Programme of Work and Budget, and in trust funds received from UN agencies and from national governments. The Regular Budget (financed by member contributions) for the years 1991/92 and 1992/93 amounted US$ 680 million per biennium. In the years 1996/97 and 1998/99 the Regular Budget was roughly US$ 650 million per biennium, which means that during the

second half of the 1990s FAO was in fact confronted with a zero-growth budget.
The Netherlands contribution to FAO over the last few years represented approximately 1.7 % of the Regular Budget (US$ 5.4 million annually).
On the basis of the financial information collected during this evaluation it is clear that, due to the rigorous austerity measures imposed by the decline in real terms in the Regular Budget of FAO over the last ten years, the organisation had to adapt: not only by introducing efficiency measures, but also by diminishing the volume of activities in certain fields. Indeed, some aspects of the organisation's routine work and communications, which have always been highly valued by the Netherlands, such as the work of the Committee on Phytosanitary Measures, are clearly under-funded. This means that FAO can no longer be accused of being a wasteful bureaucracy. The entire annual Regular Budget of FAO, contributed by its 180 member countries, is just over half the annual recurrent budget of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
The decline in approved core budgets went along with a decline in extra-budgetary funded field programmes. An analysis by FAO itself of the extra-budgetary funding over the last two biennia shows a significant decline in delivery of non-emergency, extra-budgetary projects (around 10% per year), as well as a concentration in geographic coverage and in sources of funding.

Table 1 Extra-budgetary funds (excluding emergency aid)

Year	US$ million
1980	140
1985	218
1990	285
1993	263
1996	202
1999	150

Source: survey data

Although the total amount of these extra-budgetary funds increased enormously between 1980 and 1990, it started to drop sharply from 1992 onwards. In combination, the UNDP and other (non-emergency) trust fund resources for FAO fell from US$ 263 million in 1993

to US$ 150 million in 1999[11]. Meanwhile, however, donor funding for emergency activities by FAO was rising fast (Table 2). Although emergency aid is not part of this evaluation, it is worth noting that the uncontrolled and relatively unmanaged growth of that portfolio will need more policy guidance in the near future.

Table 2 Expenditure on emergencies and oil-for-food

Year	Emergencies (US$ million)	Oil-for-food (US$ million)	Total (US$ million)
1996	23	n.a	23
1997	23	23	46
1998	21	67	88
1999	29	83	112
2000	50	120	170
2001	54	130	184
2002 (to 1 Nov.)	53	88	141

Source: FAO Division for Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation data

For many years the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) was by far the most important trust fund donor to FAO, providing almost 90% of these funds in the 1970s and 40% in the late 1980s. After 1992, however, UNDP withdrew almost completely (from US$ 108 million in 1993 to US$ 28 million in 1998) which meant a sudden and sharp decline in extra-budgetary funding. In 1999 it contributed about 9% of the total funding of the Field Programme. The most important reasons for the withdrawal of UNDP were a shift in policy in the early 1990s towards national execution, which meant that it was no longer UNDP but the national authorities of a country that had to invite FAO to participate in activities, and the creation of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). But like UNDP, bilateral donors also gradually decreased their extra-budgetary support. The main reasons given by most donors were FAO's perceived inefficiency in administrative and operational support, and the consequent high costs. However, that seems only a partial explanation. If one looks at overall figures on investment in the agricultural sector in the 1990s, the picture of a steady decline emerges. The World Bank reports that the annual

11 Review of Support Costs. Current profile of FAO's Field Programme and other Programmes funded by voluntary contributions. Rome: FAO, May 2000.

investment in agriculture (in its broadest sense) shows a declining long-term trend in developed countries and only a marginally increasing trend in developing countries. In addition, donor countries have reduced their investments in the agricultural sectors of developing countries. Development assistance for agriculture in general has fallen by 32% over the ten-year period 1985-1995, and for agricultural production in particular the reduction has been 28%[12].

The geographical distribution of extra-budgetary funding over the last few years showed a trend towards concentration. In 1996, 50 countries had over US$ 1 million in project delivery, while in 1999 only 24 countries registered delivery levels above US$ 1 million. Of the 114 countries where FAO projects were executed in 1999, ten countries showed net increases in annual delivery since 1996, the largest increase being registered in Mozambique (from US$ 1.7 million to US$ 4.9 million). However, 26 countries registered major programme decreases, while six remained more or less stable. The remaining 72 countries accounted for a low share of the extra-budgetary funding (14% in all) with marginal changes. The decline from 1996 through 1999 also varied by region.

The decrease was most pronounced in the Near East, where it dropped by 38%, followed by Africa, 33%, and Asia, 26%, whereas in Latin America it remained stable.

Regional projects showed a decrease over the same period of 26%.

The following table gives an impression of the allocation of all regular and trust funds to the major programmes of FAO as presented in the 1996/97 Implementation Report.

Table 3 Allocation of Regular Budget and trust funds to FAO's major programmes, 1996-1997

Major Programmes	% of Regular Budget	% of Trust funds	% of total
Agricultural production and support systems	30.5	53.0	43.7
Food and agriculture policy and development	29.7	8.4	17.3
Fisheries	13.1	7.3	9.4
Forestry	9.5	18.8	15
Sustainable development and special programme thrusts	17.2	12.5	14.6
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

12 World Development Report Indicators. Washington DC. : World Bank, 1997.

In order better to understand the figures given above, one has to realise that financial allocations in the regular budget are decided upon in the biannual Conference and therefore show rather limited flexibility. A large part of this budget goes to activities that relate to the core functions of the organisation, so that no big changes may be expected from one biennium to the next. The more interesting figures are those related to extra-budgetary funding. They express the wishes of individual donor countries, and to a decreasing extent of multilateral organisations, to give more emphasis to specific issues such as forestry. Sectors with relatively modest funding in the Regular Budget may receive a considerable part of the trust funds made available to FAO. Forestry is the clearest example of this in Table 3, but agricultural production and support systems also received a significantly larger proportion of the trust funds than of the Regular Budget. In other words, one might argue that the funds in trust reflect the development priorities for the organisation from a donor perspective. Although this suggests that the mechanisms at work in the allocation of funds in the Regular Budget and the extra-budgetary domain are independent from each other, this is not completely true. Due to the budgetary constraints of the organisation, the allocation of resources in the Regular Budget was influenced, at least to some extent, by estimates of how much extra-budgetary funding could be attracted. For a sector like forestry this might well have been the case. On some of the core work of FAO, real reductions had to be applied. For instance, the wood energy sector had to face budget cuts.
The Netherlands-FAO Trust Fund Co-operation concerns trust funds allocated by the Government of the Netherlands for specific activities.

Table 4 Netherlands trust funds, 1985-2001 (€ million)

1985	1990	1996	1997	1999	2000	2001*
4.0	17.2	28.3	30.8	29.8	22.1	27.0

** Including FNPP (€ 10.2m)*

For many years the Netherlands was by far the biggest trust fund donor to FAO. For instance, in 1997 Dutch trust funds represented roughly 22% of the total extra-budgetary income, Italy with 12% being the second in line. In 1999, the Netherlands and Italy together provided 30% of all extra-budgetary resources.

The Netherlands-FAO Partnership Programme (FNPP) that was set up in 2001 has not only begun to restructure and intensify the relationship between the two partners, but has also aroused considerable interest among other donors as a potential model for their extra-budgetary support to FAO. In a combined effort to move from project to programme funding and to make extra-budgetary funds available for those activities that are part of or closely related to the core programme of FAO, several donors are starting to explore the possibility of setting up similar models of co-operation.

A last aspect of extra-budgetary resources that needs to be mentioned is the so-called support or overhead costs. Discussions on extra-budgetary support costs have taken place throughout the period covered by this evaluation. Usually, these discussions focused on practices pertaining to cost measurement and the establishment of rates to be applied to the recovery of support costs. Recently, in a report of the Joint Inspection Unit of the UN, the issue was raised in the wider context of the role of extra-budgetary resources.[13] It was stated that the justification for low support cost rates on extra-budgetary resources is that extra-budgetary funding supports and supplements the core programmes of the organisation by expanding and strengthening institutional capacity, and by increasing the delivery of developmental benefits. Moreover, a greater volume and scope of activities increases the public and political profile of the UN system and their authority as 'centres of excellence'. On the contrary, many member countries are concerned that extra- budgetary activities, supported and 'subsidised' by core resources, are diverting these scare resources away from programmes, projects or activities that make up the organisation's core programme, and that they undermine the official approval process for FAO's Regular Programme. It is argued that increased contributions to core budgets are preferable to increased extra-budgetary financing. Extra-budgetary resources are unpredictable, they demand their own planning and management, and they incur extra costs.

FAO's policy with respect to support costs was revised during the late 1990s, moving away from a standard overhead percentage to the implementation of a system of diversified reimbursement rates. These rates vary from 6 per cent, for emergency aid and activities of direct relevance to core programmes, to a maximum of 13 per cent for technical assistance. These percentages, in theory, do not cover the so-called fixed costs (e.g. the senior management structure). The argument is that extra-budgetary donors should not pay for those core staff that should be funded from the Regular Programme, because such an approach would result in an element of double budgeting. According to the calculations

13 Support costs related to extra-budgetary activities in organisations of the United Nations System. Geneva: Joint Inspection Unit, 2002.

of the Joint Inspection Unit, the full costs associated with supporting extra-budgetary activities in FAO would lead to an overhead rate of 19.3 per cent, which would still be below the average support cost figure of 23.3 per cent for UN agencies.[14] In fact, the report of the Inspection Unit shows that FAO can be considered one of the most cost-effective of all the UN agencies.

2.5 Conclusions

FAO, established after the Second World War as a specialised agency of the UN for food and agriculture, is an organisation with a global mandate. Contributions from its member countries are meant to provide the organisation with the necessary means to execute its mandate through its Regular Programme. Apart from these contributions, the organisation also receives extra-budgetary funds for specific development activities. Since the early 1960s, extra-budgetary resources have been of vital importance to FAO in delivering the programmes requested by the organisation's members.

The original distinction between regular budgets (or contributions) for core activities emanating from the global mandate, and extra-budgetary funds for field activities in developing countries, is no longer accurate. Part of the core budget of the organisation is set aside for small technical co-operation activities in developing countries, while extra-budgetary funds are increasingly used for core activities of the organisation.

Since the early 1990s, FAO has been confronted with either decline or zero growth in its regular contributions, and a net decrease in extra-budgetary funding. The only source of income that showed a considerable increase throughout these years was the funds made available to the organisation for emergency activities. As a consequence, FAO had to introduce a number of efficiency measures and economise on many of its core functions, and it is fair to say that the organisation can no longer be accused of being a wasteful bureaucracy.

In the mid 1990s, growing pressure from its member countries and the deteriorating financial position led the organisation to embark on a substantial reform programme covering decentralisation, planning, programming and budgeting. Not surprisingly, however, the recent decentralisation has not yet achieved an optimal use of all FAO's human resources.

14 ibid. p. 7.

3 Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation

This chapter gives an overview and analysis of policy developments with respect to Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation. The period under consideration, starting in 1985, is divided into three parts (sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5), separated by events that had a significant influence on Netherlands-FAO relationships. The analysis of the policy history also makes some reference to the most recent developments.

3.1 How Netherlands-FAO consultations were organised

Netherlands development policy papers started explicitly to address rural development in the mid 1970s. The 1977 paper "Bilateral development co-operation" clearly expresses the growing awareness of the need for integrated rural development.[15] In addition to agricultural development, attention should also be paid in rural areas to the expansion of industrial development, as well as to infrastructure, housing, health care and education.
In 1984, the "Review of bilateral co-operation policy" announced the establishment of a rural development sector programme.[16] The objective of this programme was the sustainable improvement of national food supply and living conditions in rural areas.
The paper "Development co-operation and employment", also published in 1984, subsequently elaborated that objective.[17] Both 1984 papers constituted the basis for the Netherlands policy in the field of rural development over the following years.
These two papers served as a framework for the 1986 Rural Development Sector Programme document.[18] For several years from 1985, the Rural Development Sector Programme was at the heart of the trust fund co-operation between FAO and the Government of the Netherlands.
An annual Netherlands-FAO Co-operative Programme Meeting constituted the main platform for policy deliberations with regard to the Netherlands-FAO trust fund activities. The first session was held in 1986. Annual meetings continued until 1996, but were subsequently suspended following a review of the Netherlands' foreign policy. The review

15 Nota Bilaterale samenwerking. Den Haag: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1977.
16 Nota Herijking Bilaterale Samenwerking. Den Haag: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1984.
17 Nota Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en Werkgelegenheid. Den Haag: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1984.
18 Sector Programme Rural Development. Den Haag: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1986.

had led to uncertainty about the role of the co-operative meeting and future Netherlands-FAO co-operation. Only in 2000 were co-operative meetings, relating primarily to non-decentralised Netherlands funds, re-launched. The aim then was to enter into a partnership covering a limited number of sectors rather than projects.

The FAO delegations to the Co-operative Programme Meetings were led by the Development Department (DDF) and included representatives of other departments and a wide range of divisions and offices. The Netherlands delegation consisted of representatives of the Directorate General for International Co-operation (DGIS), the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, and the Permanent Representation of The Netherlands to FAO. Until 1991, the delegation was led by the head of the Rural Development Sector Programme. Between 1991 and 1995 it was headed by the multilateral department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was supported by relevant specialist units (Rural Development Sector Programme, Spearhead Programmes, and Technical Advisory Department).

Documents pertaining to the meetings include Netherlands delegation instructions/guidelines and summary records, and separate Dutch reports of the discussions. As part of the annual programme meetings several relevant policy papers were presented as well as a number of discussion papers (e.g. on annual meetings and the future development of the co-operative programme). The information in this chapter is drawn from these sources as well as from interviews with resource persons.[19]

Both parties considered the Co-operative Programme Meetings the most important forum for a direct exchange of views between FAO and the Netherlands on trust fund co-operation. The main objectives of the meetings were to:

- review policy issues and matters of common interest;
- assess, in general terms, the progress of the joint programmes;
- acquaint both parties with recent changes in policies, guidelines, priorities and action programmes;
- develop guidelines for future co-operation;
- suggest appropriate measures for programme expansion and for quality improvement, and for integration of Dutch expertise both at the associate and expert level;
- screen new project ideas and suggest guidelines for the formulation of related documents.

19 References to all the individual instructions and summary records are avoided, unless specific phrases are literally cited.

The annual Co-operative Meetings were largely of a one-way nature. The Netherlands explained current policy and requirements for funding and FAO acted as an attentive audience. FAO was seldom approached directly to implement specific activities with Netherlands funding. As FAO was keen to attract funds and extend its operational activities, there was also no need to approach FAO with requests that it serve as a delivery channel. Instead, FAO brought project proposals to the Netherlands for approval.
In addition to Co-operative Programme Meetings, FAO and Netherlands officials also met for technical reviews of the main fields of co-operation (both in connection with or apart from programme meetings) as well as for mid-term reviews, mini-reviews and ad hoc meetings. The technical reviews primarily aimed to discuss the progress of ongoing activities, to solve problems encountered in implementation, to develop measures to improve impact, to monitor progress in the preparation of pipeline projects and in decision making on their financing, and to discuss future programme development. National and international policy developments were to some extent explained and discussed as well. Through these reviews, as well as through general discussions on programme areas, issues of a general nature were identified for presentation or discussion in the annual Co-operative Programme Meeting.
As of 1989, the technical reviews were organised according to three programme areas: Food Security, Forestry, and Agricultural Production Systems (APS). In 1993, the reviews on food security and agricultural production systems were amalgamated into one review on sustainable agriculture and rural development. The forestry review remained separate because FAO and Netherlands forestry specialists felt that integration might negatively affect the attention paid to the forestry sector.
Apart from these meetings on trust fund co-operation, more or less informal meetings took place during international conferences of FAO. In particular after 1996, when the annual meetings were suspended, such conferences were the most important occasions for discussions between Netherlands and FAO officials on trust fund co-operation matters.

3.2 The importance of multilateral and trust fund assistance

The Netherlands Government reconfirmed in the 1985 budget for development co-operation that the objectives and principles of the United Nations are an indispensable and irreplaceable guideline to realising a more righteous world order. Multilateral development co-operation therefore had a central and necessary role to play. Financial support to multilateral organisations was also viewed as an instrument to influence policy and to urge for sound management and responsible financial control. Moreover, multilateral

assistance was regarded as having advantages over bilateral assistance.
A 1999 Netherlands paper titled "The quality of the UN as channel for development co-operation" lists the following comparative advantages:

- the accumulation of knowledge and experience on a level which cannot be achieved by individual donor countries;
- the dispersion and overlap of activities can be avoided, which increases efficiency;
- ownership is usually higher in comparison to bilateral assistance;
- the rallying of forces allows for advantages of scale and the presentation of more comprehensive programmes;
- demand on the institutional capacity of recipient countries is decreased;
- total administrative costs, and the management load with respect to execution, are reduced.[20]

Over the years the Netherlands regularly reiterated the importance it attaches to multilateral assistance, e.g. in the 1992 paper Multilateral Development Co-operation.[21] Particularly in view of weakening borders, international organisations need to play a prominent role (especially in global, trans-boundary fields like environment, population, migration, refugees, research and technology). Most of these policy statements refer to multilateral assistance in general and do not deal specifically with policy on trust fund assistance. For instance, in the yearly Budget, FAO is often mentioned. But these references are almost exclusively in relation to calls for active multilateral policy in particular fields or with regard to specific concepts (e.g. environment, forestry, co-ordination, population, participation, and social dimensions of structural adjustment). Policy with respect to FAO itself was never mentioned during the parliamentary discussions on the yearly Budget. The organisation was referred to insofar as it played a role as a centre of information on food production, hunger and starvation. The only aspect of trust fund co-operation that was touched upon was the level of support costs for UN agencies such as FAO. That issue was raised in 1991 and 1993. In both cases Parliament and the Minister for Development Co-operation agreed upon a policy of differentiation of support costs for the agencies, although the overall attitude was that the current 13% was not to be exceeded.
The 26th FAO Conference in 1991 underlined the importance of FAO as a 'centre of excellence' in the areas of food, agriculture, forestry and fisheries and urged that this role be further strengthened. In the 1990s FAO's role as a policy adviser and 'centre of excel-

20 De kwaliteit van de VN als kanaal voor OS. Den Haag. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999.
21 Nota Multilaterale Ontwikkelingssamenwerking. Een appreciatie van de multilaterale organisaties als kanaal voor de Nederlandse hulpverlening. Tweede Kamer, vergaderjaar 1991-92, 22 478, NRS. 1-2.

lence" was repeatedly stressed by the Netherlands, and which advocated the strengthening of this role. FAO stated in 1992 that it was now convinced that input delivery was not what technical co-operation should be about in the 1990s. There was no reluctance whatsoever on the part of FAO to move further upstream and concentrate on policy advice, formulation of national programmes and training. The Netherlands encouraged FAO in 1995 to strengthen its role as a 'centre of excellence' in the field of agriculture and rural development. It should further concentrate on those issues and activities where it has a clear comparative advantage, and Agenda 21 (the outcome of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development) should be a guide for its work.

In 1987 and other years, the Netherlands underlined the role of FAO as policy adviser to member states for rural and agricultural development as well as the task of assisting in the preparation of sector studies or reviews. The Netherlands wished FAO to play a more active role as neutral adviser in processes of agricultural policy and structural adjustment. In 1988, for instance, it was recommended that FAO develop an active profile as policy adviser on these matters in order to encourage UNDP and the World Bank to invite FAO in that capacity.

The Netherlands also regularly stressed the need to link trust fund assistance with the FAO Regular Programme, and recommended the inclusion of activities or concepts developed with trust funds in the Regular Programme. Obviously the Netherlands gave priority to FAO's normative task and role as policy adviser and saw the role of implementing agency as complementary. However, apart from the complementary function, FAO's implementing role was also clearly appreciated in terms of channelling *per se*, on the basis of its comparative advantages. The Budget of 1991, in fact, stated that multilateral organisations have two functions: (a) as forum in the field of international economic and political co-operation, and (b) as channel for funding and execution. More specific references to the project implementation function of FAO are chiefly made in instructions or guidelines for meetings and reviews. In particular, the reasons for using FAO as a channel for Netherlands development co-operation are advanced. However, these motives, stated several times in instructions for Co-operative Meetings, are derived from the general comparative advantages attributed to multilateral assistance for the channelling of trust funds. They include:

- FAO implements projects and programmes which are well attuned to Dutch policy priorities;
- FAO has expertise and capacity that the Netherlands lacks;
- trust fund co-operation creates the opportunity to influence the policy of FAO;

- channelling of funds through FAO reduces the number of separate aid relationships with recipient countries;
- FAO is, unlike bilateral donors, in the position to implement large-scale and trans-boundary activities.

3.3 Policy development and issues, 1985-1990

The 1984 policy paper, "Review of bilateral co-operation policy", initiated a reorganisation of Netherlands development co-operation in March 1985.[22] Rural and industrial development sector programmes, and country and regional programmes, came into being. The paper also indicated that development assistance provided by the Netherlands (not just trust fund assistance, which is already 'contracted out' by definition) is in principle contracted out, although funds are allocated to previously agreed activities in clearly described policy areas in mutually agreed countries. Activities obviously needed to meet the criteria of the sector programmes, and to adhere to the policies for programme countries and regions.

A document on the Rural Development Sector Programme was presented to Parliament in February 1986. The general objective of rural development was stated to be better use of economic potential and a sustainable improvement of the living conditions in rural areas. Rural development would be directed at five major objectives:

- agricultural production, energy and ecology;
- food supply and food aid;
- institutional development;
- off-farm employment;
- social and production infrastructure.

The position of women and active participation of target groups were regarded as basic elements in rural development. The document called for optimal use of existing initiatives, knowledge, experience, organisations, and inputs in both the public and private sectors, and for the reinforcement and encouragement of mutual support between these sectors in regions and countries with which the Netherlands co-operates.[23]

Following the reorganisation of 1985, the Netherlands trust fund co-operation with FAO became concentrated in the Rural Development Sector Programme. Initially, first priority would be given to financing of ongoing projects approved during previous years. But in the following years, the Programme's co-operation with FAO intensified tremendously. This was partly due to the fact that FAO was seen as an excellent organisation for the

22 Nota Herijking bilaterale samenwerking. Den Haag: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1984.
23 Rural Development Sector Programme. Den Haag: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1986.

implementation of the development goals of the Rural Development Sector Programme, but also because of the reluctant attitude of the country departments in DGIS, which considered the sector programme as an additional source for funding that interfered with their country policies. In fact, the idea was that projects, once identified and started by the Rural Development Sector Programme, should become an integral part of the country programmes at a later stage. However, this was seldom the case. As a result, the Rural Development Sector Programme turned away from the country programmes and focused on co-operation with either NGOs or multilateral organisations. The policy of the Sector Programme signified a change from an explicit target group oriented approach to an approach focussing on specific problem areas in rural development, such as food security, rural organisations and forestry. In fact, in 1988 the Netherlands stated that food security would be a priority in the coming decade. FAO was asked to cluster activities of their Food Security Assistance Scheme that were until then spread over various departments within the organisation, in order to increase the possibility of more programmatic support.

In the field of agricultural policy, FAO gradually shifted away from the Green Revolution's High Yielding Varieties during the 1985-1990 period. It moved towards the sustainable development approach, which meant ensuring adequate food production while securing natural resources for future generations. Although the Green Revolution resulted in increased production, it was also associated with environmental problems like water logging, salinisation, exhaustion and destruction of soils, health risks from excessive use of pesticides, and problems caused by large reservoirs. The relation between agriculture and environment was stressed and acknowledged as a problem that transcends national boundaries. Attention became more directed at intensive production systems which use lower amounts of external inputs and which are carefully tailored to particular environmental, health, social and economic conditions. This resulted in particular in the launch of the concept of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), but also in more attention for traditional local production systems, farmer participation and new developments in biotechnology.

The Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) was another important activity of FAO in the 1985-1990 period. This worldwide plan was initiated at the World Forestry Congress in Mexico in 1985 and aimed at concerted action through National Forestry Action Plans to counter increasing deforestation. FAO, the World Bank, the World Resources Institute (WRI), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and UNDP jointly took up implementation. TFAP was intended to be a think-tank and advisory body, in particular focusing on agro-forestry, fuel wood, forest industries, institutional support

and biological diversity. TFAP actually promoted a large number of sector analyses and constituted the beginning of a sector programme. The Netherlands especially supported TFAP in order to get this activity included in FAO's Regular Programme, because it felt that support to forestry was not yet given sufficient emphasis in the organisation. It believed that TFAP, being a framework setting activity, should become a regular FAO programme.

After TFAP was initiated in 1985, the Netherlands in 1986 doubled its assistance to the forestry sector in general, to €45 million (NLG 100 million) a year, a substantial part of which was channelled through FAO. The main argument here was that, while FAO's forestry department was considered to have the necessary staff, DGIS staff were too few to be able to meet the set quantitative targets. Support to FAO was therefore considered convenient for the Netherlands, as FAO managed the activities fully. The co-operation became more or less a matter of routine. Implementation was largely left to FAO, although from their side the Netherlands objected to certain activities related to forest exploitation and timber processing.

FAO also reported increasing attention to population activities initiated by the FAO Population Programme Co-ordinator, who was attached to FAO from UNFPA. Population activities focused on extension and awareness concerning population issues. FAO started to emphasise the integration of population components in ongoing and planned activities, in contrast with the old trend of isolated population projects. For example, population activities were incorporated in projects of the Food Policy and Nutrition Division.

Agreed minutes of the annual Co-operative Meetings show that, throughout the 1985-1990 period, references were made in the first place to changes in Netherlands policy. Main objectives, approaches, criteria, and instruments were outlined or further explained in relation to the Rural Development Sector Programme. Explanations were also provided on the list of countries and regions eligible for Netherlands assistance.

Several other major topics were repeatedly brought up by the Netherlands delegation during the Co-operative Meetings. Women in Development was one such recurring topic. To address gender issues in project proposals became a prerequisite in 1988. Attention to the effects of project activities on the position of women was stressed. Another recurring topic concerned environment. In 1986 FAO was asked to give attention to ecology, but in succeeding years the issue was described in terms of the need to address environmental issues. In 1988, screening on the environmental impact of project proposals became also a prerequisite for Netherlands assistance. By 1989, deforestation and environmental degradation had become a major political issue on the international development agenda. The Netherlands therefore promised more support for activities aimed at solving

problems related to climate change. FAO established a Task Force on Forestry and Environment to deal with issues connected with environment and the related implications, including climate change.
The replication or integration in their Regular Programme of participation concepts, embedded in FAO's People's Participation Programme, was a further topic that was persistently discussed. In relation to this the Netherlands expressed the wish for expanded co-operation with NGOs and increased involvement of the private sector in the development process. The need for bottom-up generation of activities was stressed.
A main concern on the part of the Netherlands in this period was its desire for UNDP to play a central role in UN activities at country level, and more generally in co-ordination within the UN system. A lack of collaboration between FAO and UNDP, particularly exchange of information and project identification, was noted. FAO pointed to a lack of interest in agriculture within UNDP, and a poor staff quality in the field of agriculture. FAO in turn raised the need to co-ordinate multilateral and bilateral aid. Meanwhile, FAO was asked several times to strengthen its contacts with relevant Netherlands embassies to ensure joint monitoring, co-ordination of efforts, and quicker decisions on pipeline projects.
In the course of 1986, the Camberley Group of 11 like-minded countries came into being. The members were Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The Group aimed to enhance the performance of FAO. Complaints already raised by the Nordic countries also resounded in the Camberley Group. These included over-involvement in project implementation, mission creep (proliferation of activities not or not directly related to the FAO mandate), lack of cohesion and co-ordination with other UN agencies, insufficient backstopping, and weak and biased evaluations.
In 1988, the Netherlands pointed to weaknesses with regard to quality of staff, delayed reporting, and inadequate project proposals. It also voiced a growing need for more adequate instruments to manage the Netherlands-FAO Co-operative Programme.
In order to improve the co-ordination, a discussion paper on the future development of the Co-operative Programme was submitted. Several suggestions were made. Among others, programmes, projects, and evaluations should take more note of the country, region and sector concentration of the bilateral programme as well as the complementarities and interaction between bilateral and multilateral activities in countries and regions. Furthermore, it was suggested that ongoing and new activities be clustered in a more clearly defined sector approach, based on the sectoral priorities of the Netherlands.
It seems astonishing that the harsh criticism, expressed amongst others in the Camberley Group, apparently had no influence whatsoever on funding levels. On the contrary, as was

said earlier, funding levels went up quite substantially during those years. The possible explanations for this contradiction are, first, that it was impossible for the Rural Development Programme to work in the context of the regular bilateral country programmes. This left it with a serious spending problem. The Programme had to look for alternative ways of funding. It found them in multilateral and non-governmental organisations. Secondly, extra-budgetary funds were seen as a way to buy policy changes in the organisation.

Another recurring topic related to the wish of the Netherlands that FAO draw upon Dutch products, services and expertise as much as possible, both in terms of personnel and institutions. In particular the Associate Professional Officers Scheme, with the Netherlands as a prime supporter, was consistently addressed.

Finally, although the idea was rejected in 1985, FAO and the Netherlands agreed in 1986 to conclude a general agreement covering administrative, financial and procedural matters. This idea remained under discussion for several years, and in 1990 the co-operation was still based on a draft general agreement.

3.4 Policy development and issues, 1991-1995

In 1991 the policy paper "A World of Difference" indicated that sustainable poverty alleviation would be the main objective of Netherlands development co-operation in the years to come. To combat poverty, the focus would be on improving income, employment and purchasing power of the poorest groups. A focus on sustainable efforts to combat poverty entailed not only lending support to macroeconomic policy but also support to programmes that combat poverty directly, implemented on a sector basis and focused on the poorest groups. According to the policy paper the threat to food security – posed especially by soil pollution and climate change – probably constituted one of the most important problems for the rural poor. Therefore the sustainability of agriculture became an important issue of Netherlands policy.[24] Relevant policy accents for FAO were:

- improvement of purchasing power, income and employment among the poorest groups, with special attention to improvement of the position of women;
- stronger orientation on sustainable agricultural development and sustainable forest conservation;
- stronger emphasis on participation of target groups;
- continuation of the emphasis on food security.

24 A World of Difference. A New Framework for Development Co-operation. White Paper. Den Haag: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1990.

A new element in the organisation of the Netherlands aid policy was the introduction of four so-called Spearhead programmes. At the same time the sector programmes were abolished and incorporated into the country and regional programmes. In programme countries, additional activities could be set up within Spearhead programmes, of which Environment and Women and Development were particularly relevant to FAO. More emphasis would be placed on a regional approach because it enhanced flexibility with regard to the use of aid funds. Four regions in Africa, two in Latin America and one in Asia were targeted for this approach. With the abolition of the Rural Development Sector Programme, coordination of the consultations with FAO shifted to the multilateral department, seconded by representatives of the technical departments (the division responsible for technical advice as well as the Spearhead programmes).

In 1989 the Netherlands initiated discussions with FAO on a new approach with regard to agriculture and food security. Greater interest was shown in integrating all policy and programming assistance beneath one umbrella, as far as possible. It was hoped that such an approach would permit the full integration of food security and agriculture in so-called Agricultural Production Systems programming exercises at country level. Until then the agriculture component (as opposed to the food security component, which was more or less integrated in the Food Security Assistance Scheme (section 3.3)) consisted mainly of many small projects with a wide geographical dispersion. It lacked a common conceptual framework and field co-ordination. The new approach therefore aimed to develop farm household systems and rural communities on a sustainable basis, to improve farm productivity, to raise farm and family income, and to increase the welfare of farm families. To achieve such results, the APS programme would facilitate linkages, networks and complementarities between activities that were hitherto financed through various channels. APS sought to apply a farming systems development approach at the level of one or more regions or districts in a given country. Bolivia and Tanzania were selected to prepare for implementation of pilot projects.[25]

An APS proposal, drawn up by FAO, was approved in principle in 1992. However, the Netherlands decided in 1994 not to fund the project, officially due to budgetary constraints. The real reasons, however, were the abolition of the Rural Development Sector Programme and thereby the loss of ownership of the APS process on the Netherlands side; resistance of the Netherlands development specialists based in Bolivia and Tanzania, who thought that the framework for integration should have been national agricultural policies rather than a concept developed by FAO Headquarters; the lack of

25 Note on Agricultural Production Systems. Rome: FAO, 1992.

support for the APS concept in several technical departments of FAO; and finally the introduction of new concepts, in particular Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD).

In the 1991-1995 period, the FAO/Netherlands Conference on Agriculture and Environment at Den Bosch (April 1991), the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 Plan for Action of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, and the International Conference on Nutrition in Rome (1992) constituted a clear, new international basis for a policy directed at sustainable agriculture and rural development. SARD became a central topic in this period. The SARD document was the result of the Den Bosch Conference and constituted a major input to the UNCED Conference in Rio de Janeiro. Subsequently it became, as chapter 14, a main component of Agenda 21.

FAO, charged with a leading role in the implementation of chapter 14, subsequently established a Sustainable Development Department with the mandate to co-ordinate activities within the organisation.

Elements of the SARD concept were not new in themselves. However, the concept linked all elements in a comprehensive framework for agriculture and rural development, touching upon modern agriculture as well as agriculture in resource-poor environments. The three essential goals of SARD related to

- food security, by ensuring an appropriate and sustainable balance between self-sufficiency and self-reliance,
- employment and income generation in rural areas, particularly to eradicate poverty, and
- natural resource conservation and environmental protection.[26]

Pre-requisites for SARD included preservation, improvement and protection of soil fertility, and the preservation and protection of biodiversity and local ecosystems, local knowledge, culture and community tradition, local economy and food security. Consequently sustainable development conserves land, water, plant and genetic resources, is environmentally non-degrading, economically viable and socially acceptable. The concept called for action at international, national and local level.

The 1994 policy paper “A World of Dispute” again introduced changes in Netherlands development co-operation policy. It included a stronger focus on emergency operations and conflict-related activities, and implied a reduction in the budgets for Spearhead programmes. Furthermore the country/regional focus was replaced by a thematic

26 Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD). Rome: FAO, 1990.

orientation. The number of countries for regular bilateral co-operation, for instance, was reduced.
In 1994, following the election of a new Director-General in 1993, FAO renewed its emphasis on food security with a focus on large-scale, technocratic investments, particularly in irrigated agriculture. This new emphasis was clearly in contrast with the previously proclaimed focus on sustainable agriculture and rural development. In the field of food security, FAO reverted its attention to a technology-driven, non-integrated approach.
In view of the expected strong growth in the world's demand for food, FAO considered that a complete rejection of high-input agriculture was not a suitable option.
The reports of the annual co-operative programme meetings show that the Netherlands, amongst other donors, strongly opposed this sudden reorientation and decided not to support the new initiative. Instead, they would focus attention on those activities of FAO that were considered consistent with the SARD concept, such as the development and application of integrated pest management (IPM) techniques. In the field of fertiliser, the Netherlands phased out deliveries while supporting FAO's gradual shift to a policy of integrated plant nutrition systems (IPNS). The Netherlands viewed IPM and IPNS as important concepts. FAO was expected to play a leading role in terms of policy formulation and research, and linked to that role, to implement pilot projects. While IPM became a central issue in Netherlands-FAO co-operation in that period, IPNS failed because of lack of consistent policy formulation in FAO.
TFAP remained the most important framework for forestry interventions. Forestry activities that the Netherlands supported in addition to TFAP, had to be in tune with the TFAP framework. In addition to the annual allocation of € 45 million to the forestry sector in general, as of 1991 the Netherlands earmarked an extra € 23 million per year specifically in support of tropical forest conservation activities. Preference would be given to project execution through multilateral channels. An evaluation of TFAP in 1992, however, levelled serious criticism at the programme. It was considered to be too traditional, not to constitute a programme, and not to have stopped deforestation. Furthermore, FAO had not included TFAP in its Regular Programme and had concentrated more on operational activities (e.g. production) and co-ordination than on advisory services. FAO also monopolised the programme, and other partners like the World Bank, IUCN, and WRI withdrew. They returned only in 1995 after a compromise was reached regarding the execution of the TFAP.[27]

27 Tropical forestry action plan. Report of the Independent review. Kuala Lumpur, 1990.

In the annual Co-operative Programme Meetings during the 1991-1995 period, the Netherlands made repeated general references to the policy in force, although the central objective of structural poverty alleviation was less reiterated towards the end of the period. Policy changes were announced, explained, and re-discussed while revisions to the geographical distribution of Netherlands development co-operation were expounded. A special feature of the Netherlands-FAO consultations during those years concerned a shift in emphasis from project portfolio related to more general policy discussions. From the Netherlands side various sector policy papers on sustainable land use, sustainable energy use and biodiversity were presented, while FAO introduced its policy on plant genetic resources.

The Co-operative Meetings also featured several other main topics. In particular, the Netherlands continued to advocate a focus on Women in Development (WID). Integration of WID aspects in projects was stressed: improvement of the position of women in physical, political, socio-cultural and economic respects needed to be included in all activities. In the view of the Netherlands, gender aspects were still given insufficient attention by FAO and the organisation should act upon its own action plan for "Integration of Women in Development". Other foci like environment, people's participation, the role of NGOs in project implementation, and biodiversity – which should be an integral part of all FAO fields – were likewise regularly brought forward.

In 1991 the Netherlands addressed the need for improving the assessment of intended results. Project evaluation became a recurring topic, particularly in relation to the effectiveness and efficiency of the co-operation and the improvement thereof. Clear and assessable objectives in all phases of project implementation were called for. Not only the quality of the co-operation but also the quality of FAO as a channel was brought to the fore.

Another regular topic in this period concerned the Netherlands-FAO co-operation at field level, i.e. strengthening of dialogue between the FAO representatives, Netherlands embassies, and project staff at country level. In particular, closer co-operation with Netherlands development specialists at the embassies was advised. Dialogue at the country level became even more important in view of the planned further delegation of operational tasks and responsibilities to the Netherlands embassies.

The procurement of Netherlands services and equipment/products was still addressed in 1991 but thereafter it was not raised again. The APO scheme, however, remained a regular subject of discussion. And, finally, a "Financial Framework" and a "Project Arrangement" governing the financial and administrative issues of the Netherlands-FAO Co-operation were at last concluded in 1991.

3.5 Policy development and issues, 1996-2000

In December 1995, the Netherlands Parliament approved the policy document "The Foreign Policy of the Netherlands – A Review".[28] Greater cohesion of policy and between policy instruments, and liaison within and between ministries, were considered of vital importance if the Netherlands was to play an effective role on the world stage. As a result of the review, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was reorganised in 1996. Rural development and environment now came under so-called thematic departments, i.e. the Rural and Urban Development Department, and the Environment and Development Department. Greater autonomy was accorded to the Dutch representations abroad, which were given more powers relating to development co-operation. Henceforth they were empowered to fund development activities directly. The Ministry in The Hague continued to direct overall policy.

In this period, Netherlands development co-operation was linked to political reform, democratisation, human rights, the building of civil society, and good governance, as well as economic policy reform and structural adjustment (debt relief and programme aid). Efforts with respect to rural development were aimed at the improvement of the four necessary elements of food security (availability, stability of supply, accessibility, and quality). Cost-efficiency and sustainability were to be achieved through further intensification and diversification of agriculture (with attention for recovery of soil fertility and avoidance of further soil degradation). Simultaneously access of the poor to land, water and other means of production had to be increased while off-farm, small-scale employment in both rural and urban areas had to be expanded and social sectors (health care and education) further developed. Supporting infrastructure like roads, energy, credit, research, extension, and land registration needed to be available. People's participation, democratisation and decentralisation were conditions for a structural improvement of the position of the rural population. Though policy statements addressed food security, the Netherlands actually turned away from FAO's food security activities, which focused on technocratic investments.

With the delegation of authority over project portfolio management to the embassies, the role and functions of the newly created thematic departments had to be revised.

For instance, they were not fully clear with respect to future trust fund co-operation.

As a consequence, the purpose and organisation of the Netherlands-FAO Co-operative Programme Meetings started to drift. The meetings were subsequently suspended. This suspension of meetings on the trust funds was also in line with another gradual change

28 Nota Herijking Buitenlands Beleid. Den Haag: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1995.

that had taken place in the policy towards UN agencies. The annual meetings were considered by the Minister for Development Co-operation as an instrument of traditional one-sided donor dominance. Co-operation with UN agencies, in his view, should be based on agreement with their policies, and not on donor agendas. So, when the minister for Development Co-operation argued that this kind of meeting was an expression of donor-centrism, it was decided to suspend them. For co-ordination of its trust fund activities, FAO had henceforth to deal primarily with the strengthened Netherlands embassies and the experts based there. It is not surprising that during those years, the first ideas were developed with respect to a new form of trust fund co-operation that would be less dependent on individual projects. Although structured consultations with FAO on trust fund co-operation no longer took place, contacts, of course, still existed. But they were more of an *ad hoc* nature.

The delegation of authority on project funding to the embassies and the abrupt suspension of regular consultations had a tremendous impact on the co-operation with FAO. A number of long-term Netherlands commitments suddenly came to an end, such as the support to the People's Participation and the Women and Development Programmes. Other programmes came under heavy pressure because they had to compete with other activities for the scarce resources of the thematic departments in the Ministry, such as the projects on integrated pest management.

After 1996 the role of the Netherlands Permanent Representation to the Rome-based institutions also changed. In previous years the Mission basically functioned as a liaison office between policy departments in The Hague and FAO, focusing on the administrative aspects of the relationship. Later, when the yearly meetings were suspended and the dialogue between the Ministry and FAO quickly eroded, it gradually extended its role to the policy aspects of the relationship.

Delegation of authority to the embassies on the Netherlands side coincided with a less radical process of decentralisation in FAO, which resulted in greater autonomy for the three regional offices in Africa, Asia and Latin America. However no regular communication developed between these offices and the Dutch representations in the regions.

The suspension of consultations on the trust fund co-operation and the delegation of responsibility for project portfolio management to the embassies were seen by FAO as a severe risk for the continuation of Netherlands-FAO co-operation. Instead of dealing with one or a few central units within the Ministry that were familiar with FAO and had their own budget, the organisation now had to deal with a wide range of specialists working in embassies around the world. FAO expressed its concern that policy coherence in

Netherlands-FAO co-operation would gradually erode and that funding levels would go down rather fast.

A World Food Summit was held in Rome in 1996. Over the years the aim of sufficient food at the global level turned into one of food security for households and individuals. The summit accepted the Rome Declaration on World Food Security, which aimed to halve the number of undernourished people by 2015. An action plan stipulated that countries would give absolute priority to the eradication of hunger and under nourishment, and to poverty alleviation in general. Countries also committed themselves to sustainable agriculture and rural development, and had to promote public and private investments to this end. Further liberalisation of world trade was underlined, and viewed to be of vital importance. Also in 1996, the city of Leipzig hosted an International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources that finally put the issue of agricultural biodiversity on the agenda of FAO. These conferences were used by Netherlands delegations as a vehicle for more general policy discussions with FAO, on the normative function of the organisation as well as on the use of non-decentralised funds for activities related to the normative function.

In 1999, a Conference on Multifunctional Character of Agriculture and Land took place in Maastricht. It aimed to review the progress of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, as well as to prepare the eighth session (in 2000) of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, which was set up after the UNCED Conference to monitor progress toward Agenda 21. The Conference reflected the evolution towards a focus on the multifunctional character of agriculture and land. Land was no longer viewed just as a resource to be exploited with minimal negative impacts, but as a crucial instrument for the achievement of improved socio-economic, biological and physical environments. However, the withdrawal of a number of important developing countries, which saw the vocabulary used as a means for western countries to introduce new or justify existing protective measures, had a negative influence on the impact of the Conference. The FAO Council decided in November 1999 that, for political reasons, the organisation would refrain from elaborating the multifunctional concept of agriculture and stick to the Agenda 21 wording.

The 1998 general elections in the Netherlands kept the ruling coalition government in power, but the composition of the Cabinet changed. Under the new minister for development co-operation the focus of development co-operation again shifted, but now from a thematic to a country orientation. A new country policy came into being. Selection criteria henceforth concerned the quality of socio-economic policy, the quality of governance, and the degree of poverty. Ownership became a keyword: developing countries themselves would direct and take responsibility for development co-operation. The number of

countries eligible for a full-fledged development co-operation programme was limited. Moreover, the focus shifted from project support to sector support, ideally in the form of budget support. In Bolivia, for example, the Netherlands introduced the new sector wide approach in 1999. Much of that year was spent on discussions and negotiations with national authorities on the sector choice and the implementation modalities. Following a broad based consultation process, the Netherlands committed itself in the course of 2000 to long-term, programme-based co-operation in three sectors, i.e. education, rural productive development and decentralisation/ people's participation. While other donors were rather cautious in switching to the new aid modality, the Netherlands energetically embraced the concept and almost instantly announced the termination (or transfer to other donors) of all 'old-style' projects, including the FAO projects under review in that country.

Netherlands development co-operation with Zambia was converted to sector-wide approaches in the late 1990s. This matched well with support to the Agricultural Sector Investment Programme being undertaken by that country, with World Bank Support. In Zambia's agriculture sector, the Netherlands' long-term goal is to develop an efficient, competitive and sustainable sector, assuring food security and maximising its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (see box). In 2000, the Netherlands undertook more or less the same changes in Senegal that it had executed in Bolivia. Here it was not so much a change towards sectoral support as such, but rather the decision to choose for national

Although the Agricultural Sector Investment Programme has had only limited success and the sector-wide approach is becoming more flexible than originally conceived in Dutch policy, current Netherlands development cooperation with Zambia clearly differs from arrangements at the start of the 1990s:

- *The 'projects' still exist, but there are fewer of them, they are better coordinated, and they rely less on expatriate technical assistance;*
- *The there is a strong emphasis on sectoral coordination, supported in the case of agriculture by Dutch funding for the Agricultural Consultative Forum;*
- *The while collaboration with the Government of Zambia continues, the emphasis is now on support for non-governmental development partners;*
- *The the Dutch spatial focus on Western Province has ended, although residual support is still provided to some activities there.*

Source: Report of field mission to Zambia, 2002

execution that led to the gradual abolition of the co-operation with FAO. Also, regional projects were not seen to be in line with the new policy, on the one hand because it might imply an expansion in the number of countries being supported, and on the other because regional activities were not seen as a priority from a country focus perspective. Although from 1998-99 onwards the number of new commitments for project funding gradually started to decrease, the effects on the Netherlands-FAO trust fund budget only started to show by the end of 2000. In 2000 and 2001, however, much of the decline in budget was compensated by an increase of funding in the field of emergency aid. While project funding on country level was almost exclusively limited to project extensions in 2000, funding of regional programmes almost completely stopped. For instance, most of the regional work that had already been carried out for many years in the field of integrated pest management could only be continued through programmatic support for an IPM unit within FAO. It was only in 2002 that a temporary solution was found for one of the IPM programmes in South East Asia, i.e. IPM for vegetables. A budget for one year's expenses was approved as a financial addendum to the new partnership programme (see section 3.6 below).

Although from 1985 onwards expenses in the forestry sector gradually increased, towards the end of the 1991-1995 period allocations to FAO forestry work started to decline. Activities in the field of biodiversity and conservation became more and more important, and attention to social forestry diminished. Traditionally FAO had a strong position in regular forestry, but was not well versed in biodiversity and conservation. In addition, FAO's position was affected by the strong criticism of TFAP. Simultaneously, FAO's expertise eroded because staff moved to the World Bank and other institutions. These other organisations attracted funding and FAO lost its leading position in forestry.

The Netherlands paper on "The quality of the UN as a channel for development co-operation" (1999) stated that the tasks of FAO are primarily normative (compilation, processing and dissemination of information, and development of international standards), and that these tasks are performed on the basis of operational activities.[29] The document presented a rather negative picture of FAO.[30] Although not based on a thorough evaluation of FAO's performance, it was seen by FAO as an additional threat to Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation. Moreover, during discussions in Parliament on the Budget in that year the Minister for Development Co-operation clearly indicated that support to FAO trust fund projects was going down rather fast, partly due to the fact that trust fund projects were never an expression of a deliberate Netherlands FAO policy. She stated further that

29 De kwaliteit van de VN als kanaal voor OS. Den Haag: Ministry of Foreign affairs, 1999.
30 De kwaliteit van de VN als kanaal voor OS. The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999.

the Netherlands' position as one of the bigger donors to FAO was not based on a serious assessment of the quality of FAO as an executing agency.[31] Although it criticised them heavily for their lack of efficiency and effectiveness, the Netherlands reconfirmed in its annual budgets during the 1996-1999 period the great importance that it attached to assistance via multilateral organisations.

3.6 Recent developments

By 2000 the Netherlands placed much greater emphasis on ownership and authority for its development partners in the use of Netherlands aid funding. This meant that collaboration between The Hague and Rome was much less central to the creation of trust fund projects. Meanwhile, the Netherlands had applied similar concepts to its multilateral partners, setting up partnership agreements that make block grants to these agencies for use in specified fields.[32] Within those broad sectors, the agencies decide how to use the funds. The FAO/Netherlands partnership programme (FNPP) was finally set up on this basis in 2001 with a budget of € 10.2 million for two years. It has begun to restructure and intensify the relationship between the two partners, and has aroused considerable interest among other donors as a potential model for their extra- budgetary support to FAO. The partnership was meant to express some continuing Netherlands support for FAO work in the approved sectors, to develop a policy framework for FAO/Netherlands co-operation, to support institutional reform in FAO itself and to replace individual project funding by programme funding as far as non-decentralised Netherlands funds are concerned. In line with general Netherlands policy towards developing country partners and multilateral agencies, it is up to FAO to decide whether the funds will be used for 'normative' or operational activities, at headquarters or in the field. However, given the amount of funds available and the mere fact that decision-making on how the funds have to be spent is concentrated at headquarters level, it is obvious that the focus tends to be on the normative side. FNPP requires some major changes in the ways FAO works, and in how it monitors and reports its work. It is too soon to evaluate its performance. Ambitious early plans for monitoring and reporting are currently being scaled down. FAO reporting on the programme so far has only been indicative. Meanwhile, the approval and funding of country-specific trust fund projects would remain the responsibility of the individual

31 TK 32 Verslag van de Begrotingsbehandeling Buitenlandse Zaken, onderdeel Ontwikkelingssamenwerking. Den Haag: Tweede Kamer 8 december 1999, 32-2459.

32 Partnership agreements exist with the World Bank and the specialised UN agencies ILO and WHO, and with the UN funds, UNICEF, UNDP and UNDGO. Other agreements are being prepared for UNEP and HABITAT.33 Letter to Dr. Jacques Diouf, Director-General of FAO, 22/01/02, no. ROF-2002/135. Rome: Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to FAO, WFP and IFAD.

embassies. The FNPP focuses on three sectors: food security, forestry and agro-biodiversity. The choice of these sectors was one-sided because it was based on Netherlands proposals, ignoring those made by FAO. One of the biggest challenges the programme poses to FAO staff is to think programmatically. Much remains to be done in that regard. Linked to this challenge is the need to build a more evaluative, analytical approach, while maintaining a focus on effective delivery. Results will be harder to demonstrate in the more diffuse and verbal normative fields where many of the funds will probably be spent. After a first phase of two years, the FNPP has recently been extended for a third year . In Rome, it has become something of a model for framework funding agreements between FAO and donor governments. Overall, the changes in the global Netherlands-FAO relationship have a clear intent and structure when viewed from The Hague or Rome. For example, in a recent letter to the Director General of FAO from the Netherlands Permanent Representation in Rome, the Netherlands policy and its implications for Netherlands-FAO co-operation at country level are formulated in a clear and straightforward manner (see box).[33] It remains to be seen whether this new policy framework will actually lead to an improvement in FAO-Netherlands trust fund co-operation. Support for the new partnership remains rather fragile in The Hague. Rural development is currently

"...What does this all mean for the co-operation between the Netherlands and FAO at country level? First, the Netherlands will only be able to support FAO projects and programmes in countries the Netherlands is working with in its bilateral aid programme. Secondly, in these countries the Netherlands will only be able to support FAO projects and programmes in the sector(s) of concentration agreed upon by the recipient country and the Netherlands. Thirdly, FAO projects and programmes must fit within the PRSP and the relevant sectoral policy of the recipient country and the organisation should move towards adopting a sector-wide approach. Fourthly, ownership means that the Netherlands can and will only (co-) finance FAO projects and programmes if these projects and programmes are explicitly requested supported and approved by the recipient government. Ideally FAO should submit its proposals through the government of the recipient country to potential donors. Fifthly, because of the wide-ranging decentralisation and the transfer of powers to the Netherlands embassies in the field, proposals should be submitted to the concerned Dutch embassy for appraisal and consideration."

Excerpt from letter to FAO from the Netherlands Permanent Representation, 2002

33 Letter to Dr. Jacques Diouf, Director-General of FAO, 22/01/02, no. ROF-2002/135. Rome: Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to FAO, WFP and IFAD.

not a priority in Netherlands policy and the department that formerly dealt with rural development has shifted its focus to other development domains.
In the field, however, the FNPP and its consequences for country-specific and regional projects remain a rather remote and often confusing issue. One impression that has been gained by people in the field is that there is some link between the apparently changed Netherlands attitude to funding regional projects, and the introduction of the FNPP. The current Netherlands policy on funding regional projects is in particular seen as something of a mystery, because of the excellent reputation of some of these programmes. Neither the Netherlands nor FAO has succeeded in explaining the FNPP adequately to decision makers in the regions – including their own staff.

3.7 Assessment and conclusions

The early years of the 1990s continued an established pattern in Netherlands-FAO co-operation. This was marked by high levels of extra-budgetary funding to the organisation; a high degree of professional confidence and technical contact between the two sides; and generally good working relations between The Hague and Rome, marked by regular consultations on the co-operation. Much changed over the second half of the decade. Partly because of structural and policy changes on the Netherlands side, contacts and confidence waned. While the trust fund co-operation in 1985-1990 was largely vested in the Rural Development Sector Programme, in 1991-1995 it was organised along geographical lines (country and regional programmes) and through Spearhead Programmes, co-ordination being the responsibility of the multilateral department. The Permanent Representation in Rome functioned mainly as a liaison office dealing with administrative matters. From 1996 the co-operation was largely delegated to embassies, thematic departments in The Hague being only responsible for worldwide and regional projects. This coincided with a more modest decentralisation of responsibilities within FAO to regional offices. Prior to 1991 the co-operation was therefore chiefly organised and managed from a focal point, but it subsequently spread out first over regional departments and Spearhead Programmes, and then over thematic departments at Headquarters and embassies.
Despite the extent of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation, an explicit policy framework has never guided it. The co-operation had neither specifically formulated main objectives nor a set budget. The activities were therefore implemented on the basis of the Netherlands aid policy in force at any time. The Netherlands-FAO co-operation was primarily considered an instrument to meet the objectives of the Netherlands aid policy, which in the 1990s also included quantitative targets. FAO was of course a ready channel.

Particularly in the forestry field, for a long time there were also few alternative executing agencies. Moreover, FAO did constitute a convenient channel for donors. It fully managed and controlled donor-financed activities, and a donor did not have to discuss policy with recipient governments. Ironically, it is the FNPP, a partnership agreement aimed at offering the recipient greater latitude and responsibility than before, that has finally given FAO more detail on Dutch policy about how Netherlands aid (from central funds, not embassies) may be used. The FNPP, however, only started operating in 2001. During the period on which this evaluation focuses, the Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation was not guided by any overall policy.

Projects were generally identified and initiated by FAO. Formally FAO only acts on request of recipient countries, and the Netherlands always assumed that this was the case. Proposals were formulated at FAO headquarters and attuned to the requirements for Netherlands funding. The Netherlands usually briefed FAO on budget constraints, priorities and funding possibilities.

There has not been a Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation *programme*. Instead, what this evaluation covers is a ten year assemblage of projects, designed and delivered on the basis of a spectrum of common understanding and interest – but increasingly hindered towards the end of the decade by growing confusion and lack of confidence. It can be argued that in 1985-1990 the trust fund co-operation was largely attuned to the objectives of the Netherlands' Rural Development Sector Programme and as such constituted part of a *programme*. However, this binding factor no longer applied once the Rural Development Sector Programme was abolished in 1991. From then on, the co-operation consisted basically of a series of projects that were largely judged on their own merits. Despite the annual coordination meetings that were held between FAO and the Netherlands government, activities were monitored and reviewed individually and not as a coherent programme.

This does not imply that no efforts were made to give the co-operation a more programmatic character. The APS concept is a good example. In 1989, the co-operation was considered to lack a clear structure, and for that reason it was decided to organise the technical reviews according to three clusters: Food Security, Forestry, and Agricultural Production Systems. In 1993 the Food Security and APS clusters were subsequently merged into an Agriculture and Rural Development cluster. While the clustering could be explained as an effort towards the formation of a programme, it was primarily founded on management principles. Moreover the APS cluster, for instance, included assorted activities and notoriously lacked cohesion. The Forestry cluster focused on TFAP. All non-TFAP forestry activities were in principle supposed to be related to the core activity. Reportedly

the practice was different. In addition, the Forestry cluster functioned in a rather self-contained manner. Both FAO and Netherlands officials felt that this was necessary in order to promote forest interests as well as possible.
From 1996 onwards, following the decentralisation of Netherlands development co-operation, the annual meetings were suspended and the only possibility to discuss co-operation in more programmatic terms disappeared. For the five years until annual meetings resumed in the different framework of the FNPP, the relationship drifted.
The trust fund co-operation primarily concerned the Field Programme of FAO. An essential foundation for the co-operation was meant to be interaction between the Regular and the Field Programmes. Activities or concepts that had been tested in the Field Programme and proved to be effective should subsequently be incorporated in the Regular Programme. This assumption was congruent with one of the reasons for channelling development assistance through FAO, namely to influence the organisation's policy.
The interaction was frequently discussed in the annual Co-operative Programme Meetings but reportedly not followed up in practice.
As far as policy influence is concerned, FAO was considered by the Netherlands to be a traditional, technology oriented organisation, generally lacking ideas and innovative capacity. In order to transform the organisation's prevailing culture, in particular in the early years of the period under consideration, attempts were made to find change agents within FAO who would associate with Netherlands policy and support new concepts or activities. In fact, however, the trust fund co-operation hardly stirred FAO policy. It might well be concluded that trust fund money does not necessarily buy or change policy. In this respect it might be questioned how far one of the aims of the new Partnership Programme – promoting reform in the organisation – is realistic, especially when one considers the relatively modest funding that is involved.
However, apart from FAO's traditional disposition, a number of other factors deterred policy changes. These included a tendency to concentrate on the volume of business. Operational activities were pursued at the cost of advisory or normative tasks. The Netherlands repeatedly emphasised the importance of FAO's role as policy adviser and on normative issues, although it was one of the biggest trust fund donors. It also addressed the proliferation of departments within FAO, which impeded the co-operation that was needed to set up innovative activities. Furthermore, the FAO Conference was a levelling factor. Donor countries lacked cohesion, and recipient countries in particular were mainly interested in attracting funding for operational activities.

4 Developments in key sectors

This chapter amplifies some of the policy history that was outlined in chapter 3, with particular reference to the key sectors on which this evaluation focuses.

4.1 Food security and nutrition

The first focus area for Netherlands co-operation with FAO was food security. The concept of food security was high on FAO's agenda after the world food crisis of the mid-1970s. In 1972-1973, world food surpluses disappeared almost overnight after the first drop in food production since the Second World War. As a result cereal prices trebled and food aid dropped by half. Poor countries were priced out of the market at the very time when their need for cheap imports was more urgent than ever. World food security, as formulated by FAO, embraced three concepts: increasing agricultural production in the developing countries, stabilising prices and supplies of food on national and international markets, and providing adequate access to food for all.

The World Food Security Compact, which was approved by the FAO Conference in 1985, urged developing countries to promote domestic food production, to provide farmers, particularly smallholders, with adequate incentives, to avoid dependence on imported foods that cannot be grown locally, and to set up early warning systems and emergency food reserves. Developed countries were asked to help developing ones to increase their production, to continue providing emergency food aid as required and to consider world as well as national interests when setting policies concerning food production, stocks, imports and prices.

One result of the crisis of the mid 1970s was the creation of FAO's Special Action Programme – known as the Food Security Assistance Scheme (FSAS) – designed specifically to help countries increase their food security. The basic idea of the FSAS was to encourage countries to develop an overall food security programme and to provide assistance to this process.

Most FSAS projects embraced agricultural policies that were supposed to provide adequate incentives for farmers without raising domestic food prices dramatically, plans for developing an effective early warning system for predicting crop shortages, a network of emergency food reserves over the country, and cereal management practices designed to stabilise the price and supply of grain.

During the 1985-1990 period, the Netherlands supported a number of FSAS projects through its Rural Development Sector Programme. Food security in Netherlands rural development policy focused on measures to be taken after the production phase *per se*, such as availability and distribution of food, storage arrangements and post harvest losses. The approach was technical by nature and aimed in particular at the issue of availability.

FAO also operated its own crop forecasting and early warning system known as the Global Information and Early Warning System for Food and Agriculture (GIEWS) which monitored developments in food demand and supply at both global and national levels. In particular during the African food crisis of the mid 1980s, GIEWS increased its monitoring activities and issued regular monthly reports on crop information and the provision of emergency food aid in Africa. One of the most important Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects in this field, known as ARTEMIS (see box), focused on the development of an automated system for the retrieval and processing of satellite data. In addition to this worldwide initiative, the Netherlands also supported a FAO project in Zambia enabling the country to set up a crop forecasting and early warning system for agricultural produce (see box).

After the abolition of the Rural Development Sector Programme in 1991, food and food security lost their central position in Netherlands rural development policies. It was clearly stated in "A World of Difference", the major policy document of that year, that food security basically had to do with purchasing power of poor populations.[34]

In discussions with FAO the Netherlands tried to integrate food security and agricultural production issues under a new umbrella, i.e. Agricultural Production Systems (APS).

The ARTEMIS project (Africa Real Time Environmental Monitoring Systems using imaging satellites) was developed to establish an operational remote sensing system to support agricultural production in Africa. Most project activities were executed at FAO headquarters in Rome. ARTEMIS is considered the cornerstone of a worldwide early warning system for food security. It collects, compares and interprets remote sensing data on weather conditions (in particular rainfall) and vegetative cover in order to predict where unfavourable conditions occur for crop development during the growing season or where insect plague outbreaks might be expected.

34 A World of Difference. The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1991.

The Early Warning System (EWS) and Census of Agriculture project has been designed to assist the Government of Zambia in developing a sound planning base for agricultural development, with particular reference to the implementation of national food security policies.

Review mission, 1990

The EWS and Census of Agriculture project laid good foundations for ongoing work to monitor food production and food security in Zambia. However, two factors have qualified the impact of this project... [First,] GRZ has lacked the recurrent resources to operate, maintain and renew the systems and procedures that the donor funded project put in place... The second factor concerns the political dimension of food security assessments and food relief operations in Zambia... this project functioned well within its technical and policy parameters. But although it did contribute to refinements in the ways that the food balance was calculated – for example, in the assumptions made about diet and relevant crops – the project reinforced rather than questioned the politicisation of food security.

Extract from draft report of evaluation field mission to Zambia, 2002

This initiative, however, failed because of lack of ownership by all stakeholders, including the Netherlands and FAO (section 3.4).
During the mid-1990s FAO launched a new initiative on food security called Food Security in Low-Income Food Deficit Countries. The concept was based on action at country level and implied technology transfer starting with pilot projects in a limited number of areas. The approach turned out to be based on rather old concepts of agricultural intensification through the introduction of technology packages, including irrigation and external inputs. As a consequence, most donors, including the Netherlands, withdrew. The World Food Summit of 1996, which resulted in a Rome Declaration and a World Action Plan, tried to revitalise attention to the issue. But at least in Netherlands-FAO development co-operation it was only by the end of the 1990s that food security gradually came onto the agenda again.

4.2 Agricultural policy and production

Especially during the 1980s and early 1990s, one of the key sources of inspiration for activities in the field of agricultural policy and production was FAO's "Agriculture: Toward 2000" document.[35] It was characterised by a focus on growth that was typical for the Green Revolution era. FAO's conclusion, based on World Bank population estimates, was

that when the world's population eventually stabilised (at around 10 billion, towards the end of the 21st century), global food needs would be around three times greater than in 1980. In other words, total food output needed to grow at 1.4% per annum. Most of the increased demand for food would be concentrated in the developing world. Food production in the countries concerned would need to show a fivefold increase over the next century, equivalent to an annual growth rate at 2.2%. FAO urged a development strategy aimed at making increased domestic food production the top priority of developing countries, and the creation of international trade and co-operation structures in line with developing countries' needs. FAO also stressed the interdependence of the North and South and the consequent need for international solutions to world problems.
The FAO fertiliser programme, although it had been launched in 1961, can still be considered as a clear response to the above analysis. Its long-term objective has always been very general and straightforward: to raise rural living standards by developing agricultural production. In the short term this implied increasing output at farm level and raising small farmers' incomes by efficient use of fertiliser.

A Netherlands funded mission identified the Fertisuelos project in Bolivia in 1985 after assessing the effectiveness of fertiliser import support. The mission was alarmed by the lack of expertise on fertiliser use, at the level of the farmer and of the agricultural extension services. The mission's proposal for an FAO sponsored and Netherlands funded technical assistance project was endorsed by the Bolivian authorities and approved late in 1986. The formulation of the Fertisuelos project was the starting point of a long-lived technical co-operation spanning 12 years in two phases. The main objectives of the project were to increase the productivity of agriculture, to obtain self-sufficiency in basic food crops and, eventually, to produce more food for export and improve the standards of living of the rural poor. This study's field mission concluded that although the project generated a wealth of information on how to combat soil fertility problems, it suffered from the same problems that affected similar projects elsewhere when the input (fertiliser) is not adequately co-ordinated with the overall farming system, as part of technological packages that make both agronomic and economic sense. Efforts to broaden the project's scope of intervention came rather late and remained largely ineffective in the absence of supporting price and trade policies at the central level.

35 Agriculture toward 2000. Rome: FAO, 1981.

The majority of the fertiliser programme schemes were demonstration projects geared to provide information and training for local farmers. The Netherlands has funded such projects in several countries, such as Nepal, Bolivia, Sri Lanka and Tanzania.
In the 1985-1991 period, six FAO fertiliser projects were funded. The Netherlands not only provided funding for FAO fertiliser projects involving field trials and demonstrations, but also participated in FAO support for a national fertiliser development centre in Pakistan and provided fertiliser for use in a rural stores project in Sudan.
Almost all tripartite evaluation reports on these activities take a predominantly favourable view of the quality of the results, although hardly any concrete information on implications for food supplies, output levels and the relief of poverty is given. However, it is noteworthy that in later years criticisms became at least as numerous as plaudits and often weightier in substance: for example, field activities did not reflect farmers' interests, no practical and affordable recommendations were given, and newly introduced techniques were not always economically attractive to farmers. Important aspects of sustainability – such as economic viability at farm level, economic sustainability and

In the period 1985-1990, four projects focused on the improvement of rice post harvest technologies were started in Gambia, Senegal, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. These four projects were to be co-ordinated by an FAO umbrella project: 'Technical co-operation between developing countries in rice post-harvest technology', to facilitate collaboration and improve the exchange of information. Through exchange of information more efficient use would be made of scarce resources. Two of these four projects, in Gambia and Senegal, were covered by this evaluation.They basically had the same objectives and set-up: an improvement of rice production through the introduction of post-harvest techniques and the support of a government agency in this field. Hindsight shows that the strategy followed was inadequate. As DGIS noted in 1996: "no post harvest without pre harvest, farmers are not willing to invest in the prevention of harvest losses when no improvement of production is visible in the field, which warrants the investment." This implies a weakness in project design often encountered in Netherlands-FAO projects: virtually no attention was paid to the economic viability of the proposed technology. Technologies were often identified by FAO on their technical merits, not on their socio-economic benefits. Farmers will only use a new technology if the investment in it pays off. A second design weakness was the limited approach followed. No integral analysis was done of rice production in the different countries, which would have shown production problems to be interrelated, both within and between countries. >

> *Apart from weaknesses related to the project design, implementation of the projects was unsatisfactory as well. Each project worked largely in isolation, seeking its own solutions to problems. The exchange of information through the planned umbrella project did not materialise. Both projects found out on their own that the proposed technologies were not fully adapted to the socio-economic context, leading to an absence of sustainable results. Thus, little use was made of the potential communication role of the umbrella project. A second problem in the implementation of the projects was the lack of use made of experience and lessons learned.*
> *A mid-term evaluation executed in Gambia in 1990 made an analysis of Gambia's rice market, which clearly showed that the production problems are interrelated with the market liberalisation. Apart from that, a socio-economic survey was held in 1992, which produced a good insight in the (lack of) economic viability of a number of technologies introduced. Both were largely ignored, and no readjustment of strategy was made. A third factor which hampered an effective implementation of the Gambian project was that FAO, through the same counterpart used by the project, and in the same period, introduced 700 grain mills, a donation of Italy and Japan. Apart from being a complete failure, the introduction of the mills made heavy demands on the counterpart, leaving little time for co-operation with the post harvest project. The project, in its general role of supporting the counterpart, got involved in the distribution and management of the grain mills, an unintended and ineffective activity.*
> *Overall, it appears that the potential advantages of FAO as an executing agency - its supranational reach, technical knowledge and role as information centre - were not used in any way.*

viability in relation to macro-economic factors, such as international trade and exchange-rate policies – were generally not covered at all. Where they were touched upon the assessment was predominantly negative.[36] In the late 1980s and early 1990s, support to fertiliser projects dwindled. Not only socio-economic but also environmental concerns made various donors reluctant to continue support. After 1990 the number of fertiliser projects was in rapid decline.

The development strategies of the 1980s were strongly influenced by the structural adjustment programmes that were introduced in developing countries with a view to restoring economic balance. Those programmes emphasised market liberalisation, the ending of price controls and subsidies on fertilisers and foodstuffs, exchange rate adjustments, the reform of inefficient public agencies and the diversification of production and exports. The Netherlands supported several of those projects.

36 Fertiliser Aid. IOB evaluation report. The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1995.

4.3 Environmental sustainability and pest management

Policy debate on sustainability dominated the early years of the 1990s, although it had started in the late 1980s. Debate on the environmental damage associated with intensive farming prompted more critical attitudes towards fertiliser use and a greater emphasis on ecologically sound techniques such as ecological farming and integrated plant nutrition systems (IPNS). FAO defined IPNS in its "Agriculture: Towards 2010" document as an approach to fertilisation which aims at optimising the use of all possible on- and off-farm sources of plant nutrients, comprising organic manure, biological fixation and mineral fertilisers. IPNS was introduced in the FAO fertiliser programme at the Netherlands' request in 1991. But it largely failed, because of a top down, technocratic approach. Support to the programme was then completely phased out.

The Final Declaration of the Den Bosch Conference organised in 1991 as part of the run-up to the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, gave practical substance to the notion of sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD).[37] The central features were integrated resource planning and management at community level, optimisation of the use of local resources and reduction of external inputs, diversification and integration of agricultural and other production systems, research on the sustainability of different farming systems, and international co-operation. The FAO "Agriculture: Towards 2010" document largely reflected these notions. Although the notion of SARD became well established in the organisation, the actual formulation and execution of projects was not always that easy.

The sustainable agriculture and rural development project in the Chorotega region in Costa Rica has been quite successful in the introduction of environmentally sustainable agricultural production methods on the basis of a participatory approach aiming at involving local communities in resource management. The project worked with men as well as women farmers. It was able to combine increased production with the conservation of natural resources.

The most concrete examples of projects focusing on ecological sustainability are those related to pest management. Since 1985, pest management has been an important issue in Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation. While in the early years the focus was mainly on the different aspects of locust control in sub-Saharan Africa, in later years attention gradually shifted to integrated pest management in Asia, to regional or world wide work

37 Final Declaration of the Den Bosch Conference. Rome: FAO, 1991.

on legal and institutional arrangements with respect to pesticide trade and use, and to the disposal of obsolete pesticide stocks.
After 1985, the Netherlands financed several projects, primarily in the West African region, on locust control. It was not only the trans boundary character of the locust problem, but also FAO's expertise that made it, as a multilateral organisation, the best institution to deal with activities in this field. Apart from spraying, attention was given to strategies focusing on ways to identify and monitor the regions of origin of migratory locusts. Remote sensing technology proved to be a particularly useful instrument. Such information was used, for instance, during the 1985-1986 locust plague in Africa, the worst for half a century, and helped identify the areas in most immediate need of preventative spraying. Apart from these activities, which were co-ordinated from a Rome-based Emergency Centre for Locust Operations, the national services within the ministries of agriculture in several Sahelian countries were reinforced. Co-operation with FAO in this field was co-ordinated with other projects on pesticide management executed by the institutions of the CILSS, the co-operation mechanism of the West African Sahelian countries.[38] The agricultural university at Wageningen provided technical support to the relevant policy departments within the Netherlands ministry and also to FAO. Netherlands experts in charge of the programmes in FAO facilitated communication.

The Senegal based Locustox research project started in 1991 and is still operational. The project aims at a better insight into side effects of the use of pesticides against locust plagues in the Sahel ecosystem. The project supported a variety of research activities related to the introduction of environmentally friendly bio-agents, the development of bio-indicators in order to monitor chemical impact, and training of African researchers and agricultural technical staff in the basics of toxicology in order to establish an African network of experts. In addition, the project developed channels of communications with other research institutions inside and outside Africa.

The earliest definitions of integrated pest management (IPM) were formulated by FAO in the 1970s. The concept was a response to the negative implications of the intensive chemical pest control that had been part of the technological packages for agricultural development during the previous years. Although it started with the introduction of so-called spraying thresholds, soon non-chemical control methods were integrated. During the 1980s and 1990s, integrated pest management developed into a concept of ecosystem

38 CILSS: Comité interétats de lutte contre la sécheresse dans les pays du Sahel.

The inter-country programme for the development and application of integrated pest management (IPM) in vegetable growing in South and South East Asia started, after a long preparatory phase, in 1996 with funds from the Netherlands for activities in four countries, Bangladesh, Laos , Philippines and Vietnam. The methodology, developed in the earlier IPM in rice project, was based on so-called farmer field schools, which combine training in agro-ecological concepts with experiential learning in the field. The ultimate goal of this project is to assist farmers in creating and owning their own critical ecological and decision-making skills that make their agricultural systems more productive, efficient, sustainable and safe. After the successes in rice - a sharp reduction in the use of pesticides, resulting in environmental and economic gains for farmers - vegetable growing introduces new challenges. The sheer diversity of vegetable production systems demands a greater input from agricultural research, which has to be integrated in the farmer oriented training system of the farmer field school.

management. On the basis of first project experience in Asia, FAO became aware that the top-down extension approach delivering centrally formulated IPM instructions was a crucial bottleneck in project performance. Co-operation with NGOs in some of the countries proved that non-formal education methods could be introduced in order to help farmers become familiar with the concept and its implications. The concept was developed into participatory IPM and farmer field schools were introduced, largely inspired by Habermas' communication theories.

From the late 1980s onwards, the Netherlands supported FAO IPM projects. During the annual co-operative programme meetings these projects were mentioned more than once as examples of a successful approach in agricultural development. Apart from the positive environmental impact, the aspect of farmers' participation and empowerment was considered the most important gain of the approach. Several times FAO was urged to introduce the same concept in other fields, like nutrient management. However initial steps in that direction failed because of the technological bias that still prevailed in most of the FAO departments concerned.

After 1996, co-operation in the field of IPM gradually stagnated. It was not so much Netherlands appreciation of the performance of IPM projects but the delegation of project management to the embassies that interfered with funding procedures. Most IPM projects were regional, which was not a problem as long as they were financed out of funds available for special programmes in The Hague. However, shortly after the decentralisation of Netherlands development co-operation these funds rapidly started to decline. Choices had to be made and it was no longer possible to fund projects at the

Tens of thousands of metric tonnes of obsolete pesticides have accumulated in Africa and the Near East. Many of these stocks have deteriorated and are a source of severe pollution, posing a threat to human health, the environment and development in general. The first pilot phase of the 'Disposal of Unwanted Pesticides' project was executed from July 1994 to September 1996. Phase 1 fulfilled its objective of laying a foundation for a large-scale programme with multi-donor involvement to dispose of obsolete pesticide stocks in Africa and the Near East in a safe and environmentally sound manner. This phase financed the pilot disposal of 262 tons of obsolete pesticides in Yemen, 360 tons in Zambia and 12 tons in the Seychelles.

Phase II (1996-2000) focused on the scaling up of disposal activities. The costs of the disposal operations were not covered by the project budget but were mobilised from other sources, both bi-lateral and multi-lateral. The costs of these operations, including repackaging, shipment and incineration, were in the range of $US 2,500 - $US 5,000 per tonne. Most developing countries could not afford such expenditure and were therefore reliant on external financial assistance.

The project enhanced the awareness at Government and public levels of environmental and health risks due to large stocks of obsolete pesticides. In October 1998, 22 countries received training in the management and storage of stocks of pesticides and were assisted with disposal plans and donor identification. At the same time 14 countries completed disposal operations, assisted by various donors, covering a total of 2,667 tons, including 634 disposed of by Phase I.

The evaluation mission considered that the projects achieved considerable impact. At the same time the mission strongly believed that further assistance was needed to extend the impact to more countries. The follow-up of this project into a third phase was eventually approved in October 2000. This project is still operational, and is planned to terminate in September 2003.

same level as in previous years. Efforts to integrate regional projects in country specific project portfolios were only partially successful.

The decision to focus almost exclusively on country programmes in 1998-1999 almost meant the end of Netherlands support to IPM projects. Meanwhile FAO had launched a so-called IPM facility, a special trust fund to initiate and support IPM activities in individual countries and to develop the concept further. The IPM facility, which implied co-operation with UNDP and World Bank, was considered by the Netherlands as an acceptable alternative to project funding, in particular because it was hoped that the in house facility would have a positive influence on other FAO programmes. With the new FNPP in place, support to regional IPM activities is still to be sorted out. In order to prevent too much damage to ongoing projects, there is a tendency to look for ad hoc solutions, as in

the case of IPM in vegetable production in South East Asia where funds covering one year's expenses were made available from the FNPP.
In the mid 1980s the FAO Conference put the issue of rules and regulations for pesticide trade and use on the agenda. The system of prior informed consent (PIC), which gives an importing country sufficient insight into the nature of the product and regulations about its use in the country of origin, was considered a particularly crucial step forward in the wise use of pesticides. FAO projects on the training of staff in developing countries and putting national PIC systems in place were seen by the Netherlands as important tasks emanating from the organisation's normative function. Although they were partly financed out of the regular budget, additional trust funds were made available by the Netherlands throughout the 1990s. The PIC system ultimately evolved into the International Plant Protection Convention. Another issue related to pesticides that was also brought up during the FAO Conference concerned the environmental risks created by the existence of obsolete stocks in many developing countries.

4.4 Forestry

Forestry and forest conservation have been an important issue in trust fund co-operation with FAO throughout most of the 1985-2000 period, in terms of policy discussions and in terms of project funding. The organising principle of the co-operation was the Tropical Forestry Action Plan (section 3.3). A Wageningen based group of forestry experts particularly supported TFAP through technical assistance to small National Forest Action Plan

The initiative of the TFAP approach was much welcomed by the Netherlands, which pledged funds for the establishment of a (temporary) TFAP secretariat and the establishment of a multi-donor TFAP trust fund to mobilise financial resources. These would basically be used for assisting countries in the preparation of National Forestry Action Plans outlining national priorities and the mobilisation of funding for their execution. At the policy level, the project in Bolivia facilitated the preparation of a National Forestry Development Strategy Paper and a series of four Departmental Forestry Sector Plans in Bolivia. None of these plans were ever put into practice because most of them were endless rephrasing of general policy statements and long term aspirations. Besides that they failed to come forward with concrete action programmes or investment proposals, and because there was a lack of practical commitment on the part of the implementing Ministry and Departments, caused by a lack of will-power to put the forestry sector on the political agenda.

Extract from draft report of evaluation field mission to Bolivia, 2002

(NFAP) secretariats in recipient countries. The group also acted as a general stimulus to the strong growth of Netherlands development assistance in the field of forestry.
The Netherlands repeatedly stated in discussions with FAO that its support to TFAP was particularly intended as a stimulus to get this activity included in FAO's regular programme. TFAP, being a framework setting activity, was considered to be fully compatible with the organisation's normative function. It was noted during the early years that the main objectives of the Rural Development Sector Programme matched very well with the global Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP), which was as a Special Action Programme at the base of many activities, and with the ongoing forestry field programmes. There was a general convergence of policies and priorities regarding forestry in FAO and in the Netherlands. Despite the widening scope of debate and interaction between FAO and the Netherlands on environmental issues (for example, after the 1989 Noordwijk Conference

The principal lesson that the Zambia Forestry Action Programme (ZFAP) experience offers is the need for realism in policy planning for a country like Zambia, where the policy environment is unstable and fiscal resources extremely limited. Much of the ZFAP process was sincerely intended and technically competent, but the resultant proposals were largely unrealistic and implementation has been restricted. From one perspective, therefore, the ZFAP that emerged from two years of work and investment was of limited relevance.

A related lesson concerns project planning and donor coordination with regard to initiatives that will themselves be planning exercises. It took so long to launch the ZFAP process (partly because of lengthy debates with The Netherlands about gender and NGOs) that in many ways it was overtaken by events. Those events, sponsored by a variety of donors, sometimes confused the ZFAP consultation and planning work.

The character of the ZFAP exercise clearly represents an interface or transition between the technocratic experience and skills of FAO, the technocratic and bureaucratic style of GRZ, and the emerging emphasis on involving resource users, communities and NGOs in forestry planning and management. Perhaps not surprisingly, the transition towards this latter emphasis was imperfect. NGOs, communities and resource users were not as fully involved as they should have been. The ZFAP experience shows that in countries such as Zambia, it is critically important to bring these non governmental partners to the fore in such processes, as they are the only ones that are likely to be able to maintain momentum and take practical action thereafter. Much of what ZFAP recommended has been bogged down by its dependence on action by government.

Extract from report of field mission to Zambia, 2002

on Pollution and Climate Change, TFAP remained the most important framework for forestry interventions.
Following the critical multi-donor evaluation of TFAP in 1990 and the subsequent withdrawal of some agencies (section 3.3), the name of the activity was changed in 1995. From now on it was to be called the Tropical Forests Action Programme. The new name referred to a shift in focus from forestry to forest conservation and to the intention to convert the TFAP into a real programme. In addition to the already existing focus on social forestry, protection and conservation of forests received more emphasis. Nevertheless, the more traditional forestry issues (such as planting, maintenance, felling and processing) seemed to remain the central sector in many of FAO's activities. It was basically in the field of social forestry that most of the progress was realised.

The study's field mission to Senegal reviewed six forestry projects. The technical quality of these projects was sometimes high, although a lack of monitoring data makes it impossible to tell how much extra biomass they generated for the country. There was a laudable trend towards more participatory, bottom-up approaches. But the durability of the results was gravely impaired by inadequate attention to the legal and institutional framework. Many of the local forestry and resource management groups that were promoted by these projects have therefore failed to survive. The mission concluded that the Netherlands-FAO trust fund project to support implementation of the Senegalese National Forestry Action Plan was only marginally effective and had minimal institutional impact (section 6.2.4).

Expenses in the forestry sector gradually increased from 1985 onwards. However, towards the end of the 1991-1995 period, allocations to FAO started to decline. As was explained in section 3.3, FAO lost its leading position in the forestry sector after 1995.

4.5 Institutional development

Although not a clearly demarcated separate sector, institutional development can be considered the common denominator of a large number of FAO activities that were supported by the Netherlands. These activities relate to issues like land tenure, participation, and women and development.
In 1979, a world conference on agrarian reform and rural development (WCARRD) was held in Rome. The conference established the principle that people should participate in the institutions and systems that govern their lives as a basic human right. WCARRD became the front line of the attack on rural poverty, an attack that was to embrace the

new tool of people's participation as the key to rural development. WCARRD led to two results within FAO: the first was a follow-up umbrella programme entitled 'People's Participation in Rural Development through Promotion of Self-Help Organisations' or PPP, and the second was a re-evaluation of FAO projects in terms of their impact on rural women.

The PPP was designed to provide the rural poor with direct access to useful organisations that they could control and run themselves. If successful, such organisations would lead to self-development and planning from below. The organisations were not seen as an end in themselves but as a means to action geared towards providing income-earning opportunities for the rural poor. PPP projects therefore started by initiating or building up self-help organisations, and teaching people how to run them efficiently. Attempts were then made to help these groups identify income-earning projects, such as growing vegetables, raising poultry or other livestock, and starting handicraft or cottage industries. Many PPP projects established a revolving fund from which the groups could take loans.

The PPP matched the objectives of the Rural Development Sector Programme of the Netherlands rather well. So from 1985 onwards, the Netherlands became the most important contributor to the programme, contributing 69% of the total funds for PPP projects. Italy was the second in line. Between 1985 and 1990, the programme was operational in 12 countries, mostly in Africa. The IOB evaluation of the Rural Development Sector Programme showed that the focus on small informal groups was effective, although in several cases the projects failed to result in economically viable production systems (see also section 6.2.1 below)[39]. The envisaged mainstreaming of the notion of participation in other FAO projects also failed because of the tension between the time-consuming participatory approach on the one hand and the management incentive to formulate project phases of no more than three years on the other. After 1990 the PPP gradually dissolved because of lack of funding.

The second outcome of the WCARRD conference was the focus on rural women. The objectives formulated were to re-evaluate the FAO projects with regard to their impact on women, and to put in place procedures that would guarantee the involvement of women at all stages in the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects. In order to realise these objectives FAO created a separate 'Women in Development' unit, with a financial input from the Netherlands. As a consequence a portfolio of specific women and development projects was developed, although the idea of gender being mainstreamed in the other FAO activities failed to get off the ground. Only the PPP projects included a

39 Rural Development Sector Programme. IOB evaluation. The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1991.

In Zambia's Western Province the People's Participation Service is a well-structured organisation. It was created after the FAO People's Participation Programme came to an end. For that reason it might be concluded that FAO's PPP involvement was quite successful. The activities have been followed up by a non-governmental organisation and were in that sense institutionally sustainable in the long run. The women involved in the programme show impressive levels of capacity and commitment and a great enthusiasm for the economic activities undertaken. Although the project did lead to an increase in income from agricultural production, the People's Participation service cannot be considered an economically self-reliant organisation. It is still dependent on external resources.

careful assessment of impact on gender before they became operational. The Netherlands urged FAO to follow up on the outcomes of the WCARRD. In 1987, this resulted in an action plan with the objective of fully integrated gender assessment in all FAO activities by the year 2000. Although attention to gender in FAO projects has improved enormously (section 7.3), that objective has not yet been realised.
Although the Netherlands supported a number of the WID programme's projects during the early days, from 1987 onwards attention shifted to the positioning of the unit within FAO and to its initiatives on mainstreaming of gender. Here again, with the abolition of the Rural Development Sector Programme, support to WID projects gradually phased out. It came to an end in the mid 1990s with the decentralisation of Netherlands development co-operation.

4.6 Assessment and conclusions

The quick overview of sectoral developments presented in this chapter spans an enormous range of ideas and action that were far from consistent in their technical, social or policy approaches. Nevertheless, some overall trends can be identified. Of these, some led to greater convergence between FAO and Netherlands approaches (and thus, greater collaboration), while some had the opposite effect.
Both parties gave steadily greater emphasis to environmental concerns in various sectors during the review period, although not always at the same pace or in the same ways. Thus, the Netherlands was readier to move away from traditional fertiliser projects, and some other 'green revolution' technologies, than FAO. Its concern about potential environmental implications of FAO's new Special Programme for Food Security was one of the reasons for its lack of enthusiasm about that initiative. FAO and the Netherlands were much more in harmony over evolving, more environmentally sound approaches to pest

control, although recently the former was perplexed by the latter's apparent loss of interest in further funding for IPM activities. This was one instance of structural changes on one or the other side disrupting the rather steady progress that was being made by the two parties in some sectors. Still in the pest control sector, however, collaboration has so far remained strong on another joint success story, namely work for the environmentally safe disposal of surplus pesticide stocks.

Both parties have also seen broadly comparable evolution in their approach to socio-economic factors and concerns. The Netherlands was thus a keen supporter of FAO's trend towards stronger support for beneficiary participation, and funded a number of PPP projects. FAO reacted positively to growing Netherlands commitment to gender equity, and there were several years of close collaboration on WID activities – followed, again, by a period of FAO perplexity as the Netherlands apparently turned away from such support at the time of its decentralisation. Both parties steadily changed their stances towards privatisation, deregulation and the role of markets in agriculture and agricultural development, and the Netherlands funded a number of trust fund projects in these fields. More recently, the FNPP has manifested general Netherlands approval for FAO's strategy of moving upstream to deal with macro-economic issues affecting agricultural development at the global level. However, the Netherlands also identifies a contradiction between the more top-down, technocratic approaches of the SPFS and the broader global trends towards bottom-up planning, indigenous knowledge and locally appropriate technologies that many parts of FAO have also embraced.

This summary history of collaboration in the key sectors of Netherlands interest outlines a number of major schemes – some invented with strong support from The Hague, some originating more in FAO's analysis and priorities. Some, like TFAP and IPM, were fields for strong collaboration and substantial Netherlands funding over a number of years. Some, like the Agricultural Production Systems concept, never really got off the ground, at least in collaboration between these two parties. The periods when collaboration on some of these schemes blossomed represented times of shared approaches and mutually supportive structures and policies. When such periods of congruence ended, collaboration waned. Sometimes, as in the case of TFAP, this was because theoretical enthusiasm had been tempered with uninspiring practical experience. Sometimes, as in the food security sector, technical paradigms diverged. Structural changes on the Netherlands side sometimes merely influenced priorities (as with the abolition of the Rural Development Sector Programme and the introduction of 'spearhead' programmes). But the Netherlands decentralisation of the mid 1990s disrupted or effectively ended programmes of collaboration in several sectors.

Although the level of confusion and frustration it has caused was certainly not intended, the decentralisation of Netherlands development planning and authority to embassies was clearly in line with the broad trend in the country's approach to development co-operation since the mid 1990s. This approach emphasises the leading role of beneficiaries in developing countries – at the level of citizens, groups and governments – in determining what needs to be done and how Netherlands aid money should be spent. By definition, such an approach makes coherent sectoral collaboration with FAO much less likely. The history outlined in chapters 3 and 4 of this study is largely based on collaboration and decisions in The Hague and Rome, as issues and approaches were identified in the various sectors of FAO's mandate. Now, in the Netherlands' view, The Hague and Rome should stay much more on the sidelines as people, governments and embassies in each developing country decide the priorities and strategies. From the sectoral perspective, future use of Netherlands funds on FAO field activities is likely to look much more fragmented. It will reflect the diversity of developing country priorities rather than the (sometimes) more coherent collaboration between two parties that characterised the 1980s and the 1990s.

Part II The performance of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation activities, 1990-1999

5 The Netherlands-FAO trust fund portfolio

This chapter gives an overview of the Netherlands-FAO trust fund portfolio during the 1990s. It shows how total expenditure on trust fund co-operation projects varied from year to year through the decade, and how the expenditure was distributed by sector, by region and by type of project, noting the collapse in support for regional projects towards the end of the decade. It goes on to assess the Programme Development Facility, an important tool in Netherlands-FAO planning and management of the portfolio, and to comment on the number and type of project proposals that were accepted and rejected for Netherlands trust fund support. Finally, the chapter shows the relationship between portfolio as a whole and the sample on which the evaluation's detailed analysis is based.

5.1 Levels of expenditure

Total expenditure on Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation projects during 1990-1999 was US$ 324.4 million, split among 168 projects of widely varying scale and duration (section 1.4). Figure 3 below shows the annual expenditures on trust fund projects in the 1990s. While the first half of the decade is characterised by sharp annual fluctuations, the second half shows a more stable picture, with a decline in 1999. This decline was a consequence of the decentralisation of the Netherlands development co-operation.
The fluctuations during the first half of the decade are less easily explained. Was it the disappearance of the Rural Development Programme in 1991 and the formulation of a new policy in "A World of Difference"? Probably. In any case, a closer look at the composition of the portfolio is needed to get a better understanding of the substantial increase in expenditures in 1993.

5.2 Sectoral distribution

For ease of reference, the project portfolio has been divided into eight sectoral groups, based on the main aims of the individual projects. However, the vast majority of expenditures and projects relate to just five sectors:

- food security and nutrition;
- agricultural policy and production;
- pest management (including integrated pest management);

- forests and forestry, and
- institutional development (including Women and Development and people's participation).

Although institutional development is of course an aspect of the projects in all the other sectoral categories, the number of projects with mainly institutional objectives (such as gender, farmers' organisations, reorganisation of extension services, and land reform) justifies a separate group. The three minor sectors are animal husbandry, fisheries and genetic diversity.

The most interesting sectoral feature of the portfolio is the high level of spending on forests and forestry, approximately equalling the combined total expenditure on the three other major sectors: agricultural policy and production, food security and pest management.

Figure 3. FAO's total annual expenditure on Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects, 1990-2001

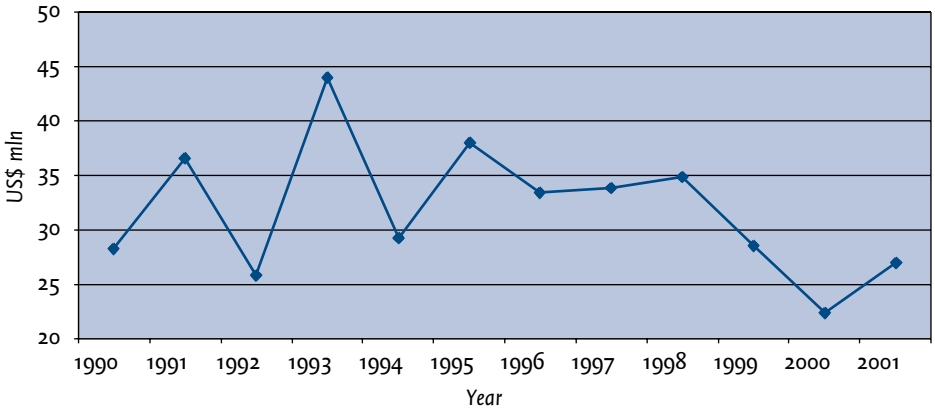
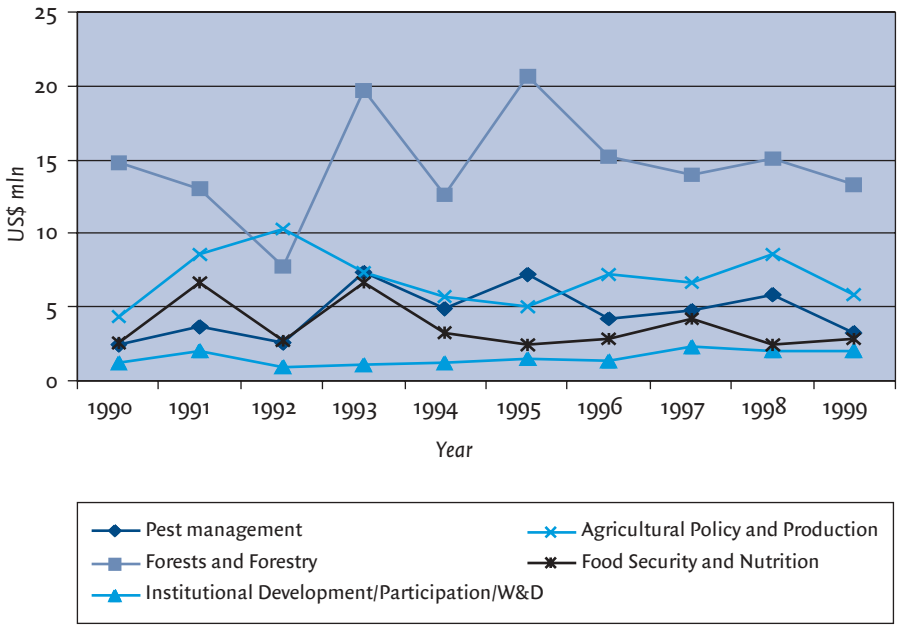


Figure 4 shows the pattern of expenditure on each of the sectors during the 1990s. Again the yearly fluctuations during the first half of the decade are the most striking ones. Here it becomes clear that changes in expenditures on forests/forestry and food security were the most influential factor in the overall fluctuations between 1991 and 1993. Analysis of the policy history has shown that the abolition of the Rural Development Sector Programme and the establishment of the Spearhead Programmes had an influence on these fluctuations. More generally the pattern shows clearly that the trust fund portfolio was not based on a clear strategy, let alone financial targets, but was in fact the result of forces of supply and demand.

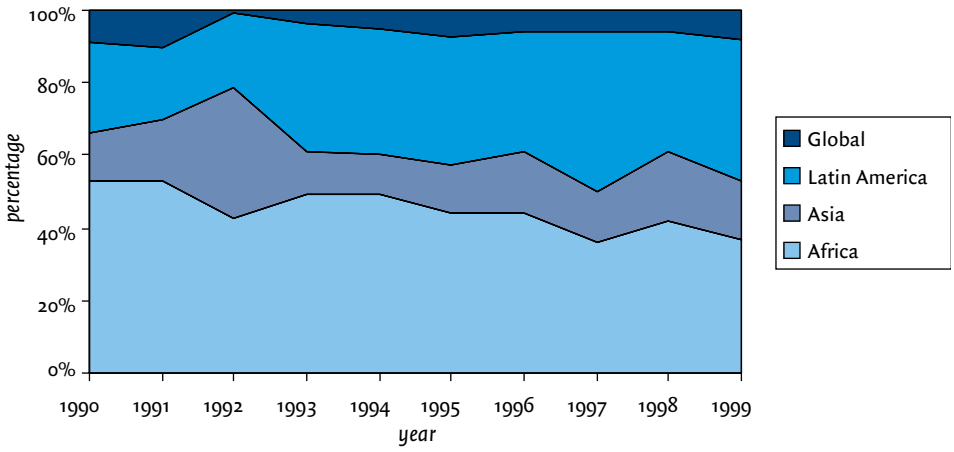
Figure 4 Sectoral distribution of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation, 1990-1999



5.3 Geographic distribution

Of the total project portfolio, 55% related to Africa, 20% to Latin America and 12% to Asia. The remaining 13% were global projects. The significant changes in regional distribution during the period (increased expenditures in Latin America and a decrease in Africa) can be explained by a change in focus in the forestry sector. From 1993 onwards, attention gradually shifted from community forest projects (mostly in sub- Saharan Africa) to tropical forest conservation projects in Latin America. Support to FAO from Netherlands forestry experts, who focused in particular on Latin American countries lacked expertise on Africa, also played a role.

Figure 5 Geographic distribution of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation, 1990-1999



5.4 Types of project

FAO policy documents often distinguish between normative and operational activities (section 2.3). Sometimes information gathering and dissemination and research related activities are mentioned as a separate category. The first category is made up of projects concerned with international policy development or legislation and regulation. The information and research related activities are a consequence of FAO's role as a global centre of expertise. The operational category embraces all projects resulting from requests for technical assistance from countries or groups of countries. The normative and information activities are inevitably closely related, and a particular operational activity may also be regarded as having a normative function. For example, projects focusing on the role of women in agriculture had purely operational aims but were also intended to get the subject onto the FAO (and indeed the global) agenda. It seems fair to assume that all country-specific projects can be considered as primarily operational in nature. Working on that assumption, the vast majority of the Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation projects that were funded in the 1990s involved operational activities. 12% of all projects had primarily normative aims, and just 5% related to information and research.

5.5 Regional projects

One of the comparative advantages of FAO that is repeatedly mentioned in records of the meetings of the Netherlands government with the organisation is its ability to work at a regional level. Regional work offers particular scope for FAO's strengths as a multilateral,

politically neutral agency with experience in promoting initiatives and influencing policy across national borders. In fact, a little over 20% of the total portfolio of the 1990s consists of regional projects. There were 38 such projects, of which 25 in Africa, seven in Latin America and six in Asia. These regional projects have been a particular casualty of the Netherlands decentralisation process and the shift in focus from sector to country in the late 1990s. Support for regional projects was almost completely banned in 1998 as part of the reorientation to support for a limited number of countries. Regional projects were only eligible for funding if the countries on which Netherlands aid focused requested them. Later, embassies were allowed to fund up to two regional projects. But they rarely funded any, not the least because of the scarcity of funds, which were primarily committed to national projects.

As far as extra-budgetary funding for FAO from central budgets is concerned, the years 1999 and 2000 can be considered a transition phase to the FNPP. Although the FNPP allows for regional projects, the funds have so far mainly been dedicated to global activities driven from headquarters. Special arrangements were recently made for extra funding through the FNPP for one more year of a promising regional project on integrated pest management in South East Asia. However, this is more an instance of pragmatism than of emerging clarity about how the Netherlands will fund regional work by FAO. It is clear that the funds made available under the FNPP hardly allow for any substantial support to regional programmes.

5.6 The Programme Development Facility

From the mid 1980s onwards, the number of project proposals financed under the trust fund arrangement increased enormously and the amount of money on the Netherlands' general interest account with FAO increased accordingly. As the financial regulations in force during those years did not allow for reimbursement to the Ministry of Development Co-operation of unused balances or interest accrued, ways were sought to put the available money to use. So it was decided to create a so-called evaluation and formulation facility. This facility came into being in 1988.

Initially the objectives of the Project Formulation and Evaluation Facility were to finance joint Netherlands-FAO missions for project programming, formulation and evaluation. The Facility was supposed to supplement other sources available for these activities, such as funds in the Regular Programme (in particular the technical co-operation budget, TCP), reservations made in the budgets of ongoing projects (especially for review, evaluation and formulation of follow-up phases) and the direct coverage by the Netherlands of the costs of Dutch participants in formulation, review and evaluation missions.

The procedures for approval of activities to be financed under the Facility were deliberately kept as simple as possible. An exchange of letters after FAO submitted a short proposal (including a budget) was sufficient to make the necessary funds available.
From its inception, the Facility underwent a series of changes, partly administrative in nature, partly also with respect to policy. In January 1996 a new plan of operations for the Facility was produced. In this new plan it was stated that

- if the Netherlands indicated interest in a specific project idea, the formulation process could be funded out of the Facility; and
- the Facility would be available for evaluations, special studies and reformulation missions. [40]

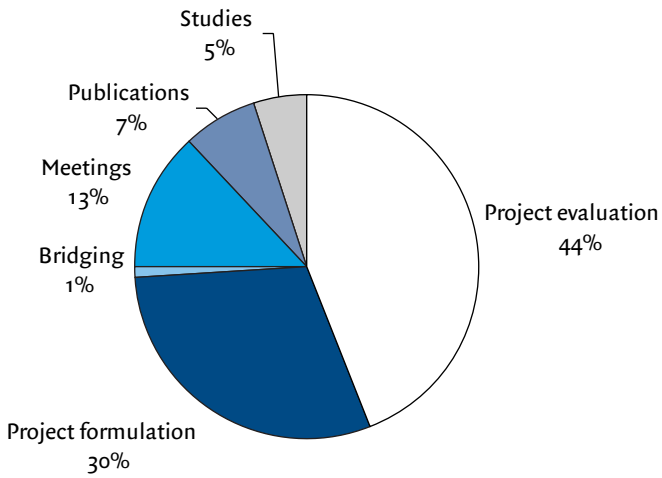
In 1998 the plan of operation was again slightly changed (or broadened) by indicating that the Facility was created for evaluations, project formulations, other purposes with regard to development co-operation, and other activities that have been approved by the Minister for Development Co-operation. The administrative merger of the General Income Account and the General Interest Account into one new account, named the Netherlands-FAO Programme Development Facility (PDF) Account, also changed the system. The administrative changes and the broadening of the PDF objectives, both resulting from discussions between the multilateral department in The Hague and FAO, created quite some confusion on both sides. The main reason for the confusion was that the merger of the two sources of funds meant that no distinction could be made between unspent balances on the one hand and interest on the other. Obviously, project or portfolio managers considered unspent balances as more or less "their" money and were surprised to be told that they had no automatic access to the PDF.

A good example of the confusion with respect to the PDF is a letter from the Rural Development Department (DRU) in The Hague. It supports the viewpoint of the embassy in La Paz, insisting that the unspent balance from one of their projects (due to a favourable dollar rate at that time), which had been sent to the PDF account in Rome, was in fact money that they should be able to use. DRU supported this position, arguing that the money in the PDF was meant to be spent on Netherlands-FAO trust fund activities in that particular country and not on other activities somewhere else in the world.

40 Proposal GCP/INT/483/NET. Rome: FAO, 1996

New financial regulations that were introduced in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1999, implying that from then on unspent balances and interest funds should be reimbursed to The Hague, led to the closure of the PDF in April 2000.
Figure 6 below gives an overview of the activities (164 in total) on which PDF funds were spent. It shows that evaluation and formulation missions have been by far the most important activities.

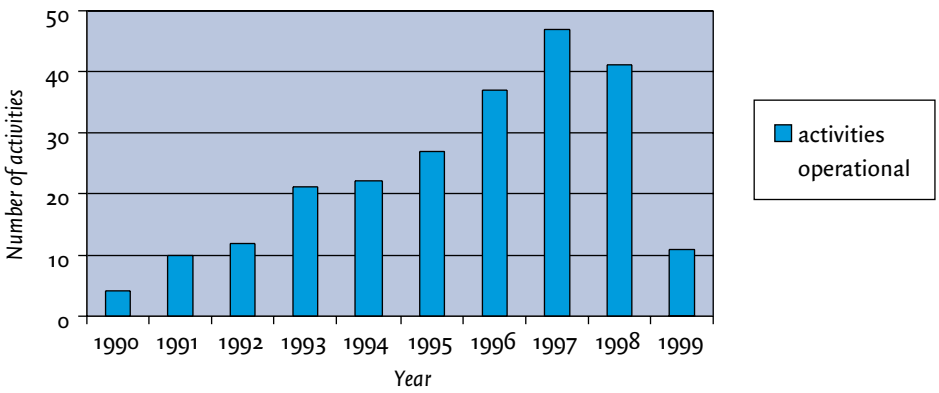
Figure 6 PDF activities by type, 1989-1999



Source: PDF progress reports, 1989-1999.

The total of 49 project (re)formulation missions resulted in 11 approved projects, of which nine were financed by the Netherlands and two by other donors (the European Union and Sweden). The other categories cover such activities as contributions to meetings (13%), publications (7%) and studies (5%). Especially during the 1994-99 period, these other activities represented an increasing share (about 50% in 1998 and 1999) of the total PDF portfolio. Among the main reasons for this shift in the use of PDF funds were budget cuts and a moratorium on new project proposals or follow-up funding in those years.

Figure 7 PDF activities, 1990-1999



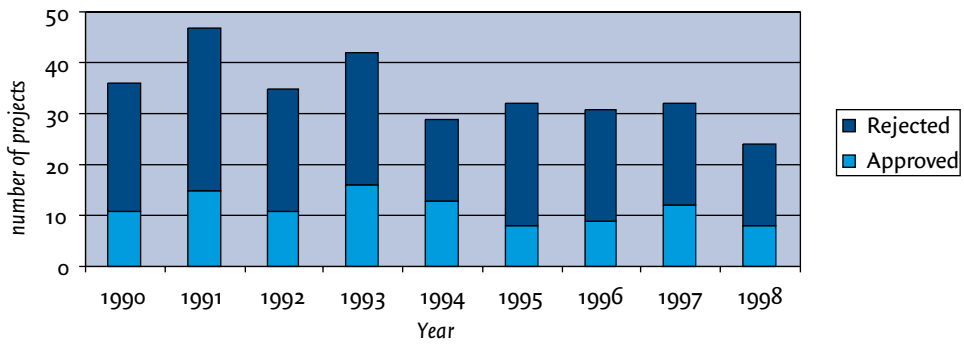
The low number of approved projects compared with formulation missions needs some further explanation. Most project proposals were rejected by the Netherlands because of the poor quality of the proposal or policy changes on the Netherlands side (meaning, for example, that the country was no longer eligible for assistance). Nevertheless, one can argue that an investment of roughly US$ 1million since 1994 from the PDF account has produced an output of projects worth about US$ 40 million. With a few exceptions, rejected project proposals were not submitted to other donors for approval. Experience has shown that this 'donor-hopping' is hardly productive, because most donors do not like to fund projects if they were not directly involved in their preparation.
With 11 activities, 1999 brought the portfolio back to the level of 1992 (12 activities). This was mainly caused by the decision on the Netherlands side to tighten financial control and await new policy with respect to the future of interest funds.
The PDF played an important role in Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation. It proved to be a useful tool for project formulation and evaluation in the early years, while later it became the lubricant that kept the wheels going, for instance, in periods when budget cuts on the Netherlands side led to stagnation in the co-operation or when quick action was needed to follow up on earlier initiatives.

5.7 Approved and rejected projects

Section 5.6 above comments on the reasons why 49 project (re)formulation missions that were funded by the PDF resulted in the approval of only 11 projects or further phases of projects. This evaluation included review of a complete list of project proposals submitted

by FAO and rejected by the Netherlands government. In order to better understand the figures, some preliminary remarks are necessary. First, emergency aid projects were excluded from the evaluation and were therefore also removed from the list of rejected projects. Secondly, the list of rejected projects refers not only to proposals that were explicitly rejected by Netherlands authorities, but also to proposals that remained on the shelf for many years without any follow-up from either side and thus effectively lapsed. In the Figure 8 – Figure 10, numbers of approved and rejected projects are compared. It should be noted that the graph only shows projects that were approved from 1990 onwards, and not all the projects that were already ongoing in 1990; and also that sectors for which no approved projects exist are excluded from the graph.

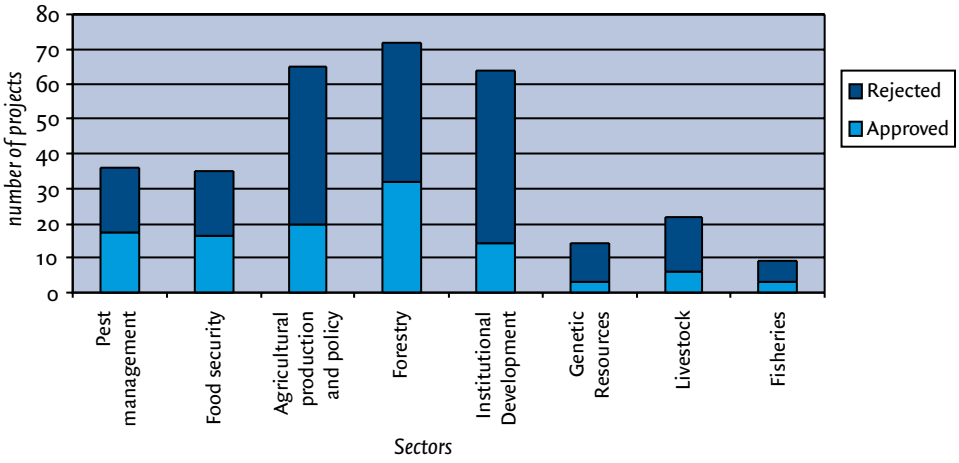
Figure 8 Approved and rejected projects, 1990-1998



The next graph gives the figures for the sectors on which the evaluation focuses its attention. The large numbers of rejected projects in the fields of agricultural policy and production and of institutional development are remarkable. A closer look at these projects reveals that as far as agricultural production and policy is concerned, most dealt with local level improvement of agricultural practices. With respect to institutional development, many projects dealt with rural organisations, extension services and agribusiness, but also multi-country networking on specific issues.

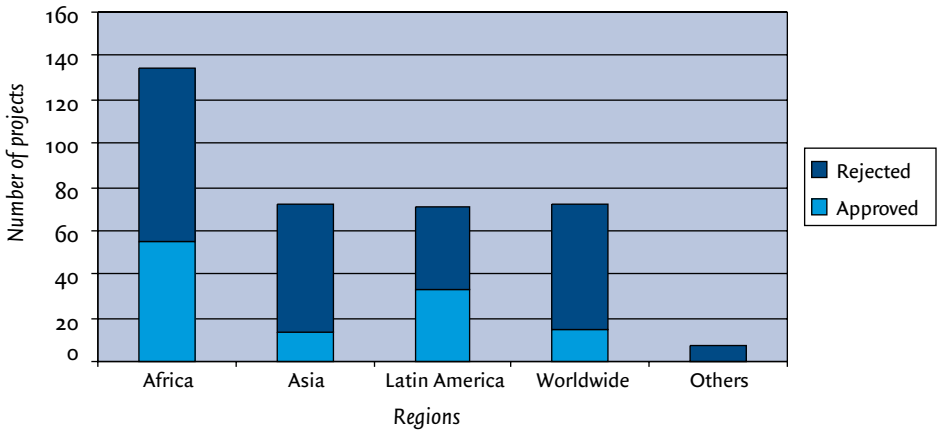
A last graph of this series compares approved and rejected projects per continent. The category 'others' refers to countries in Eastern Europe. The figure reflects the importance the Netherlands attributed to the African region, which led to a large number of proposals being submitted. Apparently, in the eyes of the portfolio managers on the

Figure 9. Approved and rejected projects, 1990-1998, by sector



Netherlands side, the quality of many of these projects was below standard. Further, the figure shows that project proposals from Latin America were apparently slightly better received than those from other continents. The relatively large number of projects rejected from Asia is probably due to the fact that the countries eligible for funding changed several times during the period under consideration.

Figure 10. Approved and rejected projects, 1990-1998, by region



5.8 Analysis of the portfolio

As described in section 1.4, the evaluation focused on a weighted sample of 58 projects (86 project phases) taken from the total portfolio. The assessments in the following chapters of the report are based on the desk analysis of these projects or project phases, as well as field visits to some of them. Although quite large, the sample of projects taken for this further analysis was not big enough to make extensive quantitative comparisons between the distinct sectors possible. The diversity within the project portfolio was such that the separate populations in some of the sectors became too small.

The percentages in the sample do not exactly mirror those in the total population. In the first place the category 'others' (covering a few projects on livestock, fisheries and genetic resources) was left out. Furthermore, the proportions of forestry and of food security and nutrition projects are slightly higher in the sample than in the total population. The proportion of agricultural policy and production projects is a little lower. These differences are due to the lack of adequate information on some of the projects in the initial sample of 67 projects, which became clear only during the assessment and led to their exclusion.

Table 5. Representation of sectors in sample

	Sample Size		Total population	
	No. of projects	%	No. of projects	%
Food security and nutrition	14	24.1	29	17.3
Agricultural policy and production	9	15.5	34	20.2
Institutional development, participation and gender	9	15,5	24	14,3
Forests and forestry	20	34,5	44	26,2
Pest management	6	10,3	21	12,5
Other	-	-	16	9.5
Total	**58**	**100**	**168**	**100**

Annex 3 gives further details on how this sample was assessed and analysed.

6 Relevance: positive beneficiary impact and consistency with policy

This chapter presents the first and most fundamental part of a systematic assessment of the sample of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation projects reviewed by this evaluation. It grapples with the concept of relevance as the extent to which outcomes lead to impact: how well did the sample projects achieve their intended beneficial impact(s) for their target groups? It also considers the policy relevance of these sample projects from the perspective of FAO, the Netherlands government and host governments.

6.1 Introduction

The Terms of Reference of this evaluation define relevance in terms of relevance to policy, including relevance to FAO policy, to Netherlands policy and to the host country government's policy. A more fundamental definition of a project's relevance, however, is the efficiency of its outcomes. In other words, how well did the project achieve its intended beneficial impact(s) for the target group? As the study evolved, it was decided to give most attention to the latter aspect of sample projects' relevance. In fact, this is the most fundamental issue in any project's performance.

This more meaningful definition is hard to apply, and the question is hard to answer. Impact studies are rare. In fact, as far as could be ascertained from the data, only one of the projects included in this review (the People's Participation project in Sri Lanka) was subject to a formal impact study. Part of the reason for this lack of impact studies is the prevalence of an implementation culture over an evaluative culture in both FAO and DGIS. Once the account of a Netherlands-FAO trust fund project has been closed, it is no longer possible to fund an impact study of that project unless special and separate funding arrangements are made. Those arrangements were not made.

It might have been possible to focus this study's four field missions on impact assessment. However, this would have required either that the missions focus on far fewer projects (probably one per mission), or that the missions be significantly extended – or, most probably, both. As it was, these missions, which reviewed between four and seven projects in three weeks each, could gather only some impact data. Nevertheless, it seems

important to present what is known about sample project impact before going on to the less useful aspect of project relevance, which is relevance to policy.

6.2 Positive impact for beneficiaries

6.2.1 Zambia

In this study's sample of projects in Zambia, the **People's Participation in Rural Development Through the Promotion of Self-Help Organisations** project (PPP) was the only activity that focused on field implementation with rural people. It was found to have had a largely satisfactory impact, although the extremely adverse economic conditions of its area of operations meant that sustainable development for the beneficiaries was still far from assured. Relatively good progress had been made with community-level institutional development and with the operation of a local NGO established to continue the project's work. But the NGO continues to depend on outside support. The field mission report concluded that the "group-based extension approach promoted by the project can be effective and durable. It can make a real difference to the livelihoods of the rural poor, in both economic and empowerment terms. It can achieve specific benefits for women, even though the PPP approach as developed by FAO was not specifically gender focused.[41]" However, it also warned that "complete self-reliance and sustainability are impractical targets in areas like Western Province" [of Zambia].

The PPP project in Sri Lanka (1984-1992) seems to have achieved less durable results than the one in Zambia. An impact study (Röseberg, 1999) describes how the structures and activities of the project gradually fell apart in the years following 1992, although the higher than traditional degree of agricultural labour pooling that was introduced by the project does persist. It suggests a number of reasons for "the gradual disintegration of most of the Sri Lanka PPP small farmer organisations". The project took too patchy a spatial approach. It was undermined by the tradition of high staff allowances and subsidies in Sri Lanka, and by inappropriate staff policies. Credit arrangements were not helpful to small farmers and led to poor repayment rates. The project's marketing arrangements proved unsustainable. The agri-business enterprises that it promoted often failed, in particular due to inadequate management training.

41 Evaluation of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation, 1985-2000. Report of mission to Zambia. The Hague: IOB, 2002.

The **Early Warning System and Census of Agriculture** project was a more technical activity, as its title implies. The field mission found that it had had valuable impact in the sense that it laid good foundations for ongoing work to monitor food production and food security in Zambia. However, its beneficial impact was qualified by the Government of Zambia's chronic lack of funding for the recurrent costs of such activities. The field mission concluded that "Until the [Database Management and Early Warning] Unit has been given the resources to operate, the long term results of this project will be little more than a handful of computers and frustrated staff." A more serious, though indirect, criticism of the project's impact must be that it contributed to a philosophy and methods of assessing food security shortages that were increasingly politicised during the 1990s and probably increasingly deleterious to the food security of many poor Zambians.

The **Marketing Management Assistance** (MMA) and **Food Reserve Agency** (FRA) projects operated in the arena of Zambian agricultural marketing policy and systems, which meant that their impact was bound to depend on the subsequent vagaries of policy. The field mission concluded in early 2002 that "in practice, MMA's long term policy impact has been diluted by the continuing instability of economic and agricultural policy direction in Zambia. The MMA project may have been good while it lasted, but circumstances have since dismantled much of what was achieved. The FRA project, too, did good work during its two years, but was already badly destabilised in its second year of operations by changes in government policy towards the Agency. Just three years after the project ended, its institutional achievements were still clearly visible during this mission's visits to the FRA. The best that could be said for its policy achievements is that they were in abeyance."

The final project reviewed by the Zambia field mission was **Capacity Building for Zambia Forestry Action Programme** (ZFAP). Although a ZFAP was indeed produced in 1997, the impact of the project looked dubious in 2002. The project had not succeeded in its capacity building objectives; indeed, the government's ability to fund any sort of forestry work had dwindled drastically. The ZFAP remained official policy, but could not be implemented. There had been only slow and often reluctant adoption of the community-based approaches that the ZFAP process encouraged. Nor was there much evidence of "political will to address deforestation and forest-based livelihoods sincerely... Overall,... positive impact for the ZFAP project is precluded by the current economic and policy environment in Zambia. Until policy is consistently and sincerely applied, and until government or parastatal forestry agencies have the resources to operate, the long term results of this project will be limited."

6.2.2 South East Asia

Most of the projects visited by the study's field mission to south east Asia were still operating. While this made a final assessment of impact impossible, the mission was able to make some comments on the basis of activities that these projects had begun in earlier phases. Two of the projects reviewed concerned **integrated pest management** (IPM) on rice and vegetables respectively. Despite the strong reputation of these projects, the mission observed that there were very few systematic data available for corroboration of what is widely believed to be their positive impact. In any event, the IPM in vegetables project, begun in 1996 and much more ecologically complex than IPM in rice, was too young for analysis of impact. With regard to the IPM rice project, it argued that "the absence of systematic monitoring and evaluation makes an assessment of the achievements (beyond the actual output level) hardly feasible."[42] Nevertheless, it concluded that "sustainability at the local level and through the farmer and community development is without doubt the strongest feature of the programme in the absence of further donor inputs." A wider positive impact is the spread of the IPM projects' Farmer Field School approach into other crops and sectors in some parts of the region. On the other hand, the mission pointed out that "institutionalisation within the national government services remains either very weak or an uncertain factor in a number countries."

The mission also reviewed the **Regional Wood Energy Development Programme in Asia** (RWEDP), a large and complex activity that operated from 1985 to 2001. It concluded that "the data base, data systems, web site and extensive literature that RWEDP developed will remain available into the future. Having been accepted as a legitimate part of energy analysis and policy in about half the countries where RWEDP operated, wood energy is unlikely to be dropped again. Similarly, technological advances that the project facilitated, notably in domestic stove design and manufacture and in some industrial methods, will not be reversed." However, it also warned that "there is more doubt about the mid to long term impact of the project's achievements in individual and institutional capacity building around the region... high turnover of personnel was already a problem while RWEDP was being implemented. In five years' time, the number of staff in relevant posts who have had direct contact with RWEDP and its ideas will have fallen significantly. Partly because of this, ongoing institutional commitment to wood and other biomass energy as a modern, environmentally sound sector may decline too."

The Netherlands-funded phase of the **Technical Support to Agrarian Reform and Rural Development** (TSARRD) project in the Philippines ended just a month before the mis-

42 Evaluation of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation, 1985-2000. Report of mission to south east Asia. The Hague: IOB, 2002.

sion's visit. But as the project had been in operation since 1990, it was possible to consider its likely impact. The mission thought that TSARRD was achieving positive, sustainable change for some of its beneficiaries, through the community development plans that they have been helped to prepare and through the steady increase in their livelihood capabilities that the project has helped to generate. At the same time, these positive impacts are limited by the determination of elites in the Philippines to prevent agrarian reform from significantly shifting the distribution of power and resources; and by the project's own highly efficient emphasis on operations and delivery. This emphasis, in the mission's view, "has detracted from the needed emphasis on strategy, institutionalisation and sustainability – all of which contribute to a positive long-term impact."

6.2.3 Bolivia

The study's field mission to Bolivia found little positive impact to report from the four projects that were reviewed. It found no clear impact data on the **Fertisuelos** fertiliser project that FAO operated with Netherlands funding from 1987 to 1999. It is clear that the project suffered a wide range of operational and management difficulties in the problematic policy and economic environment of Bolivia. Furthermore, its approach was fundamentally questioned while it was in operation, with some reviewers proposing that it be totally restructured into an integrated rural development activity. While the project's fertiliser research and extension programmes doubtless expanded use and knowledge of fertilisers among Bolivian farmers, its successful fertiliser credit scheme had to be closed at project termination because no handover arrangements had been made. It also became clear that the project's extension activities would not be continued. There was no government agency suitable for this task.

Like the mission to Zambia, the Bolivia mission reviewed a forest policy and capacity building project: **Co-ordination and Implementation of the Forest Action Plan** (FAP), which ran from 1992 to 2002. In theory, it might not yet be possible to assess the impact of a project so recently concluded. But the mission was sure that it would never be possible to ascribe much positive impact to the project, which had laboured in a confused and unhelpful policy environment and not been helped by official apathy with regard to the forestry sector. The project generated many documents and latterly undertook a range of training activities, but to date there is no real sign that the FAP is either co-ordinated or implemented. "At the heart of the problem", concluded the mission, "was the lack of Bolivian ownership of the institutional development process, a corollary of the low priority given by the [government] to forestry sector development."[43]

Another forestry activity reviewed by the Bolivia mission was the **Community Forestry Development** (CFD) project, undertaken in the Altiplano from 1991 to 2002. Once again, it is in theory inappropriate to assess impact so soon after project termination. In practice, it is already clear that any later assessment would find that impact to have been minimal. The project started on a technically inappropriate basis, worked in an area where much basic infrastructure was lacking, and was constantly confounded by institutional difficulties at various levels in the Bolivian government. Only gradually did it bring itself to admit that its technical approaches had been misguided. Most of the community nurseries sponsored by the project collapsed before it ended in 2002. At that time, the mission concluded that "With no agricultural services delivery system in place, the sustainability of the development effort currently rests with the families and/or individuals themselves and with the trained project staff that is on the point of being dismissed and is seeking alternative employment. Discussions with beneficiaries and project staff suggest that, without further support, the project is likely to fall short of its potential. Until now, none of the assisted schemes have produced marketable surpluses and chances that produced surpluses will effectively reach the market at a profitable price, remain uncertain... it must be feared that only a few schemes will survive and the ultimate goal of the project to raise the general standard of living of the Altiplano farmer will be reached in a few isolated cases only."

The Poscosecha project (**Action Programme for the Prevention of Post-Harvest Losses**) also ended in 2002, after 12 years' operation. During that time it faced a number of operational difficulties but was considered to have been successful in introducing and distributing technologies that would reduce post-harvest losses. But it gave inadequate attention to the sustainability of these arrangements, belatedly establishing an NGO (as the PPP project did in Zambia) to continue its activities after termination. At the time of this study's field mission it was not clear how the new organisation would function. The mission noted that the project had done little about a more promising alternative, which would have been the involvement of the private sector. Despite the project's effectiveness in introducing and spreading technologies, opportunities for sustained positive impact appear to have been missed.

43 Evaluation of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation, 1985-2000. Report of mission to Bolivia. The Hague: IOB, 2002.

6.2.4 Senegal

As in Bolivia, the study's field mission to Senegal found few encouraging signs of sample projects achieving positive impact for beneficiaries. Another forestry planning project, the **Cellule de Coordination et de l'Impulsion du Plan d'Action Forestier du Sénégal**, which operated from 1996 to 2002, was characterised at one point by the Royal Netherlands Embassy as a 'talk shop' and shows no sign of having achieved positive impacts for its ultimate beneficiaries, the rural users of forest resources. The mission concluded that its institutional impact was "minimal"[44]

In the same sector, the project **Appui au Programme de Développement de la Foresterie Rurale au Sénégal** (PDFR), succeeded over a nine year lifespan (1990-1999) in promoting decentralised and participatory development approaches. But the mission questioned the sustainability, and thus the ultimate positive impact, of these achievements, pointing out that the project had failed to secure the proper legal and institutional foundations for the new natural resource management structures and procedures that it had promoted. It feared that these would not last much longer than the project itself.

A further forestry project reviewed by the Senegal mission was the **Project de Reboisement Villageois dans le Nord-Ouest du Bassin Arachidier** (PREVINOBA), which operated from 1986 to 1999. It, too, promoted participatory community forestry approaches. But the mission concluded that the end of the project basically signalled the end of the participatory institutions and land management processes that it had promoted. In fact, there has been so much staff turnover in the years since 1999 that few of those the mission met had much familiarity with the project's activities and training materials. As for the ten million tree seedlings planted during the project period, there are no M&E data to show how many have survived or of what the impact of this massive exercise may have been. Little is known about the project's influence on the demand for biomass or on illegal wood cutting. The mission argued that the project helped the poverty stricken inhabitants of its areas of operation to alleviate their hardship while it was in operation, but not structurally to enhance their livelihoods. As with PDFR, it found that PREVINOBA's participatory approaches and bottom-up structures were bound to be unsustainable in the absence of appropriate policies and legal frameworks at the macro level.

An even longer-running Netherlands-FAO trust fund forestry project in Senegal was the **Bois de Villages et Reconstitution des Forêts Classées de Gonakies** (PROGONA-PROWALO).

44 Evaluation of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation, 1985-2000. Report of mission to Senegal. The Hague: IOB, 2002.

It operated from 1990 to 1999, following a phase executed directly by the Netherlands from 1984 to 1988. As with PREVINOBA, the mission found that the end of Netherlands-FAO involvement in 1999 basically meant the end of the activities that the project had supported, although some village nurseries and a few other small-scale projects did survive. The process of participatory land use planning proved to be unsustainable; indeed, many of the land use plans had not been finalised by the time the project ended. Furthermore, the direct impact of project-supported plantings and other rehabilitation measures can at best have been minor, considering the reported scale of those outputs and the known scale of the region and its degradation. (There are no detailed M&E data.) Like PREVINOBA, the project focused on participatory approaches but failed to institutionalise and legalise them. At the same time, it adopted 'blueprint' methods of participatory planning, and showed inadequate imagination in its technical methods. There is now little sign of significant positive impact for the area's hard-pressed population.

From 1989 to 1998, a Netherlands-FAO trust fund project supported a forestry training facility at Thies (**Centre de Recyclage Permanent pour la Promotion des Programmes Forestiers**). Of all the projects reviewed by this study's Senegal mission, this showed the best prospect of a positive impact in terms of continuing capacity to provide relevant and effective training. The mission concluded in 2002 that "the Centre Forestier provides the Department of Water, Forests, Wildlife and Soil Conservation with a splendidly equipped training facility that is professionally run and can fulfil its training and refresher course functions in a flexible and effective manner. Naturally, it can only continue to fulfil this role if the Senegalese government, that is the Department, makes the substantial necessary resources available and gives the Centre the statutory authority to develop its activities on a commercial basis."

The last of the forestry projects reviewed by the Senegal mission, the **Project de Semences Forestières** (PRONASEF), operated from 1993 to 2000 and developed a national tree seed centre in Senegal. This appears to have been a successful undertaking, but the lack of M&E data made it difficult for the mission to assess its likely impact. In particular, the overall share of the national tree seed market supported by the centre can only be roughly estimated. Nor were there data to substantiate claims that the central seed quality control introduced by the project is having the intended effect. The belated realisation that a decentralised, privatised tree seed production system might be more cost effective than the original centralised facility gave insufficient time for the new arrangements to be tested. The sustainability and impact of the new approach are unclear.

The Senegal field mission could not report any positive impact from the last, and only non-forestry, project that it reviewed: a food security and early warning project entitled **Mise en Place d'un Système d'Information pour la Securité Alimentaire et l'Alerte Rapide** (SISAAR). This lengthy undertaking (1987-2000) had much less success than some other FAO early warning system projects. At termination in 2000 the project continued to be overshadowed by institutional difficulties, which meant that there was no satisfactory handover of its equipment, systems or skilled Senegalese personnel. "Two locked rooms in the Ministry, in which the (by now out of date) early warning software and hardware are stored, are the silent memorial to the inglorious end of the SISAAR project", wrote the mission.

6.2.5 Overview

It is naturally harder for a project to achieve sustainable, positive impact for its ultimate beneficiaries than it is for it to achieve its intended outcomes. (In turn, it is easier to achieve outputs than outcomes.) Many factors may prevent achievement of the intended impact. Poor design may mean that the supposed causative linkage between outcomes and impact does not in fact exist. A host of institutional and political factors external to the project may sabotage a promising set of outcomes. It is therefore a safe hypothesis that, on average, fewer projects will achieve satisfactory impact than achieve satisfactory outcomes. In other words, relevance is less assured than effectiveness. However, there is no way to prove this, because thorough impact studies are so rare. Even when such a study is done, it can only be fully meaningful if it is matched by thorough M&E data from the period of project execution.

The findings of this study's four field missions certainly show how hard it is to assess impact. They also give credence to the hypothesis that there are fewer successful impacts than there are successful outcomes. In many of the cases summarised above, there were inadequate data for impact to be assessed. In very few of the cases could the field missions even guess at anything approaching positive, sustainable impact for the ultimate beneficiaries – even though 20 of 29 project phases reviewed by these missions were assessed as achieving 'satisfactory' or better outcomes. As a better pointer to impact, perhaps, the broader definition of effectiveness outlined in section 7.6 below is less flattering. On that composite index of effectiveness, only ten of these project phases scored 'satisfactory' or better.

6.3 Policy relevance

While it is hard for a project to achieve relevance in terms of the desired impact for its ultimate beneficiaries, it is easy for it to be relevant in terms of conformance with policy. The basic reason for this is that projects were designed in order to be funded and implemented, which meant that their design had to show how they matched the policy priorities of the funding and implementing agencies – in this case, the Netherlands and FAO. As part of Netherlands policy was for the projects it supported to conform to the priorities of the recipient countries, designers took care to demonstrate that those priorities were reflected too. Not surprisingly, then, the projects in this sample scored strongly on all three criteria with respect to policy. Not one was judged to be 'unsatisfactory' in the sense that it clashed with general policy objectives. However, for several projects there was no clear evidence that the project either complied with policy or contradicted it. For these, a middle score of 'does not seem to contradict' policy had to be allocated. For other projects, there was no information at all about relevance to the policy of one or more of the three parties. These projects had to be excluded from Table 6, which shows in the heading of each column the number of project phases for which data on that type of project relevance were available.

Table 6 Compliance with FAO, Netherlands and host country policy in %

	FAO policy (40) %	Netherlands policy (79) %	Host country policy (82) %
Actively compliant (part of programme)	42.5	5.1	7.3
Clearly compliant	37.5	84.8	75.6
Does not seem to contradict	20.0	10.1	14.6
Some policy contradictions evident	-	-	2.4
Clearly contradicts policy	-	-	-

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

6.4 Relevance to FAO policy

Being a specialised UN agency with a global mandate, the FAO has broadly defined objectives. This means that there is only a remote possibility that support for trust fund activities might conflict with them. Although it may not necessarily reflect all its aspects,

the content of the Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation almost inevitably falls within this broad mandate. How the aims or relevance of trust fund co-operation relate to the overall policy aims of the FAO will in general, therefore, be a relatively unimportant issue. In other words, interpreting relevance in terms of consistency with general FAO policy is a rather unsatisfactory approach.

However, there is another way to approach the issue of policy relevance, which is by asking how and to what extent the projects that were funded relate to FAO's Regular Programme. The evaluation's field reviews and desk studies indicate that FAO operational activities, implemented using the trust funds, vary in the degree of their direct relationship to the Regular Programme. In particular, they vary in their relationship to FAO's normative role and, indeed, to the organisation's stated priorities. A little over 40% of the projects had a clear relationship with one of FAO's special programmes, e.g. food security and the TFAP. These projects, one might argue, had a direct relationship to FAO's Regular Programme and bore at least a potential relationship to the normative function. What varied considerably was the extent to which this relationship was being acted upon by FAO.

Going through the portfolio of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects, one can roughly distinguish between three types of linkages between these projects and the normative work of FAO:

- projects that were clearly closely related to the normative work of FAO and that had the effect of extending and deepening the penetration of its normative mandate: included in this category were projects to strengthen and spread to national level the capacities of government units to gather and analyse data on agriculture, forestry and nutrition. Similar projects involved improvements in early warning and vulnerability mapping;
- projects that drew on and contributed to FAO's normative role in standards development and implementation of codes of conduct and responsible practices: included in this category were projects related to the introduction of prior informed consent with respect to pesticide use;
- projects that tested or spread operational solutions to difficult problems in agriculture and forestry: that had been developed by FAO: examples of this category are projects on integrated pest management and farmer field schools or on the linkages between farming systems development in agrarian reform communities and agribusiness.

Because of lack of information it was unfortunately not possible to analyse whether the projects that were funded by the Netherlands had any impact on policy development in

FAO. It seems fair to say that the projects on integrated pest management have played that role, as did some of the projects financed in the forestry sector. Years of Netherlands extra-budgetary funding for FAO IPM activities have helped to stimulate the incorporation of some IPM work in the organisation's regular programme of work and budget.

6.5 Relevance to Netherlands policy

The policies of the Netherlands, like those of the FAO, are so broadly formulated that any assessment of policy relevance to them was also likely to produce a positive result. The easiest part of project design was to find ways of describing the planned intervention as relevant to current policy frameworks as they were presented during the annual meetings. FAO project designers have certainly been adept at this. On the Netherlands side, sector managers in The Hague as well as at embassies had no difficulty in explaining the interventions' relevance to overall Netherlands policies. While both FAO and the Netherlands have sought to introduce more meaningful policy frameworks and tighter policy guidance for their activities over the last ten years, staff have continued to be pragmatic in their interpretation of official approaches, trying to design and deliver activities that they considered most valuable and/or most feasible for the fields in which they work. Many proposals for FAO trust fund projects were of course rejected by the Netherlands (section 5.7). Incompatibility with the increasingly focused (and frequently changing) list of countries and sectors eligible for Netherlands support was a key reason for rejecting these proposals, not contradiction with Netherlands policy objectives.

However, in relation to this issue, a more interesting and obvious question was whether the trust fund co-operation was consistent with the Netherlands' views on the role and function of the FAO and the added value that the organisation is assumed to offer. Although the Netherlands repeatedly stressed the comparative advantages of FAO as a UN agency during annual meetings, most projects were more notable for their utility as a mechanism for implementing Netherlands trust fund priorities (supported to some degree by the national government). These projects may, in and of themselves, have been well designed and relevant to address specific developmental issues, but they represented, in effect, bilateral projects under a different flag and bear little or no relation to FAO's perceived comparative strengths.

6.6 Relevance to recipient countries

Obviously, it turned out to be more difficult and complicated to establish whether the trust fund co-operation was relevant to the policies of recipient countries. Moreover, one might argue that at least in some cases this question is even irrelevant. In particular with

respect to innovative projects and approaches, as for instance in the case of integrated pest management or tropical forestry action plans, it is obvious that in most countries coherence and consistency with national policy is not the state of affairs from the outset, but something that has to be worked on by the project itself. Another aspect that has to be taken into consideration is that many projects were not dealing with a single party but with many parties, each with their own policies and priorities, or with more than one country, each with its own structures and policies. Nevertheless, in order to present some observations on this issue, it was decided to investigate the extent to which the initiative to identify and formulate project proposals came from the recipient countries concerned, and what the underlying policy considerations were. In most cases, the historical records were scanty and the assessments could not clearly establish the origin of the project. For those cases where some information was found, the project idea proved normally to have been a product of a special programme in FAO itself. As was said earlier, this does not, of course, necessarily mean that the project did not converge with the policy of the recipient country. The relatively high level of national participation in project execution is at least to some extent an indication of the perceived relevance of these projects for national policy.

6.7 Conclusions

This study could find hardly any systematic impact assessments on which it could base a review of the fundamental relevance of the sample projects – that is, the extent of their beneficial impact for target groups. Limited information could be gathered from the four field missions. The missions found that positive and sustainable impacts for the intended beneficiaries seemed likely in very few of the project phases they reviewed – certainly less than the ten judged 'satisfactory' or better on the composite index of effectiveness outlined in section 7.6 below. In one or two cases it was plainly premature to assess impact, and in a few others there were signs of positive impact that could not be verified because of the lack of data. On the most fundamental criterion, of sustained positive impact still being demonstrable some years after project termination, the sub-sample of this study that was visited in the field presents a disappointing picture.

Overall, assessment of sample projects' policy relevance proved to be a less fruitful part of this enquiry than had been expected. Policy frameworks were so broad that it was hard for a project to fall outside them. The most useful aspect of the policy relevance discussion concerns the relationship between relevance to FAO and relevance to recipient countries' policies and needs. Although all this analysis is hindered by lack of data about the origins of sample projects, it can be seen that some, but by no means all, were linked in some

degree to the normative role of FAO, and/or to its special programmes and areas of operational emphasis. These fields of emphasis influenced the formation of project ideas, in which FAO mostly played a stronger role than the recipient countries. This did not render the projects irrelevant from the recipients' perspective, since their own policy frameworks were broad and their needs were many. But it was not generally difficult for FAO to line up its own capabilities and priorities with those of its developing country members. In the context of the Netherlands-FAO trust fund, FAO obviously shaped its exploration of project ideas in the context of Netherlands priorities. Despite periodic reformulations and the strong presentation of policy emphases, the Netherlands remained flexible in practice – except in the specification of countries where funds could be used.

7 Effectiveness: the achievement of sustainable outcomes

After explaining how this evaluation defined the concept of project effectiveness, this chapter examines sample projects' performance with regard to various dimensions of the concept. It considers their achievement of their intended outcomes and examines performance in terms of two key Netherlands policy concerns, gender and environment. After assessing performance on various sustainability indicators, it presents a composite measure of effectiveness and identifies factors that influence sample projects' overall scores on that measure.

7.1 Introduction

What is an effective project? Annex 3 shows that this study's assessment of the sample projects took a broad view of effectiveness. It considered first the most immediate indicators of whether a project does what it sets out to do: executing the activities and achieving the outputs and outcomes specified in its design. However, later in the study it was decided that the execution of activities and achievement of outputs are better viewed as indicators of efficiency, not effectiveness. Findings on these aspects of sample projects' performance are therefore presented in chapter 8 below. In analysis of the assessment data, it was decided to focus discussion of effectiveness on what the assessment form termed the achievement of objectives: in other words, the outcomes of the project.

The assessment of effectiveness went on to estimate the sustainability of the project's outcomes (section 7.5), using criteria of economic, financial and institutional sustainability. This is because a project that achieves the planned outcomes, but whose outcomes nevertheless turn out not to be sustainable, cannot meaningfully be called effective and has no chance of positive impact. In accordance with key priorities in Netherlands policy, the assessment method that was used also assumed that, with some exceptions where these priorities are really not relevant, a project with no prospect of gender positive impacts and environmentally positive impacts could not be considered fully effective. These two criteria were therefore highlighted as particular aspects of project effectiveness.

This detailed interpretation of project effectiveness, although intuitively appropriate, has drawbacks. First, it implies thorough research. Furthermore, some time should elapse

after project termination before outcomes can reasonably be investigated. If neither of these criteria can be met – and in fact thorough studies of these projects are rare – a detailed interpretation of effectiveness can to some extent only be a professional estimate, not a proven finding. That is certainly the character of the assessments of project effectiveness offered in this study. But detailed study of project dossiers and related material, using the methods applied to these sample projects, can lead to a reasonably accurate professional judgement on sustainability issues (section 1.5).

Another issue is that low effectiveness, judged on the criteria used here, may not always be directly attributable to the project. Inadequate project performance is certainly a prime cause of failure to achieve planned outcomes, but poor sustainability or lack of positive gender or environmental impacts may result from a wide range of factors outside the project's control – although they can also result from poor project design, execution or supervision.

At the same time, effectiveness is the most practically useful of the three broad assessment criteria on which this study is based. Efficiency is just the means to effectiveness. Analysing efficiency thus provides a partial explanation of effectiveness. The limited feasibility of assessing project relevance in impact terms, and the limited value of assessing it in policy terms, were discussed in chapter 6 above. For a measured appraisal of the 58 projects in the sample, this study therefore used the detailed concept of effectiveness defined above. Sections 7.2 – 7.5 below review the different components of this concept. Section 7.6 then presents a composite analysis of the overall effectiveness of the sample projects.

The methods used for the desk assessment of sample project phases are introduced in sections 1.4 and 1.5 above. A more detailed discussion is presented at Annex 3. Section 1.4 also explains how the study's four field missions supplemented the desk assessments for about a third of the sample by undertaking a ground check in some of the countries where the projects took place.

7.2 Achievement of outcomes

This review of the effectiveness of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects begins with the most basic element of the concept: the extent to which projects achieved their planned outcomes (or 'objectives' – the more usual operational term that was used in the assessment form as shown in Annex 3). Although outcomes lie at the heart of project design, they were not always clearly specified. The effectiveness of some projects could not be assessed, either because of poor design specification or because the data (for example, evaluation reports) were inadequate for other reasons.

Rigorous standards were applied in determining the levels of effectiveness that projects achieved. For example, 'satisfactory' performance is interpreted as achievement of at least 60% of the target. Assessment of these scores was hindered by the fact that project design typically mixed qualitative and quantitative statements of planned objectives or outcomes. In most cases, these statements were qualitative only.

Table 7 Statement of outcomes in quantitative or qualitative terms

	How project outcomes stated (% of project phases) (86)
Quantitative terms	1.2
Qualitative terms	74.4
Quantitative and qualitative terms	24.4

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available.)

This general weakness in project design makes evaluation of effectiveness difficult. Nevertheless, every effort was made to assess performance objectively on the basis of the available information.

Table 8 Achievement of outcomes

	Achievement of outcomes (% of project phases) (83)
Excellent (>100%)	1.2
Good (81-100%)	30.1
Satisfactory (60-80%)	33.7
Unsatisfactory (30-59%)	28.9
Very poor (<30%)	6.0
'Satisfactory' or better	**65.1**
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	**34.9**

(The number in brackets is the total numbers of project phases for which data were available.)

On this basic criterion, the scores of the sample Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects are generally satisfactory, with about a third classified as 'good' or even surpassing the targets set for them in their design.

The multi-sectoral Training in Nutrition for Prevention of Vitamin A Deficiency project in Nepal did a good job in achieving its planned outputs (all of which were stated in quantitative terms) and – according to evaluators – in achieving its objectives. Training activities, supplying equipment like books about food and nutrition, and organizing study tours are activities that can be measured, reported and assessed quite easily. One of the biggest critiques of this project came from the Dutch government. They found it regrettable that they did not participate in the final evaluation mission. It was suggested that a Dutch mission member be recruited from SNV in Nepal, but none of the SNV staff was available at the planned date. This contributed to the unwillingness of the Dutch government to finance a further project phase. It is striking that this project, despite its high effectiveness, was not supported for a follow-up phase. In fact, initially the Netherlands embassy did not approve the proposal for the first phase of this project at all. As far as the embassy could see, vitamin A deficiency was not a priority for the Nepalese government. Nevertheless, FAO and the Nepalese government concluded that the project was very valuable.

7.3 Gender

Since the 1980s, Netherlands development co-operation policy has demanded a proactive approach to gender. Every project proposal, including those for Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects, has been checked for its conformance to Netherlands policy in this regard, although it was permissible to classify some projects as gender neutral. This review of a sample of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects has accordingly included gender in its assessment of effectiveness. Projects were judged to be more effective if they were estimated to be likely to have gender positive impacts in their area or sector of operations. For example, agricultural production projects would be judged more effective if they built their approaches on an understanding of the gender division of roles in the farming cycle, and made efforts to enhance the status of women within the production system: perhaps by improving their access to credit, or promoting implements that reduced the demand on their physical labour.

Although it was soon well known in FAO and elsewhere that project proposals had to address gender convincingly if they were to stand a chance of approval in The Hague, lack of attention to gender issues in project formulation and execution remained a common

point of contention between the Netherlands authorities, FAO, host governments and other partner agencies throughout the review period. Project approval was often held up because gender had not been satisfactorily addressed. Project evaluations were often asked by the Netherlands to give specific attention to gender, and often reported negatively on this point. Despite all this concern, the project documentation that this study was able to trace often lacked enough information for an estimation of likely gender impacts to be possible. Admittedly, the results of a project with regard to gender may be hard to assess if there has not been thorough monitoring on this point; and this review posed the longer term question of gender impacts, which – though more intuitively meaningful – are still harder to measure. Nevertheless, it was disappointing to find that 23% of the sample project phases could not be assessed with regard to gender.
For those project phases for which there were enough data to make a judgement and in which the issue was applicable, the assessment of gender positive impacts is shown in Table 9 below. As with a number of assessment variables for which there were few quantitative data and for which a professional estimate therefore had to be made, the detailed categories used in the assessment form (Annex 3) have been collapsed in this table into two broader categories: 'satisfactory' or better, and 'unsatisfactory' or worse.

Table 9 Likely gender impact of sample project phases

Extent of gender positive impacts	% of project phases (63)
'Satisfactory' or better	71.4
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	28.6

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available.)

No project was judged to have been exceptionally positive and proactive with regard to gender. Most projects achieved a middling score on this issue. Netherlands concern about gender at least seems to have prevented any of the sample project phases from having had 'clearly negative' impacts in this regard, but almost 30% were still 'unsatisfactory'. However, the data suggest some progress over time. Only 54% of the projects that began in 1991 or earlier, and of phases of projects that had begun in that period, scored 'satisfactory' or better with regard to likely gender impact. For the period 1992-1995, the figure is 79%, and for projects starting later than 1995 it is 90%.

Because of the small number of projects in some of the categories, no statistically significant conclusions can be drawn from the sector distribution of more and less gender-positive projects in this sample. Table 10 shows that all the projects in the food security and nutrition sector were judged likely to have 'satisfactory' gender positive impacts, presumably because so many of them worked directly on issues affecting women. It is more striking that not all the sample projects in the broad field of 'institutional development, participation and gender' managed to achieve 'satisfactory' or better scores in this regard.

Table 10 Likely gender impact by sector

	Food security and nutrition (9)	Agricultural policy and production (9)	Inst. development, participation and gender (11)	Forests and forestry (32)	Pest management (2)	Total (63) No. (%)
'Satisfactory' or better	9	6	8	20	2	45 (71.4)
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	-	3	3	12	-	18 (28.6)

(Numbers in brackets are the numbers of project phases in each sector for which data were available.)

The nature of a project's target group (government or field level) made no significant difference to how much of a gender positive impact the sample projects were judged likely to have. Nor did the kind of counterpart a project had (government or a research agency or NGO). Project phases that devoted more than 40% of their budgets to international personnel scored somewhat worse on estimated gender impacts than those with lower expenditures on expatriates, but the difference is not statistically significant (using the chi squared test at the 5% significance level).

There is a strongly significant link between the quality of project design and whether a project scored 'satisfactory' or better with regard to its likely gender impact. The quality of design was judged in terms of clarity, logic and realism (section 8.4). There may be some link here to the age of the project, since project phases that became operational in 1992 or later scored somewhat better than earlier ones with regard to these design criteria. The extent of the target group's participation in project design and implementation made a statistically significant difference to whether the gender impact was judged likely to be 'satisfactory' or better. The same is true of the extent to which the host government

Another benefit identified [in the People's Participation Programme in Zambia] was the increased confidence and decision-making ability of women group members. This empowerment of group members has had an effect on the community as a whole with signs of increased civic involvement of group members and their ability to take on leadership roles for other community work... The most impressive accomplishment of PPP so far is the success it has achieved in promoting the participation of women in the various development initiatives in the Western Province. The impact that PPP has had by forming solid groups in which women are actively participating has increased the effectiveness of many rural services and development initiatives in the Province.

Geran, 1996, 3.

participated in design and implementation. These links all suggest that thoroughly and logically designed project phases that achieved strong local participation at all levels in their design and execution tended also to be those that did better with regard to gender. These projects tended also to be more cost effective and better managed (sections 8.8, 8.9), although the links are not statistically significant. The statistically significant link between estimated positive gender impact and the quality of projects' monitoring and evaluation fits this pattern. The quality of project supervision by FAO, on the other hand, made no difference at all to the estimated extent of gender positive impact.

It is notable that, for several years, The Netherlands funded a programme at FAO headquarters to enhance the organisation's awareness of and capacity to engage with gender issues. This support ended in the mid 1990s at the time of Netherlands decentralisation of its development funding, although the new FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme (section 3.6) has recently provided new resources for the organisation to strengthen its performance with regard to gender. During the period reviewed here, gradual improvement could be seen in the likelihood of projects achieving positive gender impacts. Nevertheless, performance remained mixed. There was undoubtedly an element of lip service to perceived Netherlands policy priorities, and many project managers and bureaucrats became more expert in making the required gender-sensitive gestures. While some projects just went through the motions, however, there were others that were genuinely committed to redressing gender inequities, and that achieved real progress in this field. Of the 13 projects that were judged 'good' with regard to likely gender impact, two were specifically aimed at women and their roles and capacities in agriculture and irrigation. Two more were from FAO's People's Participation Programme (in Sri Lanka and Zambia): these projects also emphasised women's involvement in rural development. Some others

The Technical Support to Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (TSARRD) project in The Philippines scores well with regard to gender. As in all areas of project work, the management addressed this issue thoroughly, and did much to mainstream gender in its Farming Systems Development approach and in staff awareness of field issues and implications. The 2001 evaluators did feel that – again as in other aspects of TSARRD – there was more awareness of gender as an operational procedure, than full understanding of why gender matters. Overall, however, they were impressed by the full involvement of women in the FSD process: '...the involvement of women and the insistence of the Project on this has been one of the strikingly positive aspects'.

dealt with various aspects of participatory natural resource management and rural development, including the Lempira Sur project in Honduras, the SOWACO Phase II soil conservation project in Lesotho, and the PREVINOBA reforestation project in Senegal. Phase III of the Regional Wood Energy Development Programme (RWEDP) in Asia is a good example of a project whose design was urgently revised at Netherlands insistence in order to give more attention to gender issues. Efficient management went on to achieve a degree of performance on gender that was generally credited as having gone even further than the design envisaged.

7.4 Environment

Environment is well known as the second element in the dual special focus of Netherlands development co-operation during the 1990s. It remains a core component of Netherlands concern in the current GAVIM package of criteria (good governance, poverty, gender, institutions and environment). Although the Netherlands policy emphasis on attention to environmental impacts and sustainability emerged somewhat later than that on gender (in the late 1980s and early 1990s), there is now a solid tradition of concern about whether Netherlands funded activities give adequate attention to the natural environment.

There is less contention over environment in the decade's correspondence between the Netherlands and FAO than there is over gender. Nevertheless, there are a surprising number of project phases in this sample for which there was not enough information available to form a judgement on whether the project was likely to have environmentally positive impacts in its area and/or sector of operations. In fact the proportion of the sample with inadequate data on environment is slightly higher, at 24.4%, than that for gender. Whereas it seemed relevant to check almost all project phases in the sample with regard to gender, the issue of environment was deemed inapplicable to 26 (30.2%) of them.

These 'environmentally neutral' projects worked in fields such as extension training and institutional development. Table 11 shows the assessed performance of the 39 project phases in the sample that had adequate data and to which the question of likely environmental impacts seemed relevant. Again, the detailed categories used in the assessment have been collapsed into two broader groups in the table.

Table 11 Estimated environmental impact of sample project phases

Extent of environmentally positive impacts	No. of project phases (39)
'Satisfactory' or better	38
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	1

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available.)

This rather small sample of projects suggests that FAO was capable of adequate performance with regard to the likely environmental impact of projects during the 1990s. Strong performance was less common. The proportion judged 'good' was only just over half the proportion judged 'satisfactory'. One project, Integrated Pest Management in Rice in South and South East Asia, was considered 'exceptionally positive and proactive' with regard to impact on the natural environment, due to its success with its core commitment to alleviating the environmental damage caused by pesticide use and substituting more ecologically appropriate means of pest control. One generally weak project in Ecuador, Popular Participation and Management in Rural Development, was assessed as 'unsatisfactory' because of its inadequate attention to environmental issues. There are only slight signs of improving performance over time. No project phase that began in 1991 or earlier achieved a 'good' assessment with regard to estimated environmental impact. Projects that began in the mid and the late 1990s respectively are equally divided between 'satisfactory' and 'good' scores.

Because of the small size of the sample, no definitive conclusions can be drawn about the relative performance of projects in different sectors with regard to their assessed environmental impact. Intuitively it seems predictable that larger proportions of projects in the forestry and pest management sectors should do better in this regard. The three agricultural policy and production activities that scored best on likely environmental impact are Phase II of a Bolivian project on Yield Increase Through the Use of Fertilisers, which had

evolved a sound approach to soil fertility management; Phase II of Support to Soil and Water Conservation in Southern Lesotho; and Phase I of the widely praised Lempira Sur sustainable rural development project in Honduras, which was aligned on the Netherlands side with the then fashionable Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development approach.

Table 12 Estimated environmental impact by sector

	Food security and nutrition (9)	Agricultural policy and production (4)	Inst. development, participation and gender (1)	Forests and forestry (22)	Pest management (6)	Total (39) No. (%)
'Satisfactory' or better	6	4	-	22		38
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	-	-	1	-	-	1

(Numbers in brackets are the numbers of project phases in each sector for which data were available.)

This group of 39 sample project phases, for which an assessment of likely environmental impact is relevant and feasible, is split down the middle when a composite score on **design quality** is considered. 20 score 'satisfactory' or better with regard to the quality of their design; 19 score 'unsatisfactory' or worse. 45% of the former group achieve a 'good' or better score with regard to estimated positive environmental impact, compared with 26.3% of the latter group. Similarly, 40% of the project phases within this sample for which data are available and that score 'satisfactory' or better with regard to **quality of project management** score 'good' or better on estimated environmental impact. But the numbers of project phases in the individual cells of these cross tabulations are too small for any meaningful test of the strength of the relationships.

The assessments presented above concerned the extent to which projects were thought likely to have an environmentally positive impact in their field of operations. A related but different question is whether the activities that a project introduces and/or promotes are likely to be **environmentally sustainable**. Once again, only a professional estimate can be offered on this point, since accurate measurement of environmental sustainability would only be feasible some years after project termination. Contrary to expectations, however,

there is no statistically significant difference between the estimated environmental sustainability of the last assessed phases of projects and phases that were not final.
In fact, only 28 project phases yielded enough data on which to base an estimate of environmental sustainability. Of these, eight are judged 'unsatisfactory' with regard to the environmental sustainability of their results. Twenty are considered 'satisfactory' or better. Although the small sample size makes generalisations difficult, these data suggest that, on this indicator too, Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation projects were achieving a reasonable level of environmental performance.
Seven of the project phases whose environmental sustainability was judged to be 'unsatisfactory' took place in Latin America. Four, comprising three projects, were in Bolivia. One of these projects, for Community Forestry Development in the Altiplano, scored poorly because the sustainability of its results overall was judged to be so low. Another was the fertiliser project referred to above. Although it had developed an environmentally positive approach that was praised by the final evaluation mission, the field mission

The Support to Community Forestry and Wildlife Management project in Mozambique focused on improving the standard of living of rural communities through increased access to forests and wildlife products for household needs and marketing, as well as the generation of income from employment, small industries and hunting fees. Its target was a resource base of forestry, wildlife, agriculture and animal husbandry protected, managed and utilised in a rational way by local communities.
The final evaluation of the project in 2001 concluded that the most significant impact of the project was probably its contribution to putting CBNRM clearly on the policy, environmental and development agenda in Mozambique. The project successfully implemented planned activities and achieved most of the achievable results. Many lessons were learned during the project period about the practicalities of developing CBNRM in the specific Mozambique situation. Other important lessons were that establishing working approaches to CBNRM in any country is largely dependent on the emergence of appropriate laws, regulations and policies and the capacity and willingness of government staff to apply them fully; and that working through extended partnerships is not always easy for a project associated with government departments. The Mozambican government department was not particularly keen to engage in such partnerships, but once initiated the positive experiences from such links helped it to open up to IUCN, the Land Commission and various NGOs. Collaboration can create willingness for further collaboration.

undertaken as part of this review concluded that the environmental sustainability of the approach would be unsatisfactory. Greatly reduced opportunities for farmers to apply the recommended methods (due in part to the freezing of the rotating fund that the project had introduced) mean that in effect the environmental sustainability of the project's results seems most unlikely. In a narrow sense, the project's results would be environmentally sustainable, if they were to be sustainable also on economic and institutional grounds. But that sort of environmental sustainability is meaningless in practice.

The same arguments apply to a third Bolivian project, for support to the Forest Action Plan. In theory this project was 'satisfactory' in terms of its positive environmental impacts; but as it was judged 'unsatisfactory' with regard to its financial and institutional sustainability for government, this assessment had to be applied to its environmental sustainability as well.

Latin America is also represented among those projects in this sample whose environmental sustainability is assessed as 'good'. The region's best performers in the sample were Lempira Sur in Honduras and an agroforestry project in the Chorotega region of Costa Rica. The latter promoted methods that local land users could maintain without the sort of external inputs that jeopardised the sustainability of some of the Bolivian activities. Other projects with 'good' scores for environmental sustainability are a brief desert locust control project in Africa that used appropriate methods; the Regional Wood Energy Development Project in South and South East Asia; Lesotho's Soil and Water Conservation project; and the PREVINOBA reforestation project in Senegal. These last two activities are similar to Lempira Sur and the Chorotega project in their emphasis on participatory, self reliant rural development approaches that focus on locally accessible resources, using methods that enhance the integrity of the natural resource base. Most of the Regional Wood Energy project's results were in the institutional and policy fields and can therefore be considered environmentally neutral. In other senses, however, it achieved environmentally sustainable outcomes. The wood fuel use that it promoted has been found not to contribute directly to deforestation or other environmental degradation. The project helped to stimulate the production of fuel producing plants in some contexts. It also stimulated the use of (agro) industrial waste materials, for example from sawmills and food processing, for fuel.

The one project in this sample that was judged 'exceptionally positive and proactive' with regard to environmental sustainability was IPM in Rice in South and South East Asia. With two decades of experience, this project is one of the few that can demonstrate convincingly that its results are environmentally sustainable. The much newer IPM in Vegetables project is also making promising progress, but it is too early to judge the

The second phase of the Proyecto Lempira Sur in Honduras achieved one of the highest overall assessment scores in this sample. The Honduran government asked FAO and the Netherlands to help it set up a project that could improve the living standard of the rural population in the most remote areas in the southern part of the Lempira department. The project was based on a participatory strategy in which the population, individually or in groups, could identify their own problems and solutions. With project support, they developed ecologically sound farming methods and tried to achieve better management of natural resources.

Although this project operated in difficult conditions (lack of facilities, bad infrastructure, etc.), it was assessed as achieving results that would probably be highly sustainable. The most important elements that reinforced economic sustainability were the amount of attention that was given to education, for project staff and for the local population; the establishment of permanent farming organisations; good participation by the local community; mobilisation of new leaders with a clear focus on community development; and the introduction of new, environmentally friendly technologies. Technical concepts were effectively delivered to local farmers.

The Honduran government supported the project strongly, because it stimulated local authorities and functioned as a catalyst for national and international programmes.

This project also scored well on institutional sustainability at field and government level. It reached many families in its areas, who were able to organise themselves. Inter-institutional coordination was also well developed.

environmental sustainability of its results in a much more diverse and complex set of ecological and farming conditions than those that prevail for rice production.

Overall, the environment policy focus has received less attention in Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation than the gender focus. This review has uncovered ample references to environment in the planning stages of projects, when proposals were being drawn up to satisfy Netherlands criteria (which were known to include environmental concerns) and when staff in The Hague were applying those criteria in their project appraisal procedures. As projects moved through execution to evaluation, references to environment became more sparse, which hinders this review's ability to comment on the overall likelihood of the trust fund portfolio's having had environmentally positive or sustainable outcomes. Whereas gender was an issue of continuing concern on the Netherlands side throughout the project cycle, environment *per se* was less systematically monitored. This was partly because it tended to be integrated with the specific sectoral focus of many of the projects, such as forestry and pest management.

The tentative conclusion is that, while many projects operated in 'environmentally neutral' fields and must be excluded from this part of the discussion, there were two types of activity where environmental impact and sustainability were meaningful concerns.

- some projects spanned policy and practice and had direct environmental implications. Some of these operated at regional level, such as the IPM and wood energy activities in Asia;
- other projects, such as the agro forestry, soil fertility and resource conservation projects quoted above from Senegal, Bolivia and Lesotho, were more directly concerned with land use practice. Their environmental impact and sustainability is obviously a key issue.

FAO achieved moderately positive environmental results with a number of activities of both types. However, such achievements were often jeopardised by weak sustainability in other fields. Even where environmentally positive and sustainable practices were developed and applied by Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects, their chances of long-term application were minimal where the necessary institutional and economic parameters were not in place. The technical answers could usually be developed. Getting them to function sustainably in an enabling socio-economic framework was much more of a challenge. The next section assesses these other dimensions of project sustainability.

7.5 Sustainability

The definition of a meaningfully effective project that was discussed in section 7.1 would give considerable weight to the sustainability of the project's outcomes. The definition of effectiveness that was used in assessing this sample of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects therefore included several sustainability criteria (Annex 3):

- the economic sustainability of the project's outcomes for the beneficiaries or target group: for example, whether improved farming or resource management practices that the project introduced would be economically feasible within local livelihoods after project termination. This assessment was only done for projects whose target group was (part of) the rural population;
- the financial or budgetary sustainability of the project's outcomes for the host government(s), i.e. whether the host authorities were judged likely to have the budgets to be able to maintain whatever services or facilities the project had introduced or strengthened, after the project had ended. This issue was assumed to be relevant for almost all projects;

- the institutional sustainability of the project's outcomes at field level, i.e. whether rural people were likely to be able to maintain whatever institutions the project had introduced (such as farmers' groups, co-operatives or credit agencies);
- the institutional sustainability of the project's outcomes for the government: this criterion concerned the likelihood that government institutions (regardless of whether the project had supported or introduced them) would have the structure and policies to continue supporting the project's outcomes after its termination.

Use of the 'economic' and 'financial' labels as shown above was contrary to the standard terminology of project cost-benefit analysis, which considers the financial viability of project activities and economic viability from the overall perspective of government and the national economy. In this study, the broader concern was at beneficiary level, looking at the likely sustainability of the activities in the long term livelihoods of affected people. The concern at government level was narrower, looking more simply at whether governments were likely to be able to sustain any recurrent costs of activities the project had introduced.

In addition, the **environmental sustainability** of the project was estimated (section 7.4). As noted in section 7.1, any attempt to assess sustainability is jeopardised by the general lack of studies and by the short time that may have elapsed since a project ended. Nevertheless, it proved broadly feasible to estimate project sustainability on the basis of the four criteria above, by considering the quality of outcomes achieved in the economic, social and institutional contexts within which projects had been executed. It might be thought more appropriate, when assessing sustainability, to consider only the last phase of each project. (Strictly speaking, this would be the last *assessed* phase of each project, since further phases of some projects in this sample are still in operation. In occasional cases, it is unclear from available data whether there was another phase after the one for which information is available; or data may have been lacking for a further phase which is known to have taken place.) In fact, when sustainability indicators were examined, no statistically significant difference (using the chi squared test at the 0.05 level) was found between last assessed phases and other phases. Nor was there a statistically significant difference on the achievement of outcomes. It is also worth bearing in mind that no project phase was designed or presented for approval on the basis that its results would be unsustainable and that it would have to be followed by another phase. It is therefore reasonable to assess all project phases in terms of their sustainability, even when the phase in question was followed by a further phase. For sustainability variables as for other

aspects of effectiveness, findings are therefore presented for all project phases for which there were adequate data.

Table 13 below suggests that, at least in the case of the sampled Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects, sustainability is more dubious at the government level, and slightly more promising at the level of rural people and institutions in the field. Even in the most apparently promising area, however – the economic sustainability of project results for the beneficiaries or target group –almost half of the sample project phases were judged 'unsatisfactory' or worse. Comparison with the scores on the basic element of effectiveness presented in section 7.2 suggests that it has been easier for Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects to achieve the immediate targets specified in their design than to secure the meaningful benefits that sustainability implies. Calculating a composite of the four sustainability scores reviewed here shows only 31% of the sample projects for which data were available achieving a 'satisfactory' or better score, with well over half scoring 'unsatisfactory' or worse.

Table 13 Economic, financial and institutional sustainability

	Economic sustainability for beneficiaries/ target group (48)	Financial sustainability for host government(s) (53)	Institutional sustainability at field level (49)	Institutional sustainability at government level (79)	Composite of the four sustainability indicators (%)
'Satisfactory' or better	25	17	23	28	30.6
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	23	36	26	51	69.4

This table refers to the last assessed phase of sample projects and excludes projects for which these criteria were considered inapplicable or for which there were inadequate data. (Numbers in brackets are the numbers of projects in each sector for which data were available.)

Which project features influence these four aspects of economic, financial and institutional sustainability? At the 5% level, there are no statistically significant links between a composite of these four sustainability scores and the period in which a project began or the number of years the project operated in total. Nor is sustainability significantly linked to the type of target group; the type of counterpart; the size of the budget or the amount of the budget used for expatriate personnel. What does make a significant difference to

these four elements of sustainability is whether the project is global/regional or national in scope. Global and regional projects achieved a much better composite sustainability score than those undertaken within a single country. The prospects of sustainability, on these measures, appear better among sample projects located in Asia than sample projects undertaken in Africa or Latin America, but the difference is not statistically significant.

There is a strong relationship between various aspects of project efficiency (chapter 8) and the four elements of sustainability reviewed here. The quality of project design, cost-effectiveness, the quality of project management and the overall degree of participation of the host government and of the target group are significantly related (at the 5% level) to sustainability. So, too, is the quality of supervision provided by FAO. There is a very significant link between these elements of sustainability and the achievement of outcomes; but there is a strong degree of auto correlation at work here. It is stating the obvious to note that projects that successfully achieve their outcomes are more likely to be sustainable than those that do not.

If the four sustainability indicators are tabulated according to the sector in which the sample projects were working, no statistically significant linkages appear – not least because of the very small numbers of projects in some of the cells of the table. Trends in the data suggest that, with regard to economic sustainability for the target group, food security and nutrition and pest management projects are more effective than sample projects in other sectors. As far as financial sustainability for the host government(s) is concerned, it is institutional development, participation and gender projects, and again pest management projects that show stronger scores. There seems to be a stronger prospect of institutional sustainability at field level in these same two categories.

But institutional sustainability at government level seems to be better assured, in these sample projects, for agricultural policy and production projects. As noted, however, none of these trends can be statistically verified from this sample of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation projects.

7.6 A composite measure of effectiveness

This section presents a combined assessment of the elements of effectiveness that were separately presented in sections 7.2 – 7.5 above. The composite score used is the average of available scores for:

- achievement of intended outcomes;
- the score on likely gender positive impacts;
- the score on estimated environmentally positive impacts;

- the assessed environmental sustainability of project outcomes;
- a composite score on the economic sustainability for beneficiaries and the financial or budgetary sustainability for the host government(s);
- a composite score on institutional sustainability at field and government levels.

As with the composite efficiency score presented in section 8.12, the composite effectiveness score can in theory range from 4 (an 'excellent' or 'exceptionally positive and proactive' score on all the individual effectiveness criteria) to 0 (a 'very poor' or 'clearly negative impacts' score on all the individual criteria). In fact the highest composite effectiveness score was 3.0 (two projects) and the lowest 0.25 (one project). For a discussion of how composite scores were calculated and categorised, see Annex 3.

Table 14 Composite effectiveness scores

	Composite score (% of project phases) (86)
Good (3.0-3.9)	2.3
Satisfactory (2.0-2.9)	36.2
Unsatisfactory (1.0-1.9)	52.4
Poor (<1.0)	9.5
'Satisfactory' or better	**38.4**
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	**61.6**

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available on at least some of the variables making up the composite score.)

The distribution of scores on this composite index of effectiveness is shown in Table 14 above. A comparison of these scores with performance on the basic effectiveness element of outcomes (Table 8 above) shows that the overall scores for effectiveness are substantially lower than those for basic achievement of outcomes. This is because it is harder to achieve strong scores on the other elements of effectiveness – in particular, sustainability – than it is to execute a project competently. Whereas this sample of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects shows a reasonable level of performance with regard to the latter, Table 14 gives a much less encouraging picture of overall effectiveness.

To cast some light on factors that may have influenced the overall effectiveness of projects in the sample, the composite effectiveness score has been cross tabulated with a number

of potential explanatory variables. Some of these factors, while displaying interesting trends, **could not be linked with variation in overall effectiveness at a statistically significant level** (5% using the chi squared test):

- The relationships between project effectiveness and the **continent where the project is executed**, show some trends. Only 15 of the 47 African projects in the sample, and seven of the 22 Latin American ones, score 'satisfactory' or better with regard to effectiveness. Asian projects did better: nine of the 14 sample project phases in that continent were assessed as 'satisfactory' or better. (So were two of the three projects undertaken at global level.) But, when variation among the three continents is tabulated together, these trends are not statistically significant (using the chi squared test at the 5% level).
- Activities that are **the last known phase** of a project in the sample achieve a 'satisfactory' or better effectiveness score more often than those that are not, but not so often as to make the difference statistically significant at the 5% level.
- The **date when a project** started does not make a statistically significant difference. Nine of the 34 project phases in this sample that began in 1991 or earlier achieved 'satisfactory' or better effectiveness. Of the 38 that began in 1992-1994 inclusive, 18 achieved that level, while six of the 14 beginning in 1995 or later were judged 'satisfactory' or better with regard to effectiveness.
- The type of **target group** a project has, or the nature of its primary **counterpart**, is not significantly linked to the composite effectiveness scores in this sample. There are only minor differences between the effectiveness scores of projects with government as their main target group, with a primary target group at field level, or with target groups of both types. It is notable that 11 of the 14 project phases with a research or other agency (excluding NGOs) as primary counterpart scored 'unsatisfactory' or worse on overall effectiveness, compared with only 41 (57.7%) of the 71 project phases with government as counterpart. But the difference is not statistically significant.
- The **budgets** of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects in this sample did not influence their overall effectiveness scores to a statistically significant degree. Fourteen of the 27 project phases with budgets over US$ 3.0m achieved effectiveness scores of 'satisfactory' or better, compared with six of the 23 project phases with budgets between US$ 1.5m and US$ 3.0m, and ten of the 27 project phases with smaller budgets.

- There were only minor differences in effectiveness between project phases devoting more than 40% of their budgets to **international personnel** and those devoting less.
- The overall score of project effectiveness is not significantly linked to the **quality of project monitoring and evaluation**.
- FAO's own potential direct influence on project effectiveness can be measured in terms of whether a project phase complies with **FAO policy**, is part of an FAO programme (implying stronger influence) or only seems not to contradict FAO policy. Again, the relationship is not statistically significant in this sample, although it is notable that 11 of the 17 project phases judged to be actively compliant with FAO policy, as part of FAO programmes, scored 'unsatisfactory' or worse with regard to effectiveness, compared with half of the eight with weaker links ('not contradicting FAO policy'). Data on compliance with FAO policy were only available for 40 of the sample project phases.
- The small number of sample projects in some of the **sectors** covered makes it inappropriate to test for statistically significant relationships. Nevertheless, it is interesting to compare the overall effectiveness of sample projects in the five sectors that were addressed by this review. Key observations are the 'satisfactory' or better effectiveness of five of the seven pest management projects in the sample, and the rather low effectiveness of those in all other sectors.

Table 15 Composite effectiveness scores by sector

	Food security and nutrition (22)	Agricultural policy and production (11)	Inst. development, participation and gender (12)	Forests and forestry (34)	Pest management (7)	Total (86) No. (%)
'Satisfactory' or better	8	4	4	12	5	33 (38.4)
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	14	7	8	22	2	53 (61.6)

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

Again using the chi squared test at the 5% significance level, a number of factors were found to be **significantly linked to the overall effectiveness scores** of this sample:

- Whether a project is **regional or (sub) national in scope** is significantly related to the assessed project phases' composite effectiveness score. Nine of the 14 regional and global project phases scored 'satisfactory' or better, compared with only 24 (one third) of the 72 project phases carried out at national or sub-national level.
- There are signs of a learning process in the statistically significant relationship between **project duration** and overall effectiveness. Fourteen of the 24 projects that ran for five years or longer achieved 'satisfactory' or better effectiveness scores. The proportions for projects with durations of three to five years and less than three years were 11 out of 43 and eight out of 17 respectively. Short projects may have achieved somewhat higher effectiveness because they were designed with more limited and feasible targets. Less effective projects of medium duration may have been struggling with ambitious targets that they did not have enough time to attain.
- The overall effectiveness score is significantly linked to a composite score for the **quality of project design**. This is a strong relationship, with 25 of the 38 project phases that were scored as having 'satisfactory' or better design attaining a 'satisfactory' or better score for overall effectiveness (compared with only eight of the 47 that were assessed as having 'unsatisfactory' or worse design).
- There is a significant relationship between overall effectiveness and the **extent of participation** of both target groups and the host government in project design and execution. Half the 44 project phases achieving 'satisfactory' or better levels of target group participation were scored as 'satisfactory' or better with regard to overall effectiveness, compared with only three of 17 project phases with 'unsatisfactory' or worse levels. For host government participation, the figures were very similar. In fact, there is considerable overlap between these variables, as the target group for many projects was one or more governments.
- Two intuitively influential factors are indeed significantly related to overall project effectiveness in this sample. **Cost effective** projects are more effective overall, as are those with 'satisfactory' or better **quality of project management**. Twenty-seven of the 44 project phases with 'satisfactory' or better cost effectiveness scores were judged to be 'satisfactory' or better with regard to overall effectiveness, compared with just two of the 30 project phases that were not cost effective. The relationship was somewhat weaker, but still significant, for the

quality of project management. Half the 50 project phases scoring 'satisfactory' or better on the quality of their management achieved 'satisfactory' or better on the composite effectiveness score, compared with one fifth of the 20 scoring 'unsatisfactory' or worse for their management.

7.7 Assessment and conclusions

A crude measure of projects' effectiveness is whether they achieve their intended outcomes – that is, the objectives specified in their design. On this measure, Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects executed during the 1990s performed quite positively, with 65% scoring 'satisfactory' or better. On a more meaningful composite measure of effectiveness, however, less than 40% of the project phases assessed in this sample scored 'satisfactory' or better. Despite fair to good scores on gender and environment, their performance was dragged down by the complexities of achieving effective development: converting immediate results into sustainably positive outcomes in the typically challenging socio-economic, environmental, policy and institutional contexts of developing countries. Assessment of this sample shows that, if a Netherlands-FAO trust fund project was well designed in a process that included good beneficiary and host government participation, and if it was well managed, it was quite likely to achieve its intended outcomes. FAO, The Netherlands and host governments were often (though certainly not always) capable of good project design. FAO, despite its inefficiencies, was capable of fielding strong management to many of its projects, and supporting it adequately (section 8.9). But the projects assessed were less impressive in their achievement of sustainable outcomes.

The study shows a focused Netherlands concern about gender issues in trust fund projects through the decade, which achieved good but incomplete results: some 30% of the sample projects still scored 'unsatisfactory' on gender. The Netherlands policy focus on environment was weaker and less systematically monitored, but overall performance in this regard appears to have been good – if only because so many of the projects to which the question was at all relevant were focusing on development outcomes with significant environmental implications. For various reasons, brief and long projects achieved stronger effectiveness than those of middle duration (three to five years). Because of the small size of the sample, there are no statistically significant differences in effectiveness scores from one sector to another, although it is notable that the small, more focused family of pest and pesticide management projects achieved generally high effectiveness. Overall, it would appear that the best prospects for effectiveness are achieved by projects that focus on local enhancements to land use practice, socio-economic parameters and

institutional frameworks. Where sustainability can be framed in local terms, and where projects focus on locally feasible technical interventions with high levels of participation in all aspects of the process, effective development is more likely to result. Nevertheless, such locally feasible, appropriate, participatory projects can still be jeopardised by externalities like market conditions or national bureaucratic or legal frameworks.
These externalities are typically what reduce the effectiveness of otherwise competent Netherlands-FAO projects that intervene at less local levels. Various factors can be identified that help to explain the effectiveness of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects. But the diversity of the portfolio, and the complexity of almost any development project process, mean that there are a wide range of other factors – ranging from the climate in a particular year to the personality of the CTA – that determine whether any individual project in this sample achieved effective results.
This study has not compared the performance of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects with that of other donors' or agencies' development efforts. It must therefore be left to the reader to judge whether the effectiveness scores of these trust fund activities are significantly different from those that other development projects would achieve if assessed on the same basis. Agricultural and rural development have clearly been too complex a challenge for the Netherlands and FAO to achieve consistently effective results.

8 Efficiency: operational reasons for project performance

This chapter assesses several broad aspects of the efficiency of the sample of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation projects examined by this evaluation. It goes on to build these into a composite index of project efficiency, and assesses the relationship between this index and a number of variables.

8.1 Introduction

It is important to assess the efficiency of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects because such an assessment can help to explain the effectiveness and impact of these projects. Analysing efficiency, in other words, reveals the operational reasons for project performance. An inefficient project will not be effective or achieve the desired impact, unless it does so at unnecessary cost.

For development management and evaluation purposes, project efficiency can be defined as the input: output ratio, or the amount of effort and resources used to achieve the planned outputs. The less the inputs for the planned outputs, the more efficient the project. In practice, however, it is rarely possible to measure project efficiency in these terms. Inputs and outputs are often not measured in the same terms, or converted to a single (preferably monetary) measure. Very often, as this study has repeatedly found, they are not defined clearly and/or they are not systematically measured or reported. It would be more difficult still to compare the input-output ratios of a series of projects, as the types of outputs that they generate would vary widely and the challenges of expressing them all in monetary terms would be formidable.

Given these practical difficulties, the approach adopted by this study has been to identify a number of proxies for efficiency, that is, for a high ratio of outputs to inputs. The choice of these proxies was based on a number of assumptions about the characteristics that would be typical of an efficient project. First, it is assumed that an efficient project its planned activities and thus achieves its intended outputs. These are clearly necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for efficiency: they say nothing about the cost at which the activities took place or the outputs were generated. Originally, as explained in section 7.1, it was intended to include assessment of these variables in the calculation of project effectiveness. (In Annex 3, they appear in the 'effectiveness' section of the project assess-

ment form.) It was subsequently decided that it was more appropriate to consider them as part of project efficiency.

It is further assumed that there are two levels or phases in project efficiency. First, project design has a powerful influence. Capable management could follow project design to the letter, but if that design is wasteful of resources or unrealistic in its planning, an efficient project cannot result. Secondly, the way in which the project's design is executed will affect efficiency.

This study's assessment of the sample Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects has therefore considered efficiency in terms of the following variables (see also Annex 3):

- as explained above, the extent to which the project **executed its planned activities** and **achieved its intended outputs** were basic considerations;
- **the quality of project design** was assessed in four ways:
  - **logic**: whether the project was clearly and logically designed with regard to inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and objectives, and the relations between them;
  - **clarity of design regarding implementation and management**: whether the design was clear about implementation arrangements and managerial structure;
  - **realism**: whether project design made realistic assumptions about what could be achieved in the prevailing conditions with the proposed time and resources;
  - the study assumed that project efficiency would be enhanced by **the degree to which the host government or other agency, and the target group or beneficiaries, participated in its design**. However, there was rarely much information on how design was done or who took part in it, so that this variable had to be excluded from most of the assessments;
- it is not uncommon for project design to be altered during execution, as experience reveals the inadequacies of the original plans. This was the case for a third of the project phases reviewed here. In such cases, the study assessed **the efficiency of design changes**: the extent to which such changes helped put the project back on track;
- moving on from design, various aspects of **efficiency during execution** were assessed:
  - **adherence to the planned time frame**: other things being equal, a project that takes longer than planned to achieve its outputs is less efficient than one that delivers as scheduled;
  - **adherence to budget**: similarly, projects that spent more than intended were assumed to be less efficient;

- **the quality of budgetary performance** was a subsidiary aspect of efficiency, taken to mean the timeliness, adequacy and quality of budgetary management, disbursements and resource management by the project and its governing authorities. The overall quality of FAO's budgetary management has been a common bone of contention between it and donors like the Netherlands;
- **cost effectiveness** is a broader aspect of efficiency that was intended in these assessments to sum up the cost relationship between inputs and outputs. Following the evaluation procedures of FAO and other agencies, the assessments took into account a number of typical indicators of higher cost effectiveness in development projects, such as the extent to which local rather than expatriate staff and consultants had been used, the amount of reliance placed on existing institutional capacity; delegation of authority; timeliness and quality of procurement arrangements; and the overall prevalence of bureaucratic procedures;
- **the quality of project management** is a matter of technical capacity as well as operational efficiency, but was taken in this context to mean the latter: factors such as the quality and timeliness of project work planning, monitoring and reporting; coordination with other agencies; flexibility and appropriateness of management response to unforeseen circumstances and disputes; extent of capacity building and delegation to national staff; timeliness, frequency and quality of work supervision;
- **the quality of project supervision** referred specifically to the support provided by FAO, from its offices at national, regional or headquarters levels;
- **monitoring and evaluation** has been a particular concern of this study, which has had to depend so heavily on the M&E that was done on sample projects during their execution. It is assumed that a project that is not competently monitored and evaluated cannot be efficient, because it is not aware of its progress, its problems and the reasons for them;
- as with design, the study assumes that **participation in implementation** by the host agency and target group/beneficiaries improves the efficiency of a project, as it is certain to facilitate the execution of the activities required to achieve the intended outputs. More data were available on participation in implementation than on participation in design. Information was available on these two variables for the majority of sample projects.

A number of **externalities** may also intervene before or during project execution to hinder the efficiency of a project. Drought, floods or political instability sometimes frustrate

projects, for example. Records of the sample projects were checked to see how often this was the case.

As explained at the start of chapter 7, the methods used in desk assessment of sample project phases are introduced in sections 1.4 and 1.5, with further discussion at Annex 3. The four field missions undertaken as part of this evaluation (section 1.4) provided supplementary information and verification for about a third of the sample, and found that the desk assessments were generally accurate.

8.2 Execution of activities

The execution of a project's activities is a basic feature of its efficiency, and the necessary foundation for any effectiveness and relevance that it may achieve. But in almost half the project phases reviewed by this study, design specified these activities in only qualitative terms. This made it harder to assess the extent to which these activities had actually been carried out.

Table 16 Statement of activities in quantitative or qualitative terms

	How project activities stated (% of project phases) (79)
Quantitative terms	12.7
Qualitative terms	46.8
Quantitative and qualitative terms	40.5

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available.)

Ultimately, it proved possible to make a reasonable assessment of the extent to which activities had been carried out for 69 of the 86 project phases in this sample. For the other 17, either the activities were unclear or the monitoring and reporting data were unclear. Among the project phases that could be assessed, just over three quarters achieved a 'satisfactory' or better level of execution of their activities.

Table 17 Execution of activities

	Execution of activities (% of project phases) (69)
Excellent (>100%)	-
Good (81-100%)	39.1
Satisfactory (60-80%)	37.7
Unsatisfactory (30-59%)	18.8
Very poor (<30%)	4.3
'Satisfactory' or better	**76.8**
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	**23.2**

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available.)

8.3 Achievement of outputs

In this sample, the outputs of project phases were stated in quantitative terms slightly less often than the activities. Again, therefore, careful estimation often had to be applied to a review of project reports and other literature in order to decide the extent to which outputs had been achieved. This proved to be possible for 71 project phases (Table 19). The assessment suggested that a slightly lower proportion of the sample achieved their planned outputs than were able to execute their planned activities. Shortcomings in design could easily explain why, in some cases, the planned activities did not achieve the expected outputs. In turn, of course, the proportion of the sample that achieved the intended outcomes (Table 8 above) is smaller again.

Table 18 Statement of outputs in quantitative or qualitative terms

	How project outputs stated (% of project phases) (76)
Quantitative terms	10.5
Qualitative terms	47.4
Quantitative and qualitative terms	42.1

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available.)

Table 19 Achievement of outputs

	Achievement of outputs (% of project phases) (71)
Excellent (>100%)	1.4
Good (81-100%)	32.4
Satisfactory (60-80%)	39.4
Unsatisfactory (30-59%)	22.5
Very poor (<30%)	4.2
'Satisfactory' or better	**73.2**
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	**26.8**

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available.)

8.4 Design

As indicated above, the quality of project design was assessed in three ways: logic, clarity regarding implementation and management, and realism. Table 20 shows how the sample project phases performed on these three criteria. It also presents a composite score on quality of design, which is the average of the three scores. As in many of the tables that follow, the number of project phases for which data were available differed from one variable to the next. This is because the sources of information on which the project assessments relied were so uneven. The extent to which each question in the assessment form (Annex 3) could be answered varied considerably. As with some tables in chapter 7, only two broad categories have been shown for assessments for which there were few quantitative data and for which professional estimates therefore had to be made.

According to the mid term evaluation of the 'Training in Integrated Post Harvest Techniques and Farm Management for Hillside Farmers' project in Jamaica, perhaps the most important single flaw of project design was an inadequate analysis of the problem to be addressed by the project and, consequently, an inadequate identification of the ways and means to deal with that problem. In fact, post harvest losses are a consequence of insufficient market outlets and of the inability of the post harvest/marketing system to place the production of small farmers in the market at remunerative prices, with the attendant negative consequences on farmers incomes. >

Table 20 Quality of project design

	Clarity of design							
	Logic (78) %		Implementation and management (75) %		Realism of design (83) %		Composite index of design quality (85) %	
'Adequate' or better	57.7		65.3		'Adequate' or better	51.8	'Satisfactory' or better	44.7
'Not clear' or worse	42.3		34.7		'Unrealistic' or worse	48.2	'Unsatisfactory' or worse	55.3

Numbers in brackets show the number of project phases for which data were available for each score. The composite index is the mean of those scores that were available for each project phase, and is skewed by the differential availability of data for each of its three components.

Although not always poor (see box below on Cape Verde), the quality of project design was a major failing of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects in the 1990s. As can be seen from Table 20, design missions found it somewhat easier to give clear guidance about implementation and management arrangements than to set out a logical relationship between inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes. The biggest challenge, however, was to stay realistic about what the project was likely to achieve. Almost half the project phases sampled for this study were assessed as unrealistic or totally unrealistic. This study's field

> *The reduction of post harvest losses per se does not necessarily lead to an improvement in farm incomes and, generally, in rural welfare. The project document had an exaggerated empahasis on pre-harvest, on-farm aspects which appears to derive from a very cursory look at the fact that while higglers (small dealers in agricultural commodities) are usually in a position to recommend to farmers which crops to grow, their information on farming systems is very limited, and that "higglers are very interested in learning about farm management". In this project the immediate objectives, which were supposed to spell out how the more general objectives would be achieved, were poorly formulated. In addition to poor priority setting, the inputs seemed not to correspond to the proposed objectives, and the project had assumed that results would be achieved in too short a time span.*

The final evaluation in 2000 of the third and last phase of the 'Development of the Market Gardening Sector' project in Cape Verde reached the following conclusions about project design: The project had developed a good project document with a logical and fixed framework in which the objectives, outputs and monitoring indicators are created in a very precise and detailed way. Besides that the project had recruited highly qualified international and national personnel. The government of Cape Verde had supported this project throughout their institutions but also because of additional financial resources.

missions to Bolivia (see box) and Senegal found that poor planning and superficial 'blueprint' approaches to design had been typical of the projects reviewed. Designers of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects typically succumbed to the common afflictions of development planners. Some were overcome with optimism. Others probably had a fairly good idea of what was likely to be feasible, but knew that the truth would be politically unpalatable to the host authorities, to FAO, to the Netherlands or some combination of the parties. They therefore presented a rosy view of what the project would

The field mission to Bolivia noted some improvement over time in the design of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects in that country. But there continued to be major weaknesses in conceptualisation and organisation of the project cycle. Detailed scrutiny of proposals by the Netherlands for conformance with various criteria, e.g. on environment and gender, sometimes caused substantial delays. In many cases, the extra time and effort spent on project appraisal and formulation was not commensurate with the quality of the basic project documents. One of the projects reviewed was basically wrong in concept and design while the others suffered from design weaknesses. In all the cases reviewed, the means-ends linkage was very weak, if not absent. Institutional capacity assessments tended to be superficial. Project objectives were often overly ambitious and complex, and were not formulated in terms of sustained utilisation of services and facilities to be strengthened through the project. Time frames were generally too short and inputs too limited to achieve the planned outputs. Paradoxically, the logical framework methods used reintroduced the blueprint design approach, which was otherwise being replaced by process planning. In general, there was a serious lack of project performance indicators focusing on quality, process and behaviour rather than on number of farmers reached, nurseries attended or farm implements distributed. There was an almost total absence of financial and economic appraisals and feasibility studies prior to project approval.

accomplish. Project design teams are usually under pressure to produce a project plan so that the cycle of approval and implementation can proceed, and are not always brave enough to go back and say that the authorities' idea cannot work.

Unrealistically designed projects led to the common development syndrome of redesign and/or extension of the project into further phases, because the project as initially designed was clearly not going to achieve its planned outputs in the scheduled period. Redesign can also result from the realisation by project management or supervisors that the existing plans are illogical or confused with regard to the development problem they are addressing, or to the implementation and management arrangements. 21 of the project phases reviewed here (24%) are known to have undergone some form of redesign. Of these redesign processes, two thirds were judged to have achieved a good improvement in project efficiency. Six achieved slight or partial improvements; one was considered to have made no positive difference at all.

The quality of design did not differ significantly from one sector to another within the sample. Notable deviations from the mean occur in forestry projects, of which 65% scored 'unsatisfactory' or worse on design quality, and in pest management projects, of which six out of seven scored 'satisfactory' or better.

Table 21 Composite scores on project design by sector

	Food security and nutrition (21)	Agricultural policy and production (11)	Inst. development, participation and gender (12)	Forests and forestry (34)	Pest management (7)	Total (85) No. (%)
'Satisfactory' or better	11	4	5	12	6	38 (44.7)
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	10	7	7	22	1	47 (55.3)

Numbers in brackets show the number of project phases for which data were available for each sector.

Nor is there a statistically significant relationship (using the chi squared test at the 5% level) between the period in which a project phase started and its composite score for design quality. The data suggest that there may have been some improvement in design quality since the pre-1992 period, but (partially because of the steep drop in the number

of new projects in the second half of the 1990s) the trend is not strong enough to be significant. There is no evidence of a systematic learning process having taken place during the 1990s to achieve better design for Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects.

Table 22 Composite scores on project design by period when project phase began

	Period when project phase began		
	1991 or earlier (33)	1992 – 1995 (38)	1996 or later (14)
'Satisfactory' or better	11	20	7
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	22	18	7

Numbers in brackets show the number of project phases for which data were available for each period.

A check on the relationship between quality of project design and whether the activity took place at the (sub) national or at the regional or global levels also shows little correlation. Eight of the 14 project phases in the sample that operated at regional or global levels scored 'satisfactory' or better for their overall design quality. 30 (42%) of the 71 projects executed at (sub) national level achieved this level of design quality. Design weaknesses were a universal tendency among Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects during the 1990s.

8.5 Participation

This study assumed that a project would be more efficient if the host authorities and the target group or beneficiaries took part in its design. However, as was reported in section 6.6 above, there was rarely much information available about how projects were designed. Whether the host authorities took part was known for 27 of the project phases in this sample. Whether the target group participated was known for only 13 of them. Among these few cases, the quality of host authorities' participation in project design was judged to be 'satisfactory' or better for 17 of the 27. The quality of target group participation was assessed as 'satisfactory' or better for eight of the 13 project phases about which data were available.

More information was available about the extent of hosts' and beneficiaries' participation in project execution, although it was available more often for the hosts than it was for the

beneficiaries. (In some cases, the host government was the intended beneficiary of the project, where the intervention focused on capacity building, institutional development or policy issues.) In general, the Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects in this sample achieved satisfactory levels of participation in execution by both groups, contributing to the efficiency and the effectiveness of these interventions (section 7.6).

Table 23 Hosts' and beneficiaries' participation in project execution

	Hosts' participation in project execution (72) %	Target group's participation in project execution (59) %
'Satisfactory' or better	73.6	76.3
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	26.4	23.7

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

Two composite variables were created to represent levels of participation in both design and execution by hosts and beneficiaries respectively. Because of the small number of projects for which information about participation in design was available, scores on these composite indices do not differ much from those on participation in execution. These composite variables were used to check for interesting variation in participation levels across the different sectors represented in this sample and across the period covered by the study. The only notable variations found are that the proportion of forestry projects with 'unsatisfactory' or worse scores for host participation is slightly above the average, and the proportion of agricultural policy and production projects with 'unsatisfactory' or worse scores for target group participation is more than double the average. However, this group of agricultural policy and production projects is small.
A check for improvement in participation levels over the study period, perhaps indicative of some learning process in the Netherlands-FAO trust fund portfolio, does not yield statistically significant results. Data from the sample suggest that host participation deteriorated somewhat during the decade, while target group participation improved. However, the reliability of these results is reduced by the much smaller number of projects that started in the period from 1996.

Before the Special Programme on Food Production in Support of Food Security in Mali became operational, FAO had supported some activities from its own Special Food Security Programme budget in order to establish an institutional framework, and help prepare a good project by thorough identification procedures. The local population and the government of Mali were closely involved in project formulation. Through field surveys, rural community members selected project activities. The government of Mali was also very enthusiastic about the project proposal and participated in formulating the project document. However, the final evaluation of this project in 2001emphasised that, although the project was formulated with the close involvement of the government and the beneficiaries, project design was not very realistic. Many risks were not mentioned in the project document, the principal objective was not clearly defined and too ambitious, and it was not clear whether the necessary means would be available at the right time. Nevertheless, this project achieved positive project results and did have a direct impact on household level food security in the project areas. Project management was good, and staff were well motivated. At the regional and national scales, the project was less successful.

Once again, there is no significant difference between projects undertaken at the (sub) national level and those working at regional or global scales when it comes to the overall degree of host and target group participation. 64% of sample projects working at the (sub) national level achieve 'satisfactory' or better scores for host authorities' participation, compared with 83% of regional or global projects. For target group participation, the figures are 69% and 84% respectively. Regional and global projects thus appear to have been more successful in achieving host and target group participation.
This is because of the nature of such projects, many of which work mainly with governments – so that the host and the target group are the same. In general, achieving governments' participation in projects is easier than persuading rural people to take part. Conventional development projects are often accused of excessive reliance on expensive expatriate personnel, who undertake insulated professional activities that rarely prove sustainable. It is interesting to consider whether Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects in this sample that devoted higher proportions of their budgets to expatriate staff differed significantly, in their levels of host and target group participation, from projects with a lower reliance on foreigners. In fact, as can be seen from Table 24, projects that spent more on expatriate staff did not do significantly worse with regard to participation of either hosts or target groups.

Table 24 Composite scores on participation by proportion of budget spent on expatriate staff

		Percentage of project budget for international personnel	
		40% or less	More than 40%
Host participation	'Satisfactory' or better	21	10
(47)	'Unsatisfactory' or worse	9	7
Target group participation	'Satisfactory' or better	15	9
(38)	'Unsatisfactory' or worse	9	5

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

8.6 Scheduling

Part of the conventional project syndrome outlined in section 8.4 above concerns time overruns. Having been unrealistically designed, many projects then take longer than was planned to be executed. Typical delays concern the recruitment and fielding of expatriate staff, the procurement and delivery of equipment, the provision of office space (often by the host authorities) and the recruitment or secondment of national staff. By the time these predictable but usually unplanned delays have intervened, an all important planting season or other milestone may have been missed. External factors like droughts or political problems can also cause problematic delays (section 8.13). Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects in this sample have certainly not been immune to these scheduling problems. The basic factor considered in this study's overall assessment of project efficiency was whether the project (phase) was implemented within the planned time frame. As can be seen from Table 25, this was true of only 16% of the project phases for which data on start and end dates are available.

The other side of the coin with regard to unrealistic project planning is that the rate of disbursements rarely matches expectations. Projects typically take longer than intended to execute their planned activities, but they also spend their budgets more slowly than scheduled. Netherlands-FAO trust fund project files are therefore full of correspondence between FAO headquarters and the Netherlands Permanent Representation to the FAO in Rome about budget neutral extensions. Although the originally planned project period has expired, the work is far from done and substantial unspent funds remain. Budget neutral extensions of a year or more have therefore been common, indicating what an

approximate, or careless, or unrealistic process project design has typically been. Although 84% of the project phases reviewed by this study were not completed within their planned time frames, negative consequences were only identified for 27%. In most cases, projects just ran on for longer than first intended. A common sequel was the agreement of a further phase to the project, to improve the prospects of ultimately achieving the outcomes intended by the original, unrealistic design.
Although not formally included in this study's overall assessment of project efficiency, some other data about project duration and scheduling are of interest and can be presented here.

Table 25 Adherence to planned time frame

Was the project implemented within the planned time frame?	% of project phases (83)
Yes	15.7
No, without negative consequences	56.6
No, with some negative consequences	26.5
No, with significant negative consequences	-
No, with severely negative consequences	-
No, consequences unclear	1.2
Yes, or no but without negative consequences	**72.3**
No, with negative consequences	**26.5**

(The number in brackets is the total numbers of project phases for which data were available.)

Table 26 Duration of some stages in the project cycle

	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
No. of months between first mention of project and start of project	29	7	55	27.9	14.8
No. of months between project termination and FAO final project report	19	0	79	19.8	19.6
No. of months between project termination and closure of DGIS project account	67	-2	68	19.9	15.5

The number of project phases for which data were available on each of the above points varied considerably, despite detailed study of the files that could be obtained from various sources. It is important to note the substantial standard deviation for each of the variables presented in Table 26. But it is interesting to see that most projects had an extended gestation of more than two years. Their closure took a year and a half on average, but lasted over five years in extreme cases. Another subject of frequent correspondence between the Netherlands authorities and FAO is delays in FAO submission of project terminal reports. Table 26 shows that, for the limited number of cases on which records were available, this took an average of 20 months after project termination.

8.7 Budgetary performance

Although most Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects in this sample did not adhere to schedule, a majority did keep their expenditures within the budget that was finally agreed at the inception of the project or phase. Table 27 shows that 46% of the sample project phases exceeded their budgets. Such cost overruns were normally sanctioned through applications by FAO to the Netherlands Permanent Representation for budget revisions, which were usually referred to The Hague for comment. Administering budget revisions is probably the heaviest single bureaucratic task in the Netherlands-FAO relationship. Many of these budget revisions arise from uncontroversial adjustments to scheduling and disbursements, and cannot necessarily be blamed on bad planning. But the volume of budget revisions for most projects does indicate a dysfunctional relationship between the precise requirements of funding and approval procedures and the imprecise realities of project execution in developing countries. This kind of micro-management is no longer required in the more trusting relationship being developed under the FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme (section 3.6).

A related concern is the quality of projects' budgetary performance: in other words, how efficiently funds and accounting procedures were managed and executed. How timely were the various disbursements in cash and in kind, by donor, FAO and the project hosts? How punctual and of what quality were the project accounts? Were project audits undertaken efficiently and on time, and what were their findings? Table 28 shows that performance in this regard was unimpressive, with 39% of the 76 project phases for which data were available scoring 'unsatisfactory' or worse.

Table 27 Adherence to budget

Was the project implemented within the budget that was finally approved?	% of project phases (76)
Yes	53.9
No, budget exceeded by 0-10%	21.1
No, budget exceeded by 11-20%	7.9
No, budget exceeded by 21-30%	3.9
No, budget exceeded by >30%	13.2
Yes	**53.9**
No	**46.1**

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available.)

Table 28 Quality of budgetary performance

	% of project phases (76)
'Satisfactory' or better	60.5
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	39.4

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available.)

There are no statistically significant differences between projects in different sectors with regard to their adherence to budget or the quality of their budgetary performance. Partly, as always, this is because of the small sample size. Overall, it can be seen from Table 29 that the proportion of project phases in the sample achieving satisfactory or better budgetary performance was higher than the proportion that managed to stay within budget. It can also be seen that satisfactory or better budgetary performance did not always go along with adherence to budget. Agricultural policy and production projects, for example, scored better than average on adherence to budget, but worse than average on budgetary performance. More than half the sampled project phases in the forestry and pest management sectors exceeded their budgets. Over half the sampled project phases in the pest management and agricultural policy and production sectors were assessed as having 'unsatisfactory' or worse budgetary management.

Table 29 Adherence to budget and budgetary performance by sector

		Food security and nutrition	Agricultural policy and production	Inst. development, participation and gender	Forests and forestry	Pest management	Total (76) No. (%)
Adherence to budget	Yes	12	7	6	13	3	41 53.9
	No	8	4	4	15	4	35 46.1
Quality of budgetary performance	'Satisfactory' or better	13	4	8	18	3	46 60.5
	'Unsatisfactory' or worse	5	7	3	11	4	30 39.5

Note: the number of project phases for which data were available on these two variables was not always the same. For example, there were 20 project phases in the food security and nutrition sector for which information was available about adherence to budget, but only 18 for which there were data on the quality of budgetary performance.

As with other aspects of project efficiency in this sample, there is no evidence of a earning process or of progressive improvement during the study period with regard to adherence to budget or budgetary performance. On both variables, the middle of the 1990s seems to have been periods of somewhat stronger performance, followed by a relapse later in the decade.

Table 30 Adherence to budget and budgetary performance by period when project began

		1991 and before	1992-1995	1996 or later
Adherence to budget	Yes	12	24	5
	No	18	11	6
Quality of budgetary performance	'Satisfactory' or better	18	21	7
	'Unsatisfactory' or worse	12	12	6

Note: the number of project phases for which data were available on these variables was not always the same.

Table 31 shows that Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects in this sample that were undertaken at global or regional scale were somewhat better at keeping to budget than those that operated at (sub) national level. The converse was true with regard to the quality of budgetary performance. This may be because of the wider scope and often multiple partners of global and regional projects.

Table 31 Adherence to budget and budgetary performance by scope of project

		Global and regional projects	(Sub) national projects
Adherence to budget	Yes	9	32
	No	4	31
Quality of budgetary performance	'Satisfactory' or better	6	40
	'Unsatisfactory' or worse	5	25

Note: the number of project phases for which data were available on these variables was not always the same.

8.8 Cost effectiveness

In assessing project efficiency, cost effectiveness is the variable that most directly represents the core concern with the input: output ratio. Direct measurement of this ratio for the sample projects was impossible because outputs were so rarely measured accurately or reported, let alone monetised in a way that would permit direct comparison with inputs. However, assumptions can be made about aspects of project operation that are likely to enhance cost effectiveness, and the project's performance in this regard can be used to infer its likely cost effectiveness. Following FAO methodological guidelines, this study's project assessments considered whether cost effectiveness could have been enhanced by the greater use of local or existing human and infrastructural resources, or by greater involvement of the private or non-governmental sectors. Stronger focus on intended outputs and outcomes, better delegation of authority and more efficient project administration may all help to enhance cost effectiveness (Annex 3). In addition, the comments of evaluators and other informed observers about projects' cost effectiveness were taken into account when these were available. Of the 74 project phases in this sample for which an assessment of cost effectiveness could be made, 59% were judged

'satisfactory' or better. This is one of several suggestions from this sample that, despite some continuing bureaucratic obstacles, FAO was often able to deliver reasonable value for money in the execution of Netherlands trust fund projects.

Table 32 Cost effectiveness

	% of project phases (74)
'Satisfactory' or better	59.4
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	40.6

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available.)

There are no statistically significant differences between sectors with regard to cost effectiveness in this sample of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects. However, food security and pest management projects achieved somewhat higher cost effectiveness than those in other sectors.

Using the chi squared test at the 5% level, there is a significant relationship between the scope at which sample projects were undertaken and the degree of cost effectiveness that they achieved. Global and regional projects were judged to be much more cost effective than those undertaken at national or local levels. The background factors that detract from projects' cost effectiveness appear to be more prevalent at the country or field levels than they are in the operation of projects at regional or global scales.

Table 33 Cost effectiveness by scope of project

	Global and regional projects (13)	(Sub) national projects (61)
'Satisfactory' or better	11	33
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	2	28

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

It is also interesting to consider whether projects with larger budgets, or projects with higher expenditures on expatriates, achieve different scores with regard to cost effectiveness. The tables below do not suggest any significant relationships, although it was only possible to assess the proportion of the budget spent on expatriate staff for 45 of the project phases in the sample. The data do suggest that projects with comparatively small or large budgets are more cost effective than those of medium size. It is possible that, in the fields where these Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects have operated, there are economies of scale to be realised – leading to greater cost effectiveness – for projects above a certain budget threshold, while small-scale projects are also able to achieve an adequate ratio of outputs to inputs. Projects with high expenditure on expatriate staff are not necessarily, according to this sample, less cost effective.

Table 34 Cost effectiveness by size of annual project budget

	Project budget per year (US$)		
	0 – 400,000 (22)	400,001 – 700,000 (23)	> 700,000 (21)
'Satisfactory' or better	15	11	13
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	7	12	8

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

Table 35 Cost effectiveness by proportion of budget spent on expatriate staff

	Percentage of project budget for international personnel	
	40% or less (33)	More than 40% (12)
'Satisfactory' or better	17	7
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	16	5

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

The data presented so far in this section are not very helpful in explaining which of the sampled project phases are more cost effective. The search for an explanation needs to be directed internally, to look at features of the project itself. Some of these derive from how the project was designed or supervised by the Netherlands, FAO and the host authorities. Some are more random factors, such as the personalities involved or the specific circumstances that a project encountered. The quality of a project's design is strongly related to its subsequent cost effectiveness. Table 36 shows that 71% of project phases judged 'satisfactory' or better on cost effectiveness were assessed 'satisfactory' or better with regard to project design, compared with only 10% of those whose cost effectiveness was considered 'unsatisfactory' or worse. Poor design usually meant low cost effectiveness.

Table 36 Cost effectiveness by quality of project design

Quality of project design	Cost effectiveness	
	'Satisfactory' or better (44)	'Unsatisfactory' or worse (30)
'Satisfactory' or better	31	3
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	13	27

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

Levels of host and target group participation in the project's design are also significantly related to cost effectiveness, using the chi squared test at the 5% level. The stronger the participation, this sample suggests, the more cost effective the project.

A similarly strong relationship emerges between the cost effectiveness of project phases in this sample and the assessed quality of their management (Table 38; see also section 8.9). However, there is not a statistically significant relationship between cost effectiveness and the assessed quality of the supervision provided by FAO. Whereas 68% of the project phases judged 'satisfactory' or better in terms of cost effectiveness were scored 'satisfactory' or better on quality of supervision by FAO, so were 48% of those that were 'unsatisfactory' or worse on cost effectiveness. What appears to make the real difference to cost effectiveness is the quality of day-to-day management rather than the quality of the intermittent supervision generally provided by FAO to Dutch supported trust fund projects.

Table 37 Cost effectiveness by composite scores on participation

		Cost effectiveness	
		'Satisfactory' or better	'Unsatisfactory' or worse
Participation of hosts	'Satisfactory' or better	33	12
	'Unsatisfactory' or worse	7	14
Participation of target group	'Satisfactory' or better	30	10
	'Unsatisfactory' or worse	2	11

Note: the number of cases for which data were available on participation was different for the two participation variables shown in this table.

Table 38 Cost effectiveness by quality of project management

Quality of project management	Cost effectiveness	
	'Satisfactory' or better (35)	'Unsatisfactory' or worse (23)
'Satisfactory' or better	31	11
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	4	12

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

Table 39 Cost effectiveness by quality of FAO project supervision

Quality of project supervision	Cost effectiveness	
	'Satisfactory' or better (38)	'Unsatisfactory' or worse (23)
'Satisfactory' or better	26	11
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	12	12

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

8.9 Management

The quality of management is one of the factors that most obviously influences the efficiency and effectiveness of a project. Points considered in assessing sample project phases on this criterion included the quality and timeliness of project work planning, monitoring and reporting; coordination with other agencies; flexibility and appropriateness of management response to unforeseen circumstances and disputes; the extent of capacity building and delegation provided to national staff; and the timeliness, frequency and quality of work supervision by management (Annex 3). These factors are largely (but not wholly) embodied in the performance of the individual appointed to run the project. In this portfolio of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects, FAO proved itself capable of fielding some highly competent managers as well as some seriously problematic ones. It is notable that two managers of projects in this sample were awarded FAO's B.R. Sen Award for outstanding project leadership. At the other extreme, one CTA had to be relieved of his duties because of controversy about his behaviour.

Table 40 shows the full spectrum of project quality represented in this sample. The standard arrangement was to post internationally recruited Chief Technical Advisers (CTAs) to run these projects. In many cases, it was the personality and abilities of the CTA that made or broke a project, or that transformed it from one phase to the next when the CTA was replaced. Overall, these data again suggest that FAO is generally able to undertake competent project execution – as represented here by the quality of management – but

The Rural Radio programme in Burkina Faso aimed to stimulate the rural population through providing information, sensitisation and education about improved production techniques and conservation activities in various agricultural sectors. According to the Netherlands embassy the management of this project was very poor because of the vertical bureaucratic structure of FAO and poor performance by the project director, who was director of both the project and of 'Radio Rurale'. The biggest problem was this director's inability to comply with FAO project regulations. When a second director was recruited, he was not able to handle the workload. Communications within the project were always disappointing and unsatisfactory. The changes in management structure did not achieve good management for the project. In the end, there were questions whether the project had achieved anything at all. Some critics argued that the project had hardly executed any of the activities that were planned to contribute to the intended results.

that there remained considerable scope for improvement, with over a quarter of the sample project phases having been assessed as 'unsatisfactory' or worse in terms of management.

Table 40 Quality of project management

	% of project phases (70)
'Satisfactory' or better	71.5
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	28.6

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available.)

The quality of management of this sample of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects is evenly spread across the sectors, with only the pest management projects standing out at all in terms of the proportion of the group judged as 'satisfactory' or better with regard to management.

Table 41 Quality of project management by sector

	Food security and nutrition (19)	Agricultural policy and production (8)	Inst. development, participation and gender (11)	Forests and forestry (26)	Pest management (6)	Total (70) No. (%)
'Satisfactory' or better	13	5	8	19	5	50 (71.4)
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	6	3	3	7	1	20 (28.6)

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

Although a number of the performance indicators assessed in this study do not show any marked improvement over the review period, the quality of project management does appear from this sample to have improved considerably during the 1990s. However, using

the chi squared test at the 5% level, the relationship is not quite statistically significant. It should also be borne in mind that the sample for the 1996 or later period is smaller than those for earlier periods.

Table 42 Quality of project management by period when project began

	Period when project phase began		
	1991 or earlier (27)	1992 – 1995 (31)	1996 or later (12)
'Satisfactory' or better	15	25	10
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	12	6	2

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

The uneven division of this sample between global/regional projects and those that operated at national or local levels hinders the assessment of statistical significance in terms of this variable. However, it can be seen from Table 43 that almost all the global and regional project phases assessed here achieved 'satisfactory' or better scores for management, compared with two thirds of the much larger group of country and more local projects. This is one of several pieces of evidence that suggest that the regional and global projects are where FAO has delivered much of its best work in the Netherlands trust fund portfolio.

Table 43 Quality of project management by scope of project

	Global and regional projects (12)	(Sub) national projects (58)
	No. - %	No. - %
'Satisfactory' or better	11 - 91.7	39 - 67.2
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	1 - 8.3	19 - 32.8

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

8.10 Supervision

In the best of circumstances, FAO's supervision of trust fund projects would be a more diluted influence on their performance than the quality of their day-to-day management. Nevertheless, it would be reasonable to assume that the organisation would provide consistent and supportive supervision to all such projects from its headquarters and regional offices, with the latter playing an increasingly important role after FAO's decentralisation from 1994.

In practice, the quality of FAO's supervision has been uneven. Many projects have given the impression of operating largely in isolation from headquarters or regional offices, depending on the quality and commitment of their own staff and counterparts. Some have been significantly influenced by decision-making and support at higher levels in FAO, and have formed part of coherent families of FAO effort in such fields as people's participation and pest and pesticide management. This more uneven performance is reflected in Table 44, which shows a somewhat lower proportion of sample project phases achieving 'satisfactory' or better scores for project supervision than for project management (Table 40).

Table 44 Quality of project supervision by FAO

	% of project phases (68)
'Satisfactory' or better	63.2
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	36.8

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available.)

Despite the fact that people's participation projects (included under 'institutional development, participation and gender') and pest management work formed part of FAO project families with clear coordination from units in Rome, Table 45 does not show these two sectoral groups of projects to have scored particularly well with regard to the quality of supervision. Although these data should be interpreted with caution because of the small sample size, they suggest that the forestry projects stood out as being better supervised than those in other sectors.

Table 45 Quality of project supervision by sector

	Food security and nutrition (17)	Agricultural policy and production (6)	Inst. development, participation and gender (11)	Forests and forestry (29)	Pest management (5)	Total (68) No. (%)
'Satisfactory' or better	11	3	4	22	3	43 (63.2)
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	6	3	7	7	2	25 (36.8)

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

Unusually, the assessed quality of supervision by FAO of these sample Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects shows a decline over the study period (Table 46). The relationship between the period when the project started and its quality of supervision is not statistically significant at the 5% level, and the usual caution is needed given the small number of projects started towards the end of the 1990s. But there is some sign of a trend, which is possibly linked to FAO decentralisation and a loss of coherence in the organisation's technical support and supervision for operational activities in the field.
Whether a sample project was global/regional in scope or operated at the national or local level was found to have made no difference to the assessed quality of its supervision.

Table 46 Quality of supervision by period when project began

	Period when project phase began		
	1991 or earlier (24)	1992 – 1995 (33)	1996 or later (11)
'Satisfactory' or better	17	22	4
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	7	11	7

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

8.11 Monitoring and evaluation

The quality of sample projects' monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has been of critical importance for this study, which has had to depend heavily on mid term and final evaluation reports as the most external assessments of their performance. Quantitative, objective monitoring is also vital for accurate assessment of projects' progress and problems. Partly because of the qualitative nature of much project design in the period of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation reviewed here, such monitoring has been scarce. Even some of the flagship projects and programmes in the portfolio, such as those for integrated pest management (IPM), have very little quantitative, documented evidence to prove what they have achieved.

There are two paradigms of development management and project assessment, in FAO-Netherlands trust fund co-operation as in many other programmes. The first seeks to reduce every kind of target and progress indicator to empirically quantifiable terms that can be objectively measured and reported. Properly designed and executed, this approach leaves little to argument; but it can be reductionist and short sighted in its insistence that every dimension of development be reduced to numbers. This first paradigm was in the ascendancy around the world during the period reviewed here, as reflected in the increasing proportion of international development effort designed and monitored through logical framework analysis. The second approach is subjective and informal, although in some contexts it can be authoritative and in practice it has served as the basis for much development decision-making and major commitments of funds. This approach depends on the professional judgement of mutually acknowledged experts in the relevant fields. The professional consensus may be that a particular technical approach is effective, or that a certain project or programme is doing good work. Respected consultants may return from the field with positive reports about the progress being made. That is enough for many decision makers, who choose to complement their own professional assessment with the judgement of trusted peers and advisers, rather than be distracted by statistics.

In this sample of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation projects, both monitoring and management paradigms have been represented. But the second has been more common than the first. It is widely acknowledged, for example, that FAO's IPM work in Asia has been professionally sound and that it has had strongly positive impacts on livelihoods and environment in the region. But the detailed field data to prove this achievement are not to be found in the projects' documentation. An exception in this regard has been the Technical Support for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (TSARRD) project in The Philippines, which has recorded and measured its progress in detail. There, however, some of the reductionist risks of a highly quantified approach are apparent. Delivering or

The key inefficiency of Phase III of the Regional Wood Energy Development Project, from the perspective of this review, was its inadequate monitoring and evaluation. The standard procedures of six-monthly progress reports and annual tripartite reviews were followed, and the progress reports were keyed to the objectives, outputs and activities set out in the project document. But this reporting was not evaluative in character. Nor were the conventional M&E arrangements for the project's many training activities put in place until 2000, when course participants began to be asked for their views about the training and its value for them.

The mid term evaluation of RWEDP Phase III (1997) was a useful exercise, But it was disappointing to learn from the project team that neither they nor DGIS had felt that the final evaluation provided for in the project document would serve much purpose. Instead, the funds that had been budgeted for a final evaluation were used for other project activities, such as additional training work. The project judged that this would be a better use of the money. It is worth keeping in mind that a common scenario was played out in RWEDP. When the mid term evaluation took place in 1997, the project was still officially expected to end in 1999. The idea of repeating the evaluation process in just two years was not attractive. In the event, RWEDP was extended to the end of 2001. While a final evaluation might have seemed a more sensible idea after four years, the money had by then been spent on other things.

All this means that the effectiveness of four years of RWEDP work, and of the corresponding expenditures, has received no systematic assessment beyond the brief observations we can offer in this review.

Extract from report of evaluation field mission to South East Asia

reporting the numbers may become more important for some staff than the substance of the rural development that the project seeks to achieve. Of the sample projects as a whole (for which data about M&E intentions could be found), 42% specified an M&E plan in their design, while 58% did not.

Overall, the study has been frustrated by the lack of evaluation reports, which is one reason why some of the projects in the original sample could not be assessed at all. It has been FAO policy not to undertake evaluations for projects of less than three years duration or with budgets under US$1m. The record is uneven with regard to final evaluations of larger, longer projects that should in theory have undergone them. In the case of final phases of multi-phase projects, it was common for FAO and The Netherlands to show little interest and to decide that the funds (if any) that had been budgeted for a final evaluation could be more productively spent on other activities. Mid term evaluations tended to take place somewhat after the mid term of a project or phase. Commonly, their

function was to assess the ways in which the project was deviating from design (perhaps because design had been unrealistic) or falling short of targets. This often led to mid term evaluation missions outlining the design of a further phase of the project. When it had already been decided that there was to be no further phase of a project, an evaluation mission could no longer play this planning role, which is why managers on the Netherlands and FAO sides were often less interested in such final evaluations. When 'final' evaluations were undertaken, a common scenario would be for the mission to be fielded at the originally scheduled time, perhaps three months before termination. At about the same time, however, there would be negotiations for a budget neutral extension (section 8.6). The project might thus end up running for 12 or 18 months after its 'final' evaluation. This sometimes crucial period of operations would then receive no evaluation.

As part of this study, 60 evaluation reports covering 45 of the sample projects were reviewed. Nearly all use FAO's standard evaluation report format, which is comprehensive and addresses the relevant issues. In general, the reports were found to be well written and to present their information clearly. However, few use protocols, guides or structured questionnaires. When used, these tools are usually not annexed to the report. Failure to use or present such guides or questionnaires makes it difficult to judge the accuracy of the evaluations. Few evaluations discuss issues of validity or reliability: they do not discuss whether they answer the questions stated in the terms of reference and/or whether they have used the right methodology to answer these questions. It is more common to avoid these issues altogether and present findings on the basis of what evaluators may claim to be "available documentation, scientific reports and extensive discussions with

This study's field mission to Senegal remarked frequently on the inadequacy of M&E data for the FAO-Netherlands trust fund projects that it reviewed there (see also section 6.2.4). There were no quantifiable performance indicators for the project of support to the national forestry action plan. The impact monitoring system for the programme of support for rural forestry development was a failure. For the two area-based village forestry projects, PREVINOBA and PROGONA-PROWALO, there were inadequate data for the establishment of seedling survival rates and overall impact. The mission considered that these projects had followed a 'blueprint' approach that focused on participatory methods and lacked objective, critical self-evaluation procedures. One project, CRPPPF, focused on forestry training and included ex-post evaluation of some of its activities. But FAO's final report on the project did not quote these evaluations.

persons concerned". An equally important accuracy issue is how the information used in the evaluation is presented. In practice, in only 10% of the evaluations reviewed are the raw data presented in the report. Without knowledge of the kind and context of questions asked, the value of the reported opinions is difficult to ascertain.

Most of the sample evaluation reports focused on measuring inputs and the achievement of concrete project outputs, overall project administration and management problems. The amount of evaluative material available for each project varies considerably. In some cases it is insufficient to provide an accurate assessment of the project's progress towards its objectives. Few evaluations attempted to go beyond that. No attempt was made to distinguish between the effects of the project and those of other factors such as changes in socio-economic conditions or the existence of other programmes or projects.

In general, the sample evaluation reports are not very substantive. They only provide an imperfect picture of the projects' overall performance. They identify types of problems but rarely explore their causes or indicate which problems are critical to project success. The information presented in the evaluation documents is eclectic: there may be little correspondence between the attention given to a problem and its relative importance. Nor do evaluation documents routinely provide information on activities or approaches that have worked, or discuss why they have worked. Project evaluation documents do not permit a comparative project analysis. In part this is due to the absence of standardized performance indicators for the measurement of project performance. The tendency in the sample evaluations was to focus on operational problems and make recommendations for remedial action. Neither the quantity nor the quality of the data in the evaluation reports would permit rigorous comparative analysis that could be used in drawing general conclusions about the Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation programme.

Impact studies of the development efforts represented by the Netherlands-FAO trust fund programme are particularly rare. This is primarily because of the ascendancy of the operational over the evaluative culture in both Rome and The Hague. A secondary but not insignificant reason is that project budgets do not normally provide for impact studies, which by definition can only be undertaken some years after project closure; and FAO has no way to fund any evaluative work on a project once its account has been closed.

The decentralisation of both Netherlands development management authority and FAO operations during the 1990s has arguably weakened the evaluative culture further on both sides. Embassies and regional offices are understandably preoccupied with daily operational challenges. They lack the staff for evaluative or analytical functions that may be available at headquarters, although in theory the sector specialists at Netherlands embassies should be qualified for evaluative work. The staff the embassies do have may

not stay for many years, and may not establish the continuity of experience or commitment that is necessary for an evaluative interest in the analysis of development experience and impact. Of course, a systematic and standardised M&E system also needs to be in place for adequate results to be achieved. Meanwhile, FAO's central evaluation service in Rome is heavily loaded with the routine work of project mid-term and final evaluations, without being able to tackle all the studies that it should. In The Hague, frequent institutional restructuring has hindered the development of an evaluative culture in the technical departments of DGIS, while the evaluative role of the agency responsible for this study has not extended to the routine approaches and methods of project M&E.
It is symptomatic of the state of M&E for the Netherlands-FAO trust fund portfolio overall that data about the quality of M&E could only be found for 61of the 86 project phases in this study. Of these, M&E quality was judged to be 'unsatisfactory' or worse for over half.

Table 47 Quality of project monitoring and evaluation

	% of project phases (61)
'Satisfactory' or better	45.9
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	54.1

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available.)

Although the small size of the sample means that not too much can be read into the findings of Table 48, it is striking to note that the food security and nutrition projects, and those in agricultural policy and production, were judged to have 'satisfactory' or better M&E much more often than the mean. Three quarters of the 12 institutional development, participation and gender projects, and all four of those in pest management for which the quality of M&E could be assessed, scored 'unsatisfactory' or worse. Whether the project is global/regional in scope or undertaken at country or local level, on the other hand, makes no difference to the quality of its M&E.

The relationship between the quality of M&E and the quality of design is not as strong as might perhaps be expected, and is not statistically significant. Table 50 shows that almost half the project phases assessed as at least adequately designed were found to have inadequate M&E. This could be for two reasons: generally good design that never-

theless failed to make adequate provision for M&E; or projects whose M&E was well designed but poorly executed.

Table 48 Quality of project monitoring and evaluation by sector

	Food security and nutrition (13)	Agricultural policy and production (8)	Inst. development, participation and gender (12)	Forests and forestry (24)	Pest management (4)	Total (61 No. (%)
'Satisfactory' or better	9	5	3	11	-	28 45.9
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	4	3	9	13	4	33 54.1

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

Table 49 Quality of monitoring and evaluation by scope of project

	Global and regional projects (9) No. - %	(Sub) national projects (52) No. - %
'Satisfactory' or better	5 - 55.6	23 - 44.2
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	4 - 44.4	29 - 55.8

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

Table 50 Quality of project monitoring and evaluation by quality of project design

Quality of project monitoring and evaluation	Quality of project design 'Satisfactory' or better (33)	'Unsatisfactory' or worse (28)
'Satisfactory' or better	18	10
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	15	18

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

8.12 A composite measure of efficiency

An overall measure of the efficiency of the Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects assessed in this sample can be built up from the individual efficiency elements discussed above:

- the extent to which planned activities were executed;
- the extent to which intended outputs were achieved;
- a composite index of design quality (see Table 20);
- whether design changes achieved improvements (included only for cases that underwent redesign);
- indices of host authorities' and target groups' participation in project design and implementation (see section 8.5);
- adherence to schedule;
- adherence to budget;
- the quality of budgetary performance;
- cost effectiveness;
- the quality of project management;
- the quality of project supervision by FAO;
- the quality of project monitoring and evaluation.

The composite score can in theory range from 4 (a top score on all the individual efficiency criteria) to 0 (a completely negative score on all the individual criteria). In fact the highest composite efficiency score was 3.4 (one project) and the lowest 0.63 (one project).

Table 51 Composite efficiency scores

Composite score	(% of project phases) (86)
Good (3.0-4.0)	2.4
Satisfactory (2.0-2.9)	55.8
Unsatisfactory (1.0-1.9)	40.7
Poor (<1.0)	1.2
'Satisfactory' or better	**58.1**
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	**41.9**

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available on at least some of the variables making up the composite score.)

Taken together, the efficiency scores of the sample Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects are not impressive. The only small consolation is that slightly over half the project phases achieved a 'satisfactory' or better composite efficiency score. Two sectors stand out as having achieved rather more efficient projects than the average (Table 52). These are food security and nutrition, and pest management. However, the small size of the sample means that these findings are not necessarily significant.

Table 52 Composite efficiency scores by sector

	Food security and nutrition (22)	Agricultural policy and production (12)	Inst. development, participation and gender (12)	Forests and forestry (34)	Pest management (7)	Total (86) No. (%)
'Satisfactory' or better	14	6	6	18	6	50 (58.1)
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	8	5	6	16	1	36 (41.9)

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category.)

Overall, projects in this sample that were undertaken at the global or regional levels achieved rather higher levels of efficiency than national or local level projects. However, the difference was not quite statistically significant, using the chi squared test at the 5% level. In general, it would seem that these larger scale projects are where FAO manages to realise more of the comparative advantage with which it is often credited in multilateral work, and to achieve more efficient operations.

Table 53 Composite efficiency scores by scope of project

	Global and regional projects (14) No.	(Sub) national projects (72) No.
'Satisfactory' or better	11	39
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	3	33

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category.)

Although the finding is not quite significant at the 5% level, there appears to be a trend among the project phases in this sample for higher efficiency to be achieved in Asia. The lowest composite efficiency scores were achieved by activities in Latin America.

Table 54 Composite efficiency scores by continent

	Africa (47)	Latin America (22)	Asia (14)	Global (3)
'Satisfactory' or better	25	11	11	3
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	22	11	3	-

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category.)

In this sample of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects, there is no significant trend in the relationship between the composite efficiency score and the size of the annual budget (Table 55). However, whereas the proportion of the budget spent on expatriates does not seem to make a significant difference to cost effectiveness (Table 35 above), there does appear to be a relationship –just significant at the 5% level – between this variable and the composite efficiency scores of the project phases in this sample (Table 56). Fourteen of the 18 project phases that are known to have spent over 40% of their budgets on international personnel achieved composite efficiency scores of 'satisfactory' or better', compared with half of the 36 that spent less than 40% of their budgets on expatriates.

Table 55 Composite efficiency scores by size of annual project budget

	US$0 – 400,000 (23)	US$400,001 – 700,000 (29)	>US$700,000 (25)
'Satisfactory' or better	13	17	16
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	10	12	9

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

Table 56 Composite efficiency scores by proportion of budget spent on international personnel

	Percentage of project budget for international personnel	
	40% or less (36)	More than 40% (18)
'Satisfactory' or better	18	14
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	18	4

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

Has the efficiency of project phases in this sample improved over the study period? Table 57 suggests an encouraging trend, although (perhaps because of the small number of project phases in the most recent group) it is not statistically significant.

Table 57 Composite efficiency scores by period when project began

	Period when project phase began		
	1991 or earlier (34)	1992 – 1995 (38)	1996 or later (14)
'Satisfactory' or better	16	25	9
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	18	13	5

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category.)

8.13 External factors

A number of external factors can interfere with the smooth running of development work, and the Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects in this sample are no exception. Such factors were identified as having had a major impact on the performance of almost half the project phases reviewed in this study.

Table 58 External factors that had a major impact on project performance

	% of project phases (85)
None	52.9
Natural disasters, e.g. floods, drought, earthquake	10.6
Political events, e.g. civil unrest, change of government	10.6
Other [see below]	15.3
Natural disasters and political events	7.1
Political events and other	3.5

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases for which data were available.)

Table 58 includes serious infrastructure problems (e.g. electricity, telecommunications, computer systems); economic problems (such as host governments' inability to pay agreed counterpart contributions, unanticipated competition between project initiatives and the private sector); major institutional conflicts (sometimes with other Netherlands agencies); and random tragedies such as the death of key project personnel. An example of the impact of natural disasters comes from the Lempira Sur project in Honduras, which overran its budget after emergency measures to help deal with Hurricane Mitch. The Projet d'amenagement des forêts et gestion de terroirs villageois du Walo in Senegal was afflicted by heavy rains and by drought. The Renforcement de la Protection des Vegetaux project in Chad was hampered by political problems in the country in 1992-1993; serious political strife in Sri Lanka in 1989 meant that the PPP programme could do little field work that year.

Table 59 Impact of external factors on composite efficiency scores

	No major impact of external factors (45)	External factor(s) had major impact (40)
'Satisfactory' or better	28	19
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	17	21

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

Overall, however, these external factors were not judged to have had a very strong influence on the composite efficiency of the project phases reviewed. While those on which external factors were not judged to have had a major impact did tend to have better composite efficiency scores than those on which external factors were a major constraint, the relationship is not statistically significant (using the chi squared test at the 5% level).

8.14 An inefficient organisation?

While FAO has been widely criticised as a cumbersome multilateral bureaucracy, there are signs from these data that it has been capable – in some narrow senses – of reasonable efficiency in project execution. Overall, this study finds that the conventional criticisms of FAO inefficiency are no longer fully justified, although there have certainly been many failings during the 1990s trust fund projects reviewed here. The size and global nature of the organisation inevitably impose some transaction costs on its work. So does the fact that it depends on public funding, which is bound to require rigorous accounting scrutiny. Chains of reporting often impose delays, and the time taken for financial reporting to be finalised has been a serious cause of concern (now somewhat reduced).
Needless to say, the fact that this large multilateral bureaucracy was interacting on these projects with another large bureaucracy in The Netherlands did nothing to enhance efficiency, and delays on desks in The Hague and Netherlands embassies often created problems for FAO and recipient countries. Netherlands delays in approving projects, or further phases of projects, caused significant setbacks in some cases.
Both FAO and DGIS underwent major structural changes during the review period, as decentralisation took place. FAO moved many technical and administrative staff to strengthened regional offices (section 2.2). DGIS handed over project planning, approval and management authority to Netherlands embassies (section 3.5). The size and complexity of these two processes was bound to jeopardise the efficiency of activities that were ongoing while decentralisation took place. The fact that the FAO and Netherlands decentralisation processes overlapped was a further threat to the efficiency of the trust fund portfolio. While it was not possible for this study to assess the impact of the two processes project by project, it is clear that some damage was done by both. FAO's administrative efficiency suffered as previously Rome-based management teams were split up. An uneven supervision scenario resulted, with some projects and programmes bypassing regional offices and continuing to work closely with Rome, while others were more effectively supervised from the regions. Inefficiencies on the Netherlands side were more at the macro level, as effective consultative structures and relationships between

The Hague and Rome were replaced by much more diffuse and uncertain communications between the many embassies and FAO's country, regional and headquarters offices. The impacts of Netherlands decentralisation point to a basic dilemma. There are two conflicting policy imperatives. One is for local relevance, ownership and participation. It calls for development activities to be prioritised and designed country by country, in consultation between embassies and national governments. This is the dominant imperative in the current Netherlands approach. The converse imperative is for coherent policy, which implies a standardised (though not necessarily centralised) set of priorities and paradigms. The inefficiencies of consultation and communication mentioned above resulted from the Netherlands' transfer in the second half of the 1990s from the latter imperative to the former.

In any event, at the end of the review period, the strongest working relationship between The Netherlands and FAO is again a centralised one, as The Hague and Rome collaborate to develop the FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme (section 3.6).

Although the overall efficiency of this sample of 1990s Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation projects was assessed as mediocre, there is some evidence of an improvement during the decade. Only 15 of the 34 project phases that started in 1991 or earlier scored 'satisfactory' or better on composite efficiency. Ten of the 14 that began in 1996 or later achieved that score (Table 57). That encouraging trend is not necessarily a helpful pointer to the future; however, as trust fund projects of the kind reviewed here become less common and new types of collaboration through the FNPP come to the fore.

8.15 Conclusions

Overall, as section 8.12 showed, the efficiency of this sample of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation projects was unimpressive. It is easy to parody the inefficiencies of projects that were poorly designed, that started late, that operated and disbursed more slowly than intended, that were inadequately monitored and evaluated, and that ran on for longer and/or into further phases than had been planned. But it is important to bear in mind the complexity of the operational challenges that these projects posed, and to remember that their efficiency (or lack of it) was a function not only of FAO performance, but also of the operational competence of the Netherlands government and the many host authorities and counterparts. External factors sometimes had a significant influence on the performance of many projects in the often-difficult operating conditions of developing countries.

Two clear areas of inefficiency in this sample of projects certainly resulted from failings in DGIS as well as poor performance by FAO. **Project design** was often inadequate: poorly

structured, unclear about management and implementation arrangements, unrealistic, or all of these (section 8.4). Despite detailed and time-consuming procedures for review of project proposals (including, *inter alia*, checks on gender and environment), DGIS often approved project designs whose weaknesses later inhibited efficiency and effectiveness. Indeed, the greatest share of responsibility for poor project design lies on the Netherlands side. FAO was driven throughout the 1990s by the constant need to generate new projects and the revenue they brought. Host authorities in developing countries, too, were usually keen to see new development interventions and would be less inclined to agonise over design details than the funding agency. Poor performance with regard to **project scheduling** was one consequence of poor design, with only 16% of the project phases in this sample being implemented within the planned time frame (section 8.6). Poor design typically led to low cost effectiveness among these sample projects.

Monitoring and evaluation was the second area of inefficiency for which The Netherlands must certainly share the blame with FAO (section 8.11). In DGIS as in FAO, the overall impression from the 1990s is the dominance of an operational culture rather than an evaluative one. Indeed, the present review has been something of a rearguard action. Only after hundreds of millions of Euros had been disbursed through Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects was this overall study of the working relationship with FAO undertaken. Even so soon after the review period, it has proved difficult to find many of the necessary files and documents that Netherlands archives ought to be able to provide about this major programme of expenditure. As explained in section 1.4, it was necessary to drop some projects from this study's sample because adequate documentation on them could not be found anywhere. The Netherlands and FAO failed to achieve adequate M&E of their trust fund portfolio during implementation in the 1990s. A few years later, the Netherlands government is hard pressed to produce an adequate documentary record of what was done with the money.

Participation is a more encouraging aspect of the efficiency of the sample projects reviewed by this study. As explained in section 8.5, it is assumed that projects in which hosts and target groups participate strongly in design and execution will be more efficient overall. Indeed, levels of participation were found to be significantly related to the assessed cost effectiveness of the sample projects. Although there was generally little information about participation in the design process, about three quarters of the project phases reviewed were judged 'satisfactory' or better with regard to hosts' and beneficiaries' participation in their execution. Global and regional projects appear to have done best of all, perhaps because their target group was typically governments or other urban-based agencies whose participation was easier to secure than that of rural populations.

Projects that devoted a larger proportion of their budgets to internationally recruited personnel scored as well as other projects with regard to the participation of host authorities and target groups.

Although the efficiency of these Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects was found overall to be mediocre, there was evidence that FAO was reasonably competent in the narrowly technical aspects of project execution. Although there were some very weak CTAs, there were also many good ones, and the overall quality of **project management** was judged 'satisfactory' or better for almost three quarters of this sample. This contributed to fair performance on the central measure of efficiency, **cost effectiveness**, which considers how prudently the project's resources have been used. On this criterion, almost 60% of the sample project phases were assessed as 'satisfactory' or better. In the core, technical tasks of project execution, FAO often proved during the 1990s to be able to deliver reasonable value for money. But the quality of this performance was clouded, in a broader assessment of efficiency, by such factors as poor design and M&E. Uneven **supervision** by FAO was another hindrance in many instances, and in general the quality of this supervision appears to have declined over the 1990s (section 8.10). What really made a difference to project performance was the quality of day-to-day management, as supervision was typically intermittent.

The **budgetary performance** of the sample projects was also fair, almost mirroring that on cost effectiveness. Although almost half of them exceeded their finally approved budgets, the management of resources, accounting, auditing and related administrative tasks were not the primary failing of the activities reviewed by this study. Nevertheless, the bureaucratic burden that FAO and The Netherlands imposed on themselves in their trust fund relationship is striking. As was pointed out in section 8.7, there was a dysfunctional relationship between the detailed administrative procedures for approving (revised) expenditures of public funds, on the one hand, and the messy exigencies of adapting to changing scenarios in project execution, on the other.

Within the group of efficiency factors assessed by this study, the core variable of cost effectiveness was found to be significantly linked to the quality of project design, to the degree of host and beneficiary participation and the quality of project management. When a composite measure of efficiency was assessed (section 8.12), it appeared to be higher among the small group of sample projects that operated at global or regional levels, although the difference was not statistically significant. Food security and nutrition projects, and those working on pest management, appeared more efficient than other types of activity, although again (perhaps because of sample size and structure) the difference was not statistically significant. Sample projects executed in Asia appeared to

be the most efficient, and those in Latin America the least, but once more this was not a statistically significant link. The only such link that was identified was between the composite efficiency index and the proportion of the project budget spent on expatriate personnel.

It seems necessary to conclude that, although the efficiency of this sample of Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects was often inadequate, the detailed nature and causes of these shortcomings were highly variable – reflecting, perhaps, the wide variety of activities and working environments that the sample represents.

9 Performance of the sample projects: an overview

This chapter assesses the sample projects in terms of a composite index of effectiveness and efficiency. It offers an overall discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of these projects, indicating which factors seem to have had the strongest influence on the performance of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation during the 1990s.

9.1 Introduction

Following its overview of the Netherlands-FAO trust fund portfolio in the 1990s (chapter 5), Part II of this study has assessed the performance of a sample of 58 projects from that period, spanning a total of 86 project phases. This performance has been considered from the three conventional evaluation perspectives: relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.
As was explained in chapter 6, analysis of relevance proved less fruitful than had been hoped, for two reasons. First, the policy frameworks against which relevance was measured were so broad that it was almost impossible for a project not to comply with them. Secondly, and more fundamentally, it was difficult for this study to obtain data on the ultimate measure of relevance – positive impact for the beneficiaries.
The analyses of effectiveness and efficiency in chapters 7 and 8 respectively concluded with the calculation of composite indices. Predictably, these showed that the sample projects' efficiency was generally higher than their effectiveness.

Table 60 Composite indices of effectiveness and efficiency

	Composite index of effectiveness (86) %	Composite index of efficiency (86) %
'Satisfactory' or better	38.4	58.1
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	61.6	41.9

(The numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases.)

An attempt will now be made to look at the overall performance of these sample projects. Originally, it was planned to build a composite performance score for each project based on its score for each of the three aspects just mentioned (see Annex 3). However, because of the problems with relevance outlined above, it was decided just to combine each sample project phase's score on effectiveness and efficiency, in the ratio 0.7:0.3. This ratio is meant to emphasise the 'bottom line' of effectiveness, but also to make some allowance for efficiency aspects of a project's performance. Not surprisingly, the sample's overall performance score, when calculated in this way, lies between the composite effectiveness and efficiency scores shown above.

Table 61 Combined index of effectiveness and efficiency

	Combined index of effectiveness and efficiency (86) %
'Satisfactory' or better	40.7
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	59.3

(The number in brackets is the total number of project phases.)

The following sections explore the relationship between sample projects' performance on this composite score and a number of potentially explanatory variables. Unless otherwise noted, the unit of analysis is the project phase (section 1.5). In some of the analysis there is a small degree of auto correlation, since the factor against which projects' composite scores are being compared is itself a constituent of that composite score. This is the case for project design quality, the quality of project management, the quality of monitoring and evaluation, and levels of participation. In each of these cases, however, the degree of auto correlation is considered acceptable, as the factor in question is only one of many that is used to build the composite score.

9.2 Sector

Most of the projects on **food security** that were sampled for this evaluation go back to the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the issue was high on the agenda. Most of the projects had to do with the development of national policies and strategies, or were related to the application of remote sensing technology. Not surprisingly, then, the assessments of the projects in the sector of food security and nutrition show that they drew relatively heavily

on international personnel. In little over half of the cases more than 40% of their budget was spent on international personnel, against an average of 33% for the total sample. Given Netherlands policy with respect to sub-Saharan Africa and the fact that during the period under review food security was becoming more and more an African problem, it also understandable that 75% of the projects in this sector were executed in Africa, compared with 55% of the sample as a whole.

Most of the **agricultural policy and production** projects that were reviewed in this evaluation focused on rural populations. They were the classic type of projects executed at field level (in 78% of the cases, compared with 42% of the total sample implemented at field level) and focusing on technological change through agricultural extension services. Nevertheless, target group participation scores for these sample projects were relatively unsatisfactory. Only in 43% of the agricultural policy and production projects was the score on target group participation satisfactory, against an average of 72%. As noted earlier, a relatively large proportion of these projects dealt with the introduction or improvement of fertiliser use and other technological production issues. The approach taken in these projects was rather top-down and non- participatory, based on the idea of technology transfer. They typically belonged to an older generation of FAO projects that failed to introduce notions of rural participation, farmer field schools and the like. Such projects are gradually disappearing.

Assessment of the sample projects studied by this evaluation showed that, with some exceptions, projects focusing on **institutional development, participation and/or gender** were less effective than projects in the other sectors. This can probably be explained by the lack of concrete information on outputs and outcomes. Often the language used to explain the performance of these activities refers more to processes than to results.

As a consequence, scores on outputs and outcomes were often rather weak. Compared to projects in the other sectors, these projects were relatively cheap: their expenditure per year and their overall budgets were below average. The PPP projects were particularly low-cost activities, as they were mostly executed by national personnel only. Taking into consideration the origin of many of these projects, it is not surprising that in many of them non-governmental institutions (and sometimes research institutions) played a predominant role. In almost a third of these cases (compared with 14% for the sample as a whole), non-governmental organisations were involved in project implementation.

Forestry projects make up a large part of all the Netherlands-FAO trust fund projects financed in the period under review. There were roughly as many as in the agricultural policy and production, food security and nutrition and pest management sectors taken together. Moreover, the forestry projects that were sampled for this evaluation were rela-

tively expensive, with an above average total budget. The expenditures per year were high as well, despite the fact that forestry projects had a relatively long duration. The high expenditure is not caused by the deployment of expensive expatriate personnel: in only 15% of these projects was more than 40% of the budget spent on international personnel, compared with 33% of the sample as a whole. Many of these projects included activities at different levels, including policy development at national level, institutional strengthening at several levels, and investment activities at the local level.
Assessments of projects included in this evaluation show that **pest management** projects scored 'satisfactory' or better on effectiveness and efficiency more often than other projects. They have particularly good scores on design (86% 'satisfactory' or better). The proportion of these projects executed in Africa is above average (71% versus 55% for the sample as a whole). Most of these projects can be characterised as information/research projects or at least as having an important component of information/research (in 43% of cases, against an average of only 8% for the whole sample). They target primarily governmental institutions and deal with governmental responsibilities (43% of the cases, which is above the average of 25%). The participation of the host government in project design and execution is satisfactory in all cases. A special sub-category are the projects on the introduction of integrated pest management through so-called farmer field schools. These regional projects show relatively high scores on efficiency and effectiveness.
Although the sample of project phases that were assessed was restricted to the sectors in which most of the Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation took place, the number of projects in some of these sectors was so small that detailed, systematic, calculated comparisons between the sectors could not be justified. Nevertheless, some comparisons are possible. Table 62 shows the scores of projects in the different sectors on which this study focused, using the composite score on effectiveness and efficiency explained in section 9.1 above. It shows that the only marked difference is between pest management projects and the rest. Five of the seven sample projects in the pest management sector achieved 'satisfactory' or better scores on this composite index, whereas this level of performance was achieved by half or less of those in all other key sectors.

Because there is only this one strong difference, no statistical significance was found (using the chi squared test at the 0.05 level) between the overall performance of sample projects in the various sectors.

Table 62 Composite effectiveness and efficiency score by sector

	Food security and nutrition (22)	Agricultural policy and production (12)	Inst. development, participation and gender (12)	Forests and forestry (34)	Pest management (7)
'Satisfactory' or better	9	4	5	12	5
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	13	7	7	22	2

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category.)

9.3 Region

There are no statistically significant differences between sample project phases on the basis of the part of the world where they were executed. Almost two thirds of the comparatively small number of Asian projects in the sample scored 'satisfactory' or better, while the converse was true of African and Latin American projects. In this sample, projects undertaken in Latin America scored worst.

Table 63 Composite effectiveness and efficiency score by region

	Africa (47)	Latin America (22)	Asia (14)	Global (3)
'Satisfactory' or better	17	7	9	2
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	30	15	5	1

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category.)

9.4 Period of operation

It would be reasonable to hope that Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation projects would show an improvement over time in their composite effectiveness and efficiency scores. Table 64 does show an improvement from the earliest period assessed to the mid 1990s, but with a slight lapse in the smaller number of project phases that began in 1995 or later. However, the differences were not found to be statistically significant.

Table 64 Composite effectiveness and efficiency score by period when project phase began

	1991 or earlier (34)	1992 – 1995 (38)	1995 or later (14)
'Satisfactory' or better	10	19	6
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	24	19	8

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category.)

9.5 Size of budget

Table 65 suggests that, the larger the budget per year of the project phases in this sample, the better its composite effectiveness and efficiency score was likely to be. However, the relationship was not found to be statistically significant, using the chi squared test at the 0.05 level.

Table 65 Composite effectiveness and efficiency score by size of budget

	Project budget per year (US$)		
	0 – 400,000 (23)	400,001 – 700,000 (29)	> 700,000 (25)
'Satisfactory' or better	7	13	12
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	16	16	13

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

9.6 Expatriate staff

One third of the sample project phases for which data are available on this issue devoted more than 40% of their budgets to international personnel. The difference in overall effectiveness and efficiency between projects spending more or less than 40% of their budgets on international personnel was not found to be statistically significant. This sample does not support the argument that expatriate staff could be expected to achieve stronger project performance.

Table 66 Composite effectiveness and efficiency score by proportion of budget spent on expatriate staff

	Percentage of project budget for international personnel	
	40% or less (36)	More than 40% (18)
'Satisfactory' or better	13	8
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	23	10

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

9.7 Scope of project

The large majority of the project phases in this sample were undertaken at the national or sub-national levels. A smaller group took place at global or regional (e.g. West Africa) level. This latter group achieved significantly stronger levels of performance on the composite effectiveness and efficiency score. One explanation for this would be that these were the projects in which FAO was best able to apply its comparative advantages in intergovernmental work. Projects undertaken at country or local levels were prey to all the standard difficulties of development execution, and were not always easy arenas for FAO to apply its special skills or resources. Regional and global projects, overall, presented fewer of these field-level challenges and were of a more upstream nature. Currently, Netherlands policy favours funding for such FAO activities, but more at the level of global policy and initiatives than of the kind of project-based work assessed here (section 3.6). It is particularly perplexing, given the evidence in Table 67, that Netherlands funding for regional projects is now almost excluded in practice, if not in principle.

Table 67 Composite effectiveness and efficiency score by scope of project

	Global and regional projects (14)	(Sub) national projects (72)
'Satisfactory' or better	9	26
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	5	46

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category.)

9.8 Project design

The quality of design as found to be strongly correlated with sample project phases' composite scores on effectiveness and efficiency, using the chi squared test. As Table 68 shows, only nine of the 47 project phases whose design was assessed as 'unsatisfactory' or worse achieved scores of 'satisfactory' or better on the composite index, as compared with 26 of the 38 project phases with 'satisfactory' or better design. As noted in section 9.1, this is one of the cross tabulations for which there is a small degree of auto correlation. Intuitively, however, this strong relationship is what would be expected.

Table 68 Composite effectiveness and efficiency score by quality of project design

	Quality of project design	
	'Satisfactory' or better (38)	'Unsatisfactory' or worse (47)
'Satisfactory' or better	26	9
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	12	38

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

9.9 Project management

Another unsurprising and very strong relationship in this sample is between composite effectiveness and efficiency scores and the assessed quality of project management. However, it was often not possible for strong management to overcome other factors and achieve a 'satisfactory' score on effectiveness and efficiency. This was the case for almost half of the sample project phases with 'satisfactory' or better management.

Table 69 Composite effectiveness and efficiency score by quality of project management

	Project management	
	'Satisfactory' or better (50)	'Unsatisfactory' or worse (20)
'Satisfactory' or better	27	4
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	23	16

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

9.10 Monitoring and evaluation

This study has found monitoring and evaluation to be one of the major weak points of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation projects during the 1990s (section 8.11). But there is no significant relationship between the quality of sample projects' M&E and their composite effectiveness and efficiency scores, as Table 70 shows. This reflects the dominance of operational over evaluative culture on the Netherlands and FAO sides. Even where M&E was strong, they were not necessarily being used as vigorously as they might be to enhance project performance. It is less surprising that some project phases that did well overall had poor M&E. These may have been the ones that were well designed to start with, and/or encountered few significant problems in their implementation. M&E is most important when, for whatever reason, a project has to be adjusted in the course of implementation.

Table 70 Composite effectiveness and efficiency score by quality of monitoring and evaluation

	Monitoring and evaluation	
	'Satisfactory' or better (28)	'Unsatisfactory' or worse (33)
'Satisfactory' or better	14	13
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	14	20

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

9.11 Participation

As will be recalled from section 8.5, this study assessed the degree of participation by host governments and target groups in the design and execution of each sample project phase. Information was not always available, especially on participation in design. Combined variables were therefore created, showing the assessed degree of overall participation by hosts and beneficiaries respectively. When these variables are cross tabulated with composite scores for effectiveness and efficiency, strong relationships are found (using the chi squared test at the 0.05 level). Stronger participation by host authorities, and stronger participation by target groups, are both linked to effectiveness and efficiency in this sample of project phases. In both cases, as Table 71 and Table 72 show, a small group of project phases achieved 'satisfactory' or better overall performance despite poor levels of participation. It is easy to imagine cases of well-designed and well-delivered projects taking place in developing countries even though

the host authorities had little to do with them. Projects that achieved well despite poor participation by the target group are more perplexing. These were the Vitamin A deficiency project in Nepal (see box, page 62), Phase III of the Marketing Management Assistance project in Zambia and Phase II of the Pilot Forestry Project in Chad. The Zambian project was found to have major contributions to policy without fully involving its direct beneficiaries, who were the senior officials of the Ministry of Agriculture. The Chad project, although it did well in achieving its intended outcomes, struggled with the initiation of a participatory approach among a population more used to a top-down style of development handouts.

Table 71 Composite effectiveness and efficiency score by level of host authorities' participation

	Hosts' participation	
	'Satisfactory' or better (51)	'Unsatisfactory' or worse (25)
'Satisfactory' or better	27	5
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	24	20

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

Table 72 Composite effectiveness and efficiency score by level of target groups' participation

	Target groups' participation	
	'Satisfactory' or better (44)	'Unsatisfactory' or worse (17)
'Satisfactory' or better	24	3
'Unsatisfactory' or worse	20	14

(Numbers in brackets are the total numbers of project phases in each category for which data were available.)

9.12 Conclusions

In the simple achievement of their intended outcomes, this sample of Netherlands-FAO trust fund co-operation projects performed fairly well. This performance was achieved through moderate levels of operational efficiency. But the overall results of this assessment are disappointing. On the composite effectiveness and efficiency index used here, only 35 (40.7%) of the 86 assessed project phases achieved 'satisfactory' or better scores. Over half were thus assessed as 'unsatisfactory' or worse. Among the sectors on which this study focused, only pest and pesticide management projects stood out as generally better on this composite index. Projects in Asia (where several of the small group of pest projects took place) did somewhat better than those on other continents, but the relationship is not statistically significant. Nor is overall performance in this sample significantly linked to the size of the project budget or the proportion of that budget spent on expatriate personnel. There seems to have been no general improvement over the period reviewed: after an apparently upward trend in the mid 1990s, there was a relapse later in the decade. However, the smaller group of these sample projects that operated at regional or global scale (they included some pest and pesticide management projects) did significantly better than those undertaken at national or sub-national levels.

This reinforces the argument that FAO's comparative strengths lie in operations at the supra-national scale – an argument that is only partially reflected in implementation of the FAO/Netherlands Partnership Programme so far.

The other project characteristics found to be strongly linked with overall effectiveness and efficiency were good design; good management; and strong participation in design and execution by host authorities and target groups. Overall, this study has found that there is wide variation in effectiveness and efficiency between projects of similar types, and between projects undertaken in the same regions and countries. There is an important degree of project specificity influencing scores in this sample: such factors as politics, personalities, policies, macro economic and climatic events all make a major difference to a project's fortunes. The sample does suggest, however, that despite many successes, generally harmonious and constructive collaboration and a strong Netherlands commitment to FAO's mandate during the 1990s, the two parties' record over the decade leaves much to be desired.

Annex 1 The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department

The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, in Dutch the Inspectie Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en Beleidsevaluatie (IOB), is responsible for conducting evaluations of Netherlands foreign policy.
IOB is part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is an independent unit, which reports directly to the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Minister for Development Co-operation. The Minister concerned submits IOB reports accompanied by a letter with his/her policy reactions, to Parliament, where they are discussed by the Permanent Committee on Foreign Affairs with respect to follow up actions.
IOB was established in 1977 with a mandate that was restricted to the evaluation of aid programmes. Following the reassessment of Netherlands foreign policy in 1996, IOB's mandate was broadened to include other fields of foreign policy.
From 1977 to the mid 1980s, IOB's emphasis was on individual project evaluations, the status of which was then confidential. Since the mid 1980s, emphasis has shifted to comprehensive thematic studies, focusing on policies and modalities of implementation and covering sectors, themes or programmes. External independent experts participate in the various phases of the research, under the responsibility of IOB. Where relevant, institutions or experts in recipient countries are invited to participate in the fieldwork. In some cases reference groups consisting of independent experts and Ministry staff are appointed for the evaluations, to advise on the methodology, approach or subjects under review. The final reports, based on various field and desk studies, are published under the responsibility of IOB.
In addition to its own evaluations, IOB also participates in multi-donor evaluations.

Annex 2 Terms of reference

1. Reason for the evaluation

In addition to its regular contribution to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Netherlands government has made considerable funding available over recent decades for specific technical co-operation projects. This type of relationship between a funding bilateral donor and an executing multilateral organisation is known as multi-bilateral or trust fund co-operation. In fact, the Netherlands was for a long time FAO's largest contributor in this field. Although individual projects have regularly been the subject of tripartite evaluation, there has never been a comprehensive evaluation of the entire trust fund co-operation with FAO. In recent years, however, changes in Dutch development co-operation (delegation of decision-making to embassies, cuts in core budgets, deferment of routine policy consultations and a critical "quick review" of aid via UN channels), have led the Policy and operations evaluation department (IOB) to express the desire for a thorough evaluation of this kind. The primary concern of such an evaluation should be to assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of Dutch/FAO co-operation from the perspective of the recipients (in particular people in developing countries). Such an evaluation could play a valuable role in FAO's initiative to improve quality and increase efficiency, which began with its decentralisation process started in 1996, and provide an input for future policy discussions between FAO and the Netherlands government.

2. Background

2.1 *The Dutch/FAO co-operation*

The FAO came into existence on 16 October 1945. The aims of the Member States establishing the organisation, as expressed in the preamble to its Constitution, are:

- Raising levels of nutrition and standards of living of the peoples under their respective jurisdictions;
- Securing improvements in the efficiency of the production and distribution of all food and agricultural products;
- Bettering the condition of the rural populations;
- And thus contributing towards an expanding world economy and ensuring humanity's freedom from hunger.

Article 1 of the Constitution then cites the three main functions of the organisation:

- The collection, analysis and dissemination of information;
- The promotion of research and policy at national and international level, and
- The provision of technical assistance to governments on request.

Keeping in mind these basic texts of FAO the following three interrelated global goals that the organisation is specifically dedicated to helping members to achieve, were recently reconfirmed in a new strategic framework (2000-2015):

- Access of all people at all times to sufficient nutritionally adequate and safe food, ensuring that the number of chronically undernourished people is reduced by half by no later than 2015.
- The continued contribution of sustainable agriculture and rural development, including fisheries and forestry, to economic and social progress and the well being of all.
- The conservation, improvement and sustainable utilization of natural resources, including land, water, forest, fisheries and genetic resources for food and agriculture

Dutch policy with regard to the FAO as an organisation is in the first place a matter for the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, which consults with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the development of policy viewpoints in this respect. Discussion of policies with respect to developing countries and the objectives, funding, implementation, etc of trust fund projects takes place principally within the Directorate-General for International Co-operation (DGIS) of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There is agreement between the ministries on the main lines of policy to be pursued.

2.2 *Dutch policy*

During the preparatory research for this evaluation, desk study and interviews provided insight into the history and evolution of policy relating to co-operation between the Netherlands and the FAO. This preparatory research was an important means of reconstructing the dialogue between the FAO and DGIS. At the same time, it provided an opportunity to refine the issues to be addressed during the evaluation concerning the policy relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. One of the questions raised was whether there is in fact any such thing as a Dutch/FAO trust fund "programme", in the sense of there being any greater link between projects than the mere fact that they are carried out

via the same multilateral organisation. In other words, is co-operation with the FAO designed to achieve specific priorities within Dutch policy (i.e. has the FAO been regarded primarily as a channel for implementation), or to direct or influence FAO policy, which should in principle derive from the broad objectives of the organisation itself? The preliminary study of the documents recording the policy dialogue between the Netherlands and the FAO reveals the influence of both viewpoints, though neither appears to have been dominant. Could the efforts from the Dutch side to cluster support to FAO around three major themes (food security, forestry and agricultural production systems) during the late 80s and early 90s and to focus on so-called special action programmes during the 70s and 80s be interpreted as trying to give trust fund co-operation with FAO the character of a programme? If one considers a clearly articulated policy and a more or less stable budget to be two of the more basic characteristics of a programme a simple look at yearly fluctuations in expenditures raises the question to what extent we are really looking at a programme in this case.

The Netherlands has always affirmed the importance of the FAO as a specialised UN agency in the field of food and agriculture and emphasised – in varying degrees – its significance as a neutral forum for discussion and setting standards (conventions, codes of conduct, best practices), a knowledge centre and an executing agency. In its policy dialogue with the FAO, the Netherlands has accordingly emphasised at fairly regular intervals and at all levels that the primary purpose of trust fund co-operation is to provide additional support in areas internationally regarded as important, on the assumption that this extra-budgetary funding will relieve financial pressure on the core responsibilities laid down in the "regular programme" of the organisation. Secondly, it has always emphasised that, where project assistance is concerned, the FAO should concentrate on implementing projects which relate to its normative functions including setting standards and generating and disseminating knowledge, or which flow from its particular strengths, such as specific areas of in-house expertise, or the organisation's ability to engage in co-operation at a regional level or in countries which do not qualify for bilateral co-operation (generally for political reasons).

Until 1995, a policy review meeting was organised each year with the FAO. The Dutch delegation to these meetings was led by the unit responsible for the Rural Development Sector Programme until 1991 and by the Multilateral Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with support from the relevant specialist units (Spearhead Programmes and Technical Advisory Department) between 1991 and 1995. In the early 1990s, the

emphasis of the annual review meetings shifted from discussion of individual projects to discussion of themes, a development welcomed by both parties. For the forestry sector, there was a separate review covering both policies and individual projects. The desire for a separate review procedure on forests and forestry was inspired by a shared anxiety that integration of this theme into the more comprehensive review might reduce the attention paid to it. A proposal of rural development specialists within DGIS to integrate the two review procedures was resisted by forestry experts within both the FAO and DGIS itself.

In 1995 the Netherlands government decided to conduct an integrated assessment of the entire Dutch foreign policy including international co-operation. Uncertainty about the future role of the policy review meetings and of Dutch/FAO co-operation in general following the review of the Netherlands foreign policy and the role of development co-operation therein led to the suspension of the annual meetings. Funding authority of projects in individual countries (or regions), even in case of execution by a multilateral agency, was delegated to the Dutch embassies in 1995. It was not until 2000 that the review procedure was relaunched, this time with a different aim: to achieve a new kind of partnership designed to support a limited number of themes rather than projects, at least so far as DGIS non-delegated funds were concerned.

The 1990s also saw a number of major international policy-making events in which the Netherlands (The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries and the Directorate-General for International Co-operation) played an active part: the FAO/Netherlands Conference on Agriculture and the Environment held in 's-Hertogenbosch in 1991, preparing the way for UNCED, the International Conference on Nutrition (1992) organised by FAO and WHO, the World Food Summit (1996), the International Technical Conference on Agro biodiversity (Leipzig, 1996) and the FAO/Netherlands Conference on the Multifunctional Character of Agriculture and Land (Maastricht, 1999).

2.3 Expenditure on trust fund co-operation

To obtain an overview of total Dutch/FAO trust fund co-operation over the 1990-1999 periods, it was necessary to combine data from a variety of sources. The annual reports of the FAO were taken as the basis. They provide an overview of the entire annual income of the organisation, broken down by donor and by project. A new database was constructed by supplementing this information with data derived from the project documentation held at the Permanent Representation in Rome and from the DGIS project database

(MIDAS). This overall inventory shows that Dutch/FAO trust fund co-operation has provided support for projects in a wide range of fields. The database provides a basis for the selection of the particular countries, themes and projects on which the evaluation will concentrate.

Total disbursements over the 1990-1999 period amounted to US$ 333 million split among 177 projects on widely differing scales. For ease of reference, the project portfolio has been divided into eight thematic groups, based on the main aims of the individual projects. However, the vast majority of expenditures and projects relate to just five themes:

- Forests and forestry
- Food security and nutrition
- Agricultural policy and production
- Pest management, and
- Institutional development (including W&D, People's participation, and so on).

Although institutional development is, of course, an aspect of the projects in all the other thematic categories, the number of projects with mainly institutional objectives (such as above all gender, farmers' organisations, reorganisation of extension services, land reform, and so on) justifies a separate group.

The three minor themes are animal husbandry, fisheries and genetic diversity. The most interesting feature is the high level of spending on forests and forestry, approximately equalling the combined total expenditure on the three other major sectoral themes of agricultural policy and production, food security and pest management.

The pattern of expenditure on each of the themes during 1990-1999 shows yearly fluctuations, the most striking ones in relation to forests/forestry and food security between 1991 and 1993. The evaluation will investigate whether these fluctuations were due to institutional or policy changes or other factors.

As regards the geographical distribution of the projects, 55% of them (US$ 150,5 million) related to Africa, 20% (US$ 109,0 million) to Latin America and 12% (US$ 55,6 million) to Asia. The remaining 13% were global projects (US$ 18,0 million). There were some significant changes in regional distribution in the period to be evaluated (increase of expenditures in Latin America and decrease in Africa).

FAO policy documents distinguish between (i) normative projects, (ii) information gathering/ dissemination and research projects and (iii) operational projects. The first category is made up of projects concerned with international policy development or legislation and regulation. The second is a consequence of the FAO's role as a global centre of expertise. The third embraces all projects resulting from requests for technical assistance from countries or groups of countries. The normative and information activities are inevitably closely related, and a particular operational activity may also be regarded as having a normative function. For example, projects focusing on the role of women in agriculture had purely operational aims but were also intended to get the subject onto the FAO (and indeed the global) agenda. On the basis of the preliminary research it seems fair to assume that all country-specific projects can be considered as primarily operational in nature. Working on that assumption, the majority of the projects funded involved operational activities. 12% of all projects had primarily normative aims and just 5% related to information and research.

3. Aim of the evaluation and issues to be examined

3.1 Aim

The aim of this evaluation is to assess the performance of the Dutch/FAO trust fund co-operation. For that matter the evaluation will focus on its policy relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. Let us consider these criteria more closely.

3.2 Relevance to policy

The examination of the relevance of the trust fund co-operation should reveal the extent to which the co-operation or parts of it reflect the aims formulated. This main issue can be broken down into three sub-issues: to what extent the trust fund co-operation reflects the aims of the FAO; to what extent co-operation with the FAO reflects the aims of Dutch development co-operation policy, and – finally – to what extent trust fund projects have addressed policy objectives of the recipient countries and the needs of the recipient population.

The FAO is a specialised UN agency with a global mandate (see subsection 2.1).
Its general aims are so broadly defined that there is only an extremely remote possibility that support for trust fund activities might conflict with them. Although it may not necessarily reflect all its aspects, the content of Dutch/FAO trust fund co-operation

almost inevitably falls within this broad mandate. How the aims or relevance of trust fund co-operation relate to the overall policy aims of the FAO will in general, therefore, be a relatively unimportant issue. On the other hand, the evaluation will try to establish whether the chosen themes for co-operation are the most relevant to those overall aims. In relation to this issue questions will be raised about consistency between the trust fund co-operation and the aims of the FAO. For that matter an effort will be made to identify, as far as possible, what proposals have been submitted by FAO, approved or rejected by DGIS, and what the underlying policy reasons were. It may also be interesting to find out if the trust fund co-operation has been used by DGIS as a way of influencing priorities within the FAO and if so with what result.

However, relevance in the light of the aims of FAO is not the only yardstick of the relevance of the co-operation. It will also be measured against the policies of the Netherlands (the donor) and those of the recipients. The policies of the Netherlands, like those of the FAO, are probably so broadly formulated that any assessment of policy relevance to them is likely to produce a positive result. However in relation to this issue, a more interesting and obvious question will be if the trust fund co-operation is consistent with the Netherlands' views on the role and function of the FAO and the added value which the organisation is assumed to present. Another question is to what extent the trust fund co-operation has influenced Dutch policy, and if so, in what areas.

It will be more difficult and complicated to establish whether it is relevant to the policies of recipient countries. The first problem is that we are not dealing with a single party, but with at least as many parties as there are projects. Secondly, many projects cover more than one country, each with its own structures and policies. Nevertheless the evaluation should try to get answers to the question where the initiative to identify and formulate project proposals came from and what underlying policy considerations were. It should also assess to the extent possible if the projects are consistent with the policies of the recipient countries and/or address the needs of the target groups.

In practice, projects have tended (with a few notable exceptions) to be identified and formulated by FAO and the recipient country before consultation with the donor started. Proposals, in general, have not been submitted for funding until after this process was completed. The evaluation will try to reveal to what extent identification and formulation were part of the discussions with the donor during the approval procedure.

3.3 Effectiveness

Issues with regard to effectiveness will relate both to the trust fund co-operation as a whole and to the effectiveness of projects both at individual level and aggregated under the various themes. The evaluation of effectiveness will investigate to what extent their effectiveness depends on the quality of the FAO as an executing agency, as opposed to other causative factors such as quality of design, quality of Dutch involvement, local circumstances, etc.

By addressing the issue of the effectiveness of the trust fund co-operation, the evaluation will try to answer the question whether its aims were actually achieved. Here, once again, the problem is one of different levels. In principle, answers can be sought at the level of individual projects, of groups of projects relating to specific themes and of the trust fund co-operation as a whole. The evaluation will be designed to produce answers at all these levels. Based on an analysis at individual project level, it will attempt to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of projects relating to each theme. This will allow comparisons to be made between the different themes and may offer a basis for a conclusion on the co-operation as a whole. Special attention will be given to the question how effective projects have been in achieving aims relating to gender and the environment.

3.4 Efficiency

Issues with regard to efficiency will be dealt with on the level of individual projects, with respect to project cycle management and in relation to the way in which the policy dialogue has been organised by the Netherlands and the FAO.

Questions about efficiency of individual projects relate to budgets, cost-effectiveness, the comparative weight of different budget-lines, changes that occurred in these during implementation and what conclusions can be reached on this. Although efficiency indicators may vary between one type of project and the next, the evaluation will attempt to reach general conclusions on each theme.

With respect to project cycle management questions that will be raised relate to how project preparation is organised within the FAO and if the procedures offer adequate safeguards for the quality of proposals (role of headquarters and regional and country offices). Special attention will be given to adequate built-in quality safeguards in relation to crosscutting themes (environment, gender) and multidisciplinarity. The issues of the quality of project monitoring and evaluation as well as reporting will also be raised and in

particular if sufficient feedback of the conclusions into implementation and policy was guaranteed.

With respect to the policy dialogue the evaluation will consider how consultations between the FAO and the Netherlands were organised in view of the stated objectives and if they helped to improve quality.

Answers to the questions concerning efficiency will almost automatically lead to the more fundamental question of the efficiency of FAO as the executing agency. However, the evaluation offers no scope for any well-founded comparison with alternative methods of implementation. It will be possible to examine to what extent and how persuasively the trust fund co-operation has demonstrated the specific values of the FAO as formulated by the Netherlands government (see section 2.2).

4. Scope of the evaluation and methods of investigation

4.1 Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation is to cover the period between 1990 and 1999. An exception will be made as regards the analysis of the policy dialogue with the FAO, which is to go back to 1985 (the year in which DGIS established its Rural Development Sector Programme). Where the analysis of the project portfolio is concerned, however, the evaluation will confine itself to the 1990-1999 period. The assumption in this respect is that the 1990 project portfolio reflects at least to a certain extent policy developments between 1985 and 1990.
The volume of the portfolio is substantial. Total expenditure over the 1990-1999 period was US$ 333 million, split among 177 projects of widely varying scale and duration. Projects starting in 1999 are excluded from the evaluation and projects starting before that date will only be assessed if they ended in/before 1999, or if at least one entire phase with its own aims was completed within that time. The evaluation will focus on five themes: forests and forestry, food security and nutrition, agricultural policy and production, pest management and institutional development.

Emergency aid activities and the Associate Professional Officer programme will not be included in the evaluation.

4.2 Approach

The evaluation will comprise a number of sub-studies, leading ultimately to a final report synthesising these and dealing with Dutch/FAO trust fund co-operation as a whole.

4.2.1 Desk studies

In order to assess the relevance of Dutch project funding to the five themes listed above, the broad-based analysis of the policy dialogue with the FAO, carried out as part of the preparatory research, will be supplemented by a more in-depth study of policy documents concerning these themes as well as project documentation. The aim of this will be to establish whether the projects, which have been funded, reflect the policy priorities of the Netherlands and the FAO.

The core of the evaluation will be an in-depth desk study of project documentation (identification, formulation, approval, progress and evaluation reports). The procedure for selecting the projects has been as follows. A weighted random sample was taken of projects relating to the five chosen themes on the basis of the availability of documentation (in particular, evaluation reports) and a weighted distribution among continents (and worldwide). This process has resulted in the selection of 76 projects (about 43% of the project population). The desk study will concentrate on aspects of the background to the selection of the project, the decision-making process, its objectives, methods of implementation, the timetable (and any changes in it), and the project results. In doing so, it will investigate the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the projects.

Use will also be made of an analysis performed by the FAO itself concerning the use of the Dutch funds of the so-called Programme Development Fund (PDF). This will give an impression both of the Dutch contribution to project preparation and of those initiatives, which never produced a completed project.

In addition, an analysis will be performed of the tripartite evaluations conducted by the FAO, the Netherlands and the recipient party(ies) to see whether these revealed any particular patterns in the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of projects: which projects scored best in this regard and which less well?

The desk studies will be supplemented by interviews with staff involved in the trust fund co-operation at the FAO Headquarters, the Permanent Representation in Rome, the

Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries as well as non-governmental organisations.

4.2.2 *Field studies*

The desk studies will be supplemented by field studies. The Terms of Reference for these field studies will be largely based on relevant issues emanating from the desk study. Although the field studies will involve various methods of investigation (including interviews with representatives of the recipients and project staff, observation of particular project results, etc.), it would be unrealistic to expect that real insight can be gained into the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the whole portfolio of projects in the selected countries. The field studies should, however, produce a deeper understanding of the quality of the selected projects from the point of view of the recipients. The primary concern of this evaluation being the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of Dutch/FAO trust fund projects from the perspective of the recipients (in particular people in developing countries), the field studies will be of critical importance to get a better understanding of these perceptions. They should enable us to judge the reputation, image and profile of the FAO in developing countries and regions. The projects visited will be assessed in the light of the problems in a particular country/region. The issues to be examined will be the relevance of the projects to the country concerned or sections of the population involved, the extent to which the latter have been involved in formulating and implementing the project, and the institutional integration of the project. Attention will also be paid to the extent to which the FAO's regional or country office has played a part in enhancing quality at different points in the project cycle and how technical backstopping, monitoring and evaluation have been organised.

Apart from efficiency considerations (i.e. focus on geographic concentration of projects), major factors in the choice of countries to be visited have been the size of the project portfolio, the thematic distribution of projects and the availability of documentation.
As a result field research will be carried out in:

Senegal
Zambia
Philippines & Southeast Asia
Bolivia

This selection reflects the intercontinental distribution of the entire project portfolio and ensures an adequate spread of projects between the themes selected for this evaluation.

The project portfolio in the countries selected consists of 23 projects (13% of the entire portfolio) involving expenditure over the 1990-1999 period totalling US$ 99,7 million (30%).

4.3 Representativeness

In an evaluation of this size, particular care must be taken to ensure that the results are representative. This is all the more so when the total population of projects on which the evaluation is expected to reach conclusions exhibits such thematic and geographical diversity. The projects to be evaluated are located in over 50 different countries and in some cases relate also to regions. In addition, there are global projects. To add to the difficulty, the scale of project funding varies from less than US$ 50,000 to more than US$ 10 million. Although an attempt has been made to order the total project portfolio by theme, it must be stressed that the projects funded under the different themes are extremely varied. For example, the heading of agricultural policy and production covers such diverse matters as agricultural extension, support to fertiliser deliveries and farming systems development. It is therefore a hazardous undertaking to attempt to reach any general conclusions on the entire trust fund co-operation. Even so, in designing the evaluation an attempt has been made to create the best possible conditions to enable representative conclusions to be reached.

In view of the scope of the various sub-studies, their weighted distribution over themes and countries and the extra data collection via interviews, it is expected that they will permit the identification of patterns, if not for the entire trust fund co-operation then certainly for the individual themes. The fact that the field studies will relate to projects which are also included in the desk studies means that it will be possible in a number of cases to check whether the patterns identified in the files can be observed and confirmed on the ground.

5. Organisation and planning

5.1 Sub-studies and reporting procedures

The results of the evaluation will be published in the form of a final report based on a number of sub-study reports, which could be published separately as working papers. The following sub-studies are planned:

- History of trust fund co-operation policy (1)
- Policy development and project analysis on the themes of food security, forests and forestry, pest management, agricultural policy and production, and institutional development (5)
- Analysis of tripartite evaluations of trust fund projects (1)
- Sub-studies on total project portfolios in Senegal, Zambia, the Philippines and Southeast Asia, and Bolivia (4).

5.2 *Implementation and supervision*

IOB inspector Dr. Henri Jorritsma will supervise the (sub-) studies in consultation with the chief consultant and will take part in two of the field studies. He will take part in and bear overall responsibility for the drafting of the final report and thus for the evaluation as a whole.

A chief consultant will be engaged. In close collaboration with the IOB inspector he will supervise the quality of sub-study implementation and be responsible for synthesising their results for use in the final report. He will also take an active part in the study of project documents and conduct at least two of the field studies.

Two external consultants will be required to implement the desk studies on the individual themes and projects. To ensure a consistent approach, the aim will be to employ the same two consultants for the field missions. However, in view of the amount of work to be done, it may prove necessary to recruit additional manpower.

Since the duties of FAO's in-house Evaluation Service routinely include the review of project evaluation reports, assessment of their quality for the evaluation database and, on a regular basis, preparation of synthesis reports on evaluation findings and recommendations, it is prepared to make this information available for this evaluation. The interpretation of the evaluation results and decisions on the use to be made of them will be entirely in the hands of the Policy and operations evaluation department (IOB).

Throughout the exercise a consultative process will be maintained with the relevant units within FAO and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as with the Permanent Representation in Rome.

5.3 *Timetable*

The entire evaluation is expected to take approximately 14 months from the date of approval of these Terms of Reference.

Annex 3 Project assessment and analysis

The methods used in this evaluation are outlined in section 1.4 above. Some of the methodological problems encountered are presented in section 1.5. Discussion of key aspects of the conceptual approach introduces the treatment of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency in Part II of the study (sections 6.1, 7.1 and 8.1 respectively). There is further methodological discussion at the start of the final chapter of the evaluation, explaining how a composite index of performance was developed (section 9.1).

The purpose of this annex is to give more detail on how material for Part II was prepared. As was explained in section 1.4, the assessment and analysis of a sample of project phases formed the core of the evaluation. The work began with a laborious search for documentation and relevant information. This served as the basis for a formal, standardised assessment of each project phase that, on the basis of data availability, could ultimately be included in the evaluation (sections 1.4, 1.5). The completed set of assessment data, in turn, provided raw material for the analysis that is reported in sections 6- 9 above.

The data gathering process absorbed many person-weeks of work, as relevant files and other data were sought in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague, in the Netherlands Permanent Representation to FAO in Rome, and in various Netherlands Embassies around the world. After all available material on a project had been brought together, it was searched for documentation that seemed directly relevant to the study. These documents were then read, and an annotated summary of the file was produced to show what each document contained. Then, an extended summary of the project was written, following a standard outline and set of headings. Where necessary, the extended summary was divided into sections for each project phase being evaluated. On the basis of this detailed review of the documentation, and with substantiation from the extended summary, the assessment form shown below was then completed for each project phase.

The assessment form was designed at an early stage of the study. Not surprisingly, hindsight suggests various ways in which it could be improved. The form was piloted, and various changes were made to it on the basis of that exercise. However, two decisions had to be taken later. The first decision was not to alter the assessment form once it had been used for assessment of a significant number of project phases. That would have meant going back to the beginning and using a revised form for a re-assessment of all the project phases that had already been covered. The second decision has been to present the form in this annex exactly as it was used, rather than to make any of the changes that hindsight now suggests might clarify meanings or interpretations.

Various explanatory comments about the assessment form have been added in footnotes. They can be summarised here. The form was designed to be completed on screen, not on paper. It therefore included a number of drop-down boxes, which expanded when clicked to offer a list of options. Thus 'Africa', 'Food security and nutrition', 'Normative' and 'Government' on the first page of the form are all actually the first options in the lists offered by the drop-down boxes for 'Region', 'Theme', 'Project type', 'Official counterpart' and 'Other partner' respectively. Numerous 'Comment' boxes were included. They look very small on this printed version of the empty form, but expanded on screen to accommodate however much text was typed into them. The 'General comments' box on the first page of the form and the 'Conclusions, final assessment' box on the second page are other examples of this feature.

The 'Comment' boxes were an essential feature of the assessment form. Each such box provided the analyst with space to explain her or his reasons for the assessment score above it. Direct reference was often made to the text of planning or evaluation reports or other documentation, and these comments sometimes included material copied from the extended summary referred to above. The extensive use of the 'Comment' boxes was necessary because many estimates and subjective interpretations had to be made in the course of these assessments. This was because project design, monitoring and evaluation rarely achieved full empirical statements of what was intended or what was achieved. Furthermore, it seemed pertinent to ask some assessment questions that would not conventionally be asked in project monitoring or evaluation, or that summed up a long series of variables (such as assessment 2.10 on cost effectiveness). Because of the amount of interpretation involved in the exercise, the number of desk assessment staff was kept small. More could have been employed, which would have made the total duration of the study shorter but would have introduced an unacceptable degree of variability in the desk assessments. An additional measure was for a senior team member to check each desk assessment and discuss it with the person who had drawn it up. For this check, the senior analyst reviewed the extended summary of the project (and sometimes other documentation), and gave particular attention to the 'Comment' boxes in which justification was usually provided for the assessment scores. Revisions were sometimes made to the final assessment on the basis of these checks. A second kind of check was possible for the 19 projects that were visited during the four field missions. During and after the missions, the desk assessments of these projects were checked on the basis of field data and observations. These checks found the desk assessments to have been generally accurate, although some minor adjustments were made and sustainability scores were often revised downwards (section 1.4).

Overall, the small size of the team, the frequent consultation among its members and the level of detail and care at which the exercise was undertaken allow a reasonable degree of confidence about the consistency with which the many interpretive assessments were scored.

As will be seen below, a five point scale was used for each assessment. (Varying numbers of possible responses were used for a few factual queries that were also included on the form, as in assessment 2.8 on who paid for budget extensions.) This was one of the aspects of methodology on which this evaluation followed the practice of FAO's own evaluation service (FAO, 1998b). Some evaluators avoid five point scales because of the risk that the middle score will be used too often by those averse to making a positive or negative judgement. Efforts were made during the use of this assessment form, and particularly during the check of each form by a senior analyst, to ensure that there was no such bias.

However, the wording associated with the five points of the scale is also important. In the case of quantifiable performance, the numbers used are important too. For the latter, directly quantifiable assessments – notably assessments 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 below – a rigorous standard was applied. The top score of 4, or 'excellent', could only be attained by a project that surpassed the performance specified in its design. For a middle score of 2, or 'satisfactory', a project had to achieve at least 60% of the planned performance. For the much more numerous interpretive assessments, where a judgement had to be made on the basis of the available information, the standard was a little more generous in allowing three out of the five scores to be positive: 'satisfactory' (2), 'good' (3) or 'excellent' or 'exceptionally positive and proactive' (4). (This last phrase meant projects that had gone beyond what their design called for to make special efforts on a particular issue.) Perhaps not surprisingly, it was unusual for a project phase to score 0 or 4 on any of the assessments, whether quantifiable or interpretive.

As is explained in sections 7.6 and 8.12, a number of these assessment scores, each based on a five-point scale, are used to generate composite scores on effectiveness and efficiency. Two methodological issues arise here:

- should there be five points on the scale for the composite scores, too? Given that the averaging process generated a scatter of composite scores (2.3, 1.8, 3.1 etc.) but no perfectly good or bad scores of 4 or 0, it seemed more sensible to use a four point scale for these composite indices. Thus, on the five point scale, 1 was usually 'unsatisfactory' and 0 'very poor', 'totally unrealistic', 'totally inadequate' or some such wording. On the composite scale, the bottom of the four

ranges (<1.0) was described as 'poor', the second (1.0-1.9) as 'unsatisfactory', and so on;

- how does the calculation of composite scores take missing values into account? Each table shows the number of project phases for which data on the variable in question could be found. They were rarely available for all 86 project phases under review. For the reasons explained in sections 1.4 and 1.5, this data set is so incomplete that it would have been impossible to generate these composite scores if the calculation method had required a valid score for every one of the component variables. The compromise method that was chosen instead was to calculate the composite scores as averages of the component scores for which data were available. Thus, if the composite score was designed as the mean of component scores *a*, *b*, *c*, *d* and *e*, and for project *x* data were only available for variables *a*, *b* and *e*, the composite score would be calculated as the mean of those three variables. As there was no project phase in the study for which there were no data on any of the component variables of the composite effectiveness and efficiency indices, Table 14 and Table 51 show that data were available for 86 project phases. In theory, this compromise method risks the introduction of certain biases into the composite scores and the relationships that are then ascribed to them. But this risk would only be real if the absence of data on some component variables followed some systematic pattern. Review of the data base for this evaluation suggests that this is not the case.

The data gathering and assessment phases of the evaluation took between two and four person-weeks per project. As only a small team of analysts worked on the task in order to maximise consistency (see above), this meant that these two phases together lasted for some 15 months.

Analysis of the data provided on the assessment forms was undertaken using SPSS software. For the most part, this was a simple counting exercise. However, attempts were made to test the likelihood of relationships using the chi squared statistical test, at the 0.05 or 5% significance level. It is well known that research or evaluation findings can be manipulated by the choice of statistical method, and there is no doubt that this report would read differently if a more or less stringent significance level were used, if the crosstabulations on which the tests are based had more or fewer cells, or if a different statistical test were used. For the purposes of this evaluation, it seemed best to use the most conventional test available for this kind of analysis, at the significance level that is most commonly applied. However, any kind of relationship testing was bound to be difficult for this relatively small sample size, especially when the data set for the sample was incom-

plete. A number of relationships could not be tested because the cells in the crosstabulation contained too few cases.

The feasibility of using a statistical test of relationships was one of two reasons for merging scores on many of the five point scales into two categories: 'satisfactory' or better, and 'unsatisfactory' or worse. This merger increased the number of cases in the cells of a number of crosstabulations to levels that were valid for application of the chi squared test. The second reason for the merger was the acknowledged subjectivity of these interpretive assessments. It seemed more valid to merge these scores into one generally positive and one generally negative group.

DGIS FAO project assessment form[45]

Part I: project information

Summary of key project data (as originally planned)

Project title	
FAO project number	
DGIS project number	
Evaluation data base number	
Phase of project	1 of 1
Year project began	
Total duration (years)	
Country/ies	
Region 1	*Africa*
Region 2	*Africa*
Region 3	*Africa*
Theme[46] 1	*Food security and nutrition*
Theme 2	*Food security and nutrition*
Theme 3	*Food security and nutrition*
Project type 1	*Normative*
Project type 2	*Normative*
'Development objective' or 'goal'	
Specific objectives	

45 This was an on-line form. Comment boxes expanded automatically as text was entered into them. Some drop-down data entry boxes were used. Clicking on 'Africa', for example, would produce a list of continents from which one would be chosen. Clicking on 'theme' brought up a list of themes from which to select.

46 Sector.

Expected outputs	
Beneficiary/ies	
Official Counterpart	*Government*
Other partner 1	*Government*
Other partner 2	*Government*

Total budget (US$m) (latest figures)
% of final budget for hardware
% of final budget for international personnel
% of final budget for local personnel
% of final budget for other costs

General comments on key project data:

Part II: summary of project assessment

	Assessment score[47]	Weighting factor	Weighted score
Effectiveness		0.5	
Efficiency		0.3	
Policy relevance		0.2	
		Total score[48]	
		Total score as percentage (x25)	

Conclusions, final assessment

47 Each of these three assessment scores was carried forward from the 'overall assessments' of effectiveness, efficiency and relevance respectively in Part III of the form. Part II was thus completed after Part III.

48 The sum of the three weighted scores. As explained in section 9.1, this overall assessment score was eventually not used. The weighting factors shown had been intended to reflect the comparative importance ascribed to effectiveness, efficiency and policy relevance respectively in an overall measure of project performance.

Part III: detailed assessments

Assessment 1: effectiveness

Assessment 1.1: achievement of objectives

Note: this corresponds to performance at the purpose level in logical frameworks, i.e. the 'specific objectives' in many DGIS project design documents. This assessment refers to objectives in the finally approved design.

Were project objectives stated in quantitative or qualitative terms?	*Quantitative*

To what extent were planned objectives realised?[50]		
Excellent (>100%)	☐	4
Good (81-100%)	☐	3
Satisfactory (60-80%)	☐	2
Unsatisfactory (30-59%)	☐	1
Very poor (<30%)	☐	0
Objectives unclear	☐	7
Inadequate data	☐	8

Comment:

49 Another example of a drop-down box used in this form.

50 Wherever possible, the score for assessments 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 was based on evaluation reports' conclusions about how many of the objectives, outputs and activities specified in project design had been accomplished, and to what extent. This was easy if design had systematically stated these variables, M&E had recorded progress on each, and evaluators had in turn reported what proportion of each had been achieved. In many cases, however, these conditions were not met. In such cases, desk assessment staff had to attempt an estimate of performance on the basis of evaluators' and other comments. Like the rest of the assessment, these judgements were checked by senior reviewers.

Assessment 1.2: achievement of outputs

Note: this assessment refers to outputs in the finally approved design.

Were project outputs stated in quantitative or qualitative terms? *Quantitative*

To what extent were planned outputs realised?

Excellent (>100%)	☐	4
Good (81-100%)	☐	3
Satisfactory (60-80%)	☐	2
Unsatisfactory (30-59%)	☐	1
Very poor (<30%)	☐	0
Outputs unclear	☐	7
Inadequate data	☐	8

Comment:

Assessment 1.3: execution of activities

Note: assessment refers to activities in the finally approved design.

Were project activities stated in quantitative or qualitative terms? *Quantitative*

To what extent were planned activities executed?

Excellent (>100%)	☐	4
Good (81-100%)	☐	3
Satisfactory (60-80%)	☐	2
Unsatisfactory (30-59%)	☐	1
Very poor (<30%)	☐	0
Outputs unclear	☐	7
Inadequate data	☐	8

Comment:

Assessment 1.4: gender

To what extent did the execution of the project have gender positive impacts in its area and/or sector of operations?

Exceptionally positive and proactive	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Clearly negative impacts	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8

Comment:

Assessment 1.5: environment

To what extent did the execution of the project have environmentally positive impacts in its area and/or sector of operations?

Exceptionally positive and proactive	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Clearly negative impacts	☐	0
Not applicable (environmentally neutral)	☐	6
Inadequate data	☐	8

Comment:

Assessment 1.6: economic sustainability for beneficiaries/target group

What was the economic sustainability of the project's results for the beneficiaries/target group?

Note: answer this question where the beneficiaries/target group are (groups of) the population rather than institutions. Thus, the question need not be answered for policy or institutional projects where the beneficiary/target is a government or other official agency.

Excellent	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Very poor	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8
Not applicable	☐	9

Comment:

Assessment 1.7: financial sustainability for host government(s)

What was the financial sustainability of the project's results for the host government(s)?

Excellent	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Very poor	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8
Not applicable	☐	9

Comment:

Assessment 1.8: environmental sustainability

What was the environmental sustainability of the project's results?

Exceptionally positive and proactive	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Clearly negative impacts	☐	0
Not applicable (environmentally neutral)	☐	6
Inadequate data	☐	8

Comment:

Assessment 1.9: institutional sustainability at field level

What was the institutional sustainability of the project's results at field level?

Excellent	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Very poor	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8
Not applicable	☐	9

Comment:

Assessment 1.10: institutional sustainability at government level

What was the institutional sustainability of the project's results at government level?

Excellent	4
Good	3
Satisfactory	2
Unsatisfactory	1
Very poor	0
Inadequate data	8
Not applicable	9

Comment:

Overall assessment of effectiveness

	Insert score (0 – 4)	Not applicable 6	Unclear 7	Inadequate data 8
Assessment 1			☐	☐
Assessment 2			☐	☐
Assessment 3			☐	☐
Assessment 4				☐
Assessment 5		☐		☐
Assessment 6 & 7 (average)				☐
Assessment 8		☐		☐
Assessment 9 & 10 (average)		☐		☐

Total score[51]	
Number of assessments with score of 0 – 4	
Overall assessment[52]	

General comments on assessment of effectiveness:

51 The sum of scores that ranged between 0 and 4.
52 The total score divided by the number of assessments with a valid score (i.e. 0 – 4).

Assessment 2: efficiency

Assessment 2.1: efficiency of design changes

Did design changes help to achieve the overall goal, purpose or objectives of the project?

Yes, major improvement	☐	4
Yes, good improvement	☐	3
Partially	☐	2
Slightly	☐	1
No	☐	0
Unknown	☐	8
Not applicable	☐	9

Comment:

Assessment 2.2: clarity of design: logic

Was the project clearly and logically designed with regard to goal, purpose/objectives, outputs, activities, inputs and the relations between these?

Yes, very clear	☐	4
Yes, clear	☐	3
Adequate	☐	2
Not clear	☐	1
Totally inadequate	☐	0
Unknown	☐	8

Comment:

Assessment 2.3: clarity of design: implementation and management

Was the project clearly and logically designed with regard to implementation arrangements and managerial structure?

Yes, very clear	☐	4
Yes, clear	☐	3
Adequate	☐	2
Not clear	☐	1
Totally inadequate	☐	0
Unknown	☐	8

Comment:

Assessment 2.4: realism of design

Was the project realistically and feasibly designed?

Yes, very realistic	☐	4
Yes, realistic	☐	3
Adequate	☐	2
Unrealistic	☐	1
Totally unrealistic	☐	0
Unknown	☐	8

Note: consider realism/feasibility of planned project duration; realism/feasibility of design of implementation arrangements and management structure; realism/feasibility of work plan (including timing of inputs, activities and outputs); realism with which prerequisites and risks for project success set out in design; realism/feasibility of planned linkages with other related institutions and organisations.

Comment:

Assessment 2.5: hosts' participation in project design

What was the extent of the host government's or other relevant host country agency's participation in the design of the project?

Excellent	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Very poor	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8

Comment:

Assessment 2.6: target group's participation in project design

What was the extent of the target group's/beneficiaries' participation in the design of the project?

Excellent	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Very poor	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8

Comment:

Assessment 2.7: actual project duration

Was the project implemented within the planned time frame?

Yes	☐	4
No, without negative consequences	☐	3
No, with some negative consequences	☐	2
No, with significant negative consequences	☐	1
No, with severely negative consequences	☐	0
No, consequences unclear	☐	7
Unknown	☐	8

Comment:

Note: examples of 'negative consequences' are cost overruns; delayed institutionalisation or empowerment of local personnel/agencies; failure to meet key milestones or opportunities; failure to synchronise with government's or other agencies' programmes.

Assessment 2.8: adherence to budget

Was the project implemented within the budget that was finally approved?

Yes	☐	4
No, budget exceeded by 1 – 10%	☐	3
No, budget exceeded by 11 – 20%	☐	2
No, budget exceeded by 21 – 30%	☐	1
No, budget exceeded by >30%	☐	0
Unknown	☐	8

Comment:

Who paid for the budget extension(s), if any?

FAO	☐	1
DGIS	☐	2
Host government	☐	3
Other funder	☐	4
Unknown	☐	8
Not applicable	☐	9

Comment:

Assessment 2.9: budgetary performance

What was the quality of the project's budgetary performance?

Excellent	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Very poor	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8

Note: consider the timeliness and adequacy of donor and national disbursements and of inputs in kind; quality and timeliness of accounting and audits.

Comment:

Assessment 2.10: cost effectiveness

How cost effective was the project?

Excellent	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Very poor	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8

Note: Cost effectiveness implies high effectiveness at low cost. Consider the overall sustainability of project results, and whether cost effectiveness could have been enhanced by, for example, greater use of:

- national staff;
- existing government capacity;
- national training;
- local consultants;
- NGOs;
- the private sector.

Consider also whether cost effectiveness could have been enhanced by better focus on key objectives/outputs; by better delegation of authority, or by more efficient project administration (e.g. quantity, quality, timeliness of supply of project resources, complexity of bureaucratic procedures).

Comment:

Assessment 2.11: quality of project management

What was the overall quality of project management?

Excellent	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Very poor	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8

Note: points to consider include the quality and timeliness of project work planning, monitoring and reporting; coordination with other agencies; flexibility and appropriateness of management response to unforeseen circumstances and disputes; extent of capacity building and delegation provided to national staff; timeliness, frequency and quality of work supervision.

Comment:

Assessment 2.12: quality of project supervision

What was the quality of project supervision by FAO national/regional/headquarters offices?

Excellent	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Very poor	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8

Comment:

Assessment 2.13: quality of project monitoring and evaluation

What was the quality of the project's internal monitoring and evaluation system?

Excellent	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Very poor	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8
Not applicable	☐	9

Comment:

Assessment 2.14: hosts' participation in project implementation

What was the extent of the host government's or other relevant host country agency's participation in the implementation of the project?

Excellent	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Very poor	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8

Comment:

Assessment 2.15: target group's participation in project implementation

What was the extent of the target group's/beneficiaries' participation in the implementation of the project?

Excellent	☐	4
Good	☐	3
Satisfactory	☐	2
Unsatisfactory	☐	1
Very poor	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8

Comment:

Overall assessment of efficiency

	Insert score (0 – 4)	Inadequate data	Not applicable
Assessment 1		☐	☐
Assessment 2, 3 & 4 (average)		☐	
Assessment 5		☐	
Assessment 6		☐	
Assessment 7		☐	
Assessment 8		☐	
Assessment 9		☐	
Assessment 10		☐	
Assessment 11		☐	
Assessment 12		☐	
Assessment 13		☐	☐
Assessment 14		☐	
Assessment 15		☐	
Total score			
Number of assessments with score of 0 – 4			
Overall assessment			
General comments on assessment of efficiency:			

Assessment 3: policy relevance

Assessment 3.1: FAO policy

How far did the project comply with FAO policy?

Actively compliant (part of an FAO programme)	☐	4
Clearly compliant	☐	3
Does not seem to contradict FAO policy	☐	2
Some policy contradictions evident	☐	1
Clearly contradicts FAO policy	☐	0
Unknown	☐	8

Comment:

Did the project have any impact on FAO policy?

Yes, a major impact	☐	11
Yes, significant impact	☐	12
Yes, minor impact	☐	13
No	☐	14
Unknown	☐	88

Comment:

Assessment 3.2: Netherlands policy

How far did the project comply with Netherlands policy?

Actively compliant (part of a DGIS programme)	☐	4
Clearly compliant	☐	3
Does not seem to contradict Dutch policy	☐	2
Some policy contradictions evident	☐	1
Clearly contradicts Dutch policy	☐	0
Unknown	☐	8

Comment:

Did the project have any impact on Netherlands policy?

Yes, a major impact	☐	11
Yes, significant impact	☐	12
Yes, minor impact	☐	13
No	☐	14
Unknown	☐	88

Comment:

Assessment 3.3: National/regional relevance

How far did the project comply with the policy of the recipient country/region?

Actively compliant (part of a national/regional programme)	☐	4
Clearly compliant	☐	3
Does not seem to contradict national/regional policy	☐	2
Some policy contradictions evident	☐	1
Clearly contradicts national/regional policy	☐	0
Unknown	☐	8

Comment:

Did the project have any impact on the policy of the recipient country/region?

Yes, a major impact	☐	11
Yes, significant impact	☐	12
Yes, minor impact	☐	13
No	☐	14
Unknown	☐	88

Comment:

Overall assessment of policy relevance

	Insert score (0 – 4)	Unknown
Assessment 1		☐
Assessment 2		☐
Assessment 3		☐
Total score		
Number of assessments with score of 0 – 4		
Overall assessment		

General comments on assessment of policy relevance:

Part IV: external factors

1. External factors that had a major impact on project performance, e.g. causing (early) termination without completion, or causing major cost/time overruns:

None	☐	0
Natural disasters, e.g. floods, drought, earthquake	☐	1
Political events, e.g. civil unrest, change of government	☐	2
Other	☐	3

Comment:

2. How much influence did the performance of the host government/other host country counterpart agencies have on the performance of the project?

Very strong	☐	4
Strong	☐	3
Some	☐	2
Little	☐	1
No perceptible influence	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8

Comment:

3. How much influence did the performance of FAO have on the performance of the project?

Very strong	☐	4
Strong	☐	3
Some	☐	2
Little	☐	1
No perceptible influence	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8

Comment:

4. How much influence did the performance of DGIS have on the performance of the project?

Very strong	☐	4
Strong	☐	3
Some	☐	2
Little	☐	1
No perceptible influence	☐	0
Inadequate data	☐	8

Comment:

Annex

Annex 4 List of projects in the sample

FAO number	Project title	Country/ Region
GCP/BKF/037/NET	Radio Rurale au service du développement intégré	Burkina Faso
GCP/BOL/030/NET	Desarollo Forestal Comunal en el Altiplano Boliviano (Potosi) / Desarollo comunidades rurales (forestal) altiplano	Bolivia
GCP/BOL/028/NET	FAO/Plan de accion forestal PAFB / Coordination and Implementation of the Forestry Plan of Action	Bolivia
GCP/BOL/032/NET	Action Programme for the Prevention of Post harvest Losses / Prevention of Food Losses	Bolivia
GCPF/BOL/018/NET	Yield Increase Through Fertilisers and Related Inputs & Soil Management and Plant Nutrition in Cropping Systems FERTISUELOS II	Bolivia
GCP/COS/014/NET	Consolidacion del Uso Adecuado de los Recursos Forestales en Comunidades Rurales de la Region Chorotega y Pacifico Central.	Costa Rica
GCP/CVI/036/NET	Développement du Secteur Maraîcher au Cap Vert & Production of Seed Potatoes and Testing Vegetable Varieties	Cape Verde
UNDP/FAO	Participacion en gestion popular en el desarollo rural	Ecuador
GCP/ETH/051/NET	Client oriented training for extension staff	Ethiopia
GCPP/GAM/020/NET	Introduction of Improved Post-Harvest Techniques and Strengthening of the Agricultural Engineering Unit	Gambia
GCP/HON/021/NET	Proyecto Lempira Sur	Honduras
GCP/HON/019/NET	Project PRODECOOPFOR Fortalecimiento del Sistema Social Forestal. / Fortalecimiento Institucional de FEHCAFOR y Cooperativas Agroforestales Asociadas / ADECAF	Honduras
GCPP/JAM/016/NET	Integrated development of post harvest techniques and farm management for hillside farmers / Training in Integrated Post Harvest Techniques and Farm Management for Hillside Farmers	Jamaica

Agricultural policy and production	1993-1997	247.960	247.960
Forests and forestry	1991-2002	12.198.961	12.479.735
Forests and forestry	1992-1996	1.648.635	1.589.548
Food security and nutrition	1990-2002	6.563.187	7.318.291
Agricultural policy and production	1987-1999	8.103.869	8.103.869
Forests and forestry	1989-1999	4.577.679	5.626.546
Food security and nutrition	1990-2001	3.242.687	3.342.478
Institutional Development, participation, gender	1990-1996	n.a.	n.a.
Institutional Development, participation, gender	1994-1996	593.209	593.209
Food security and nutrition	1989-1995	1.036.414	1.200.099
Agricultural policy and production	1994-1999	3.499.755	3.650.506
Forests and forestry	1989-2002	2.432.470	4.200.000
Food security and nutrition	1990-1995	769.376	769.376

FAO number	Project title	Country/ Region
GCPF/SRL/047/NET	Yield Increase through the use of fertilisers and related inputs	Sri Lanka
GCP/SRL/046/NET	People's Participation Project / PPP in Rural Development through Promotion of self-help Organisations	Sri Lanka
GCP/LES/039/NET	Support to Soil and Water Conservation in Southern Lesotho (SOWACO)	Lesotho
GCP/MLI/022/NET	Programme Spécial Sécurité Alimentaire PSSA / Spécial Programme on Food Production in Support of Food Security in Mali	Mali
GCP/MLI/019/NET	Gestion Foresterie/ FAO / Aménagement forestier et reboisement villageois de Koulikoro	Mali
GCP/MOZ/056/NET	Support to Community Forestry and Wildlife Management	Mozambique
GCP/NIC/023/NET	Cordillera de los Maribos / Proyecto Consv. y Manejo de Recursos Naturales con Part. Campesina en la Cordillera de los Maribios & Emergencia & Leon Chinandega Vulcanic Plain	Nicaragua
GCP/NEP/052/NET	FAO Leasehold Forestry Project / Technical Assistance to the Hills L easehold Forestry and Forage Development Project	Nepal
GCP/NEP/046/NET	FAO: Multi-sectoral Training in Nutrition for Prevention of Vitamin A Deficiency	Nepal
GCP/PER/033/NET	FAO/Forest Plantations for Energy / Apoyo a las plantaciones forestales para fines energeticos y para desarrollo de las comunidades rurales en la sierra Peruana.	Peru
GCP/PHI/042/NET	Sustainable Agrarian Reform in the Philippines- Technical Support to Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (SARC-TSARRD)	Philippines
GCP/PAK/079/NET	Participatory Rural Development Project Punjab / Participatory Rural Development (PRD) - Involvement of the Rural Poor in Development through Self Help Groups in Rural Punjab	Pakistan
GCP/RAS/154/NET	Regional Wood Energy Development Programme in Asia (RWEDP) 1993-1998	Asia
GCP/RAS/160/NET	Inter-Country Programme for the Development and Application of Integrated Pest Management in Vegetables in Southeast Asia	Asia

Agricultural policy and production	1987-1993	2.568.710	2.492.279
Institutional Development, participation, gender	1988-1992	252.885	521.337
Agricultural policy and production	1992-1996	1.153.223	1.153.223
Food security and nutrition	1998-2002	2.019.712	n.a.
Food security and nutrition	1989-1994	2.606.564	2.569.806
Forests and forestry	1997-2002	n.a	9.662.090
Forests and forestry	1989-1999	6.646.756	n.a.
Forests and forestry	1992-2001	4.844.356	4.894.356
Food security and nutrition	1991-1994	537.000	562.046
Forests and forestry	1993-1998	6.985.810	6.985.810
Institutional Development, participation, gender	1997-2001	6.750.620	6.732.620
Institutional Development, participation, gender	1989-1997	1.064.178	1.087.444
Forests and forestry	1989-2001	12.640.000	n.a.
Pest management	1996-2001	3.986.324	4.093.491

FAO number	Project title	Country/ Region
GCP/RAS/145/NET	IPM in Rice / S.& SE Asia / Inter-country Programme for the Development and Application of Integrated Pest Control in Rice in South and Southeast Asia	Asia
ECLO/INT/033/NET	Desert Locust Campaign / Netherlands assistance to the 1993/94 Desert Locust Campaign	Africa
GCP/INT/578/NET	Artemis / Establishment of an Operational Satellite Remote Sensing System to Support Agricultural Production	Global
GCPS/RAF/296/NET	SADC Remote Sensing Component of the Early Warning System	Africa
GCP/INT/650/NET	FAO/Prevention and Disposal of Unwanted Pesticide stocks in Africa and the Near East.	Africa
GCP/RAF/284/NET	Regional Food Security/Nutrition Info System / Development of Regional Food Security and Nutrition Information System	Africa
GCP/RLA/128/NET	TCA/ Apoyo al Fortalecimiento de la Secretaria Pro Tempore del Tratado de Cooperacion Amazonica	Latin America
GCP/RLA/090/NET	Community Forestry in the Andes	Latin America
GCP/SUD/047/NET	Fuelwood Development for Energy in Sudan	Sudan
GCP/SUD/050/NET	Capacity building for Women in Agriculture and rural development.	Sudan
GCP/SEN/044/NET	PROWALO / PROGONA / Projet d'aménagement des forêts et gestion de terroirs villageois du Walo	Senegal
GCP/SEN/055/NET	Centre national de semences Forestières du Senegal / Centre de Semences, PRONASEF	Senegal
GCP/SEN/042/NET	Appui au Programme de Développement de la foresterie Rurale au Sénégal (PDFR)	Senegal
GCP/SEN/046/NET	Système d'Information pour la Sécurité Alimentaire et l'Alerte Rapide	Senegal
GCP/SEN/040/NET	Centre Forestier de Recyclage a Thiès (Centre FORET)	Senegal
GCP/SEN/043/NET	PREVINOBA / Reboisement Villageois dans le Nord du Bassin Arachidier, Region de Thiès	Senegal

Pest management	1993-1998	8.913.937	n.a.
Pest management	1993-1994	1.000.000	971.588
Food security and nutrition	1989-1998	3.496.319	3.228.319
Food security and nutrition	1994-1998	2.393.584	2.393.584
Pest management	1996-2000	1.649.122	1.712.280
Institutional Development, participation, gender	1993-1997	1.880.000	1.975.964
Forests and forestry	1993-1999	6.844.046	4.574.926
Forests and forestry	1989-1995	3.531.276	5.891.189
Forests and forestry	1992-1997	7.799.609	7.799.609
Institutional Development, participation, gender	1994-1997	702.860	702.860
Forests and forestry	1990-1999	10.141.839	n.a.
Forests and forestry	1993-2000	5.490.509	5.490.509
Forests and forestry	1990-2001	3.912.220	5.461.448
Food security and nutrition	1990-2000	4.071.260	4.471.603
Forests and forestry	1989-1996	4.026.254	4.326.254
Forests and forestry	1989-1999	7.392.914	9.517.467

FAO number	Project title	Country/ Region
GCP/SEN/048/NET	Recensement national de l'agriculture et système permanent de statistiques agricoles	Senegal
GCP/SEN/053/NET	LOCUSTOX / Observatoire des Risques des Pesticides dans l'environnement sahélien	Senegal
GCPP/SEN/032/NET	Programme Nationale de Technologie Rizicole après Récolte	Senegal
GCP/ELS/005/NET	Agricultura Sostenible en Zonas de Ladera	El Salvador
GCP/CHD/024/NET	Projet Pilote de Foresterie Rurale et d'Aménagement Forestier pour la Production de Bois de Feu	Chad
UNDP FAO/CHD/88/001	Renforcement de la Protection de Végétaux / Renforcement du Service National de la Protection de Végétaux	Chad
GCP/URT/103/NET	Women in irrigated agriculture and related activities	Tanzania
GCP/URT/105/NET	People's participation in rural development	Tanzania
GCPF/VIE/016/NET	Fertiliser Supply for 1992	Vietnam
GCP/INT/580/NET	Support to the Tropical Forests Action Programme	Global
UNDP/FAO	Forestry Action Plan	Zambia
GCP/ZAM/058/NET	Technical support to the Food Reserve Agency (FRA)	Zambia
GCP/ZAM/047/NET	People's Participation in Rural Development through the Promotion of self-help Organisations	Zambia
GCPS/ZAM/048/NET	Marketing management assistance for food security & ASIP	Zambia
GCPS/ZAM/039/NET	Early warning system and census of agriculture	Zambia

Agricultural policy and production	1997-2000	2.082.882	2.351.718
Pest management	1991-1998	4.991.280	5.556.097
Agricultural policy and production	1990-1993	946.251	1.449.951
Agricultural policy and production	1995-1999	3.903.173	389.9193
Forests and forestry	1989-1997	3.508.379	4.414.327
Pest management	1991-1994	4.913.379	4.848.123
Food security and nutrition	1991-1997	1.100.575	1.100.575
Institutional Development, participation, gender	1987-1997	1.104.719	1.144.999
Agricultural policy and production	1993-1994	5.376.344	7.167.440
Forests and forestry	1989-1992	680.026	680.026
Forests and forestry	1995-1996	470.453	n.a.
Food security and nutrition	1997-1999	537.900	537.900
Institutional Development, participation, gender	1986-1996	737.981	n.a.
Food security and nutrition	1989-1997	3.301.399	3.401.643
Food security and nutrition	1988-1995	2.390.515	4.098.765

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