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Investing in rural people

## Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the country strategic opportunities programme for the Plurinational State of Bolivia

### Note to Executive Board representatives

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For: Review

# Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the country strategic opportunities programme for the Plurinational State of Bolivia

## General comments

1. The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) welcomes the new results-based country strategic opportunities programme (RB-COSOP) for the Plurinational State of Bolivia and finds it to be a well-prepared country strategy. The COSOP was developed by IFAD and the Government, drawing on the findings and recommendations of the 2014 country programme evaluation (CPE), and the corresponding agreement at completion point (ACP) signed in November 2014.
2. Elaborated in a remarkably consultative and participative process (described in appendix I), the COSOP is a concise and clear document. It contains a valuable background section describing the recent profound changes in the political and socio-economic context in the country, and demonstrates strong alignment with government priorities. It takes into consideration lessons of the past cooperation programme between IFAD and the Government.
3. IOE supports the broad strategic directions contained in the COSOP, which partially correspond to the seven recommendations of the 2014 CPE. The second part of this note identifies specific aspects of the recommendations included in the ACP (and CPE) that were not adequately taken into account in the COSOP.

## Specific comments

4. Develop a comprehensive strategy based on product lines and value chains. The second recommendation of the ACP/CPE is that the new COSOP should develop a comprehensive strategy based on product lines and value chains, including identification of value chains and consideration of key aspects of effective support provision. The COSOP mentions the progress made with respect to inclusion of value chains in new operations and foresees further application of the value chain approach. However, it does not make reference to a comprehensive value chain strategy with key supporting aspects such as strengthening the business management capacity of local authorities and organizations, leveraging investment with other initiatives, or ensuring access to financial services.
5. Define differentiated targeting of beneficiaries and adjust interventions and instruments. Lack of differentiated strategies was identified as a major area for improvement in the CPE. The fourth recommendation of the ACP/CPE was for the COSOP to define differentiated targeting of beneficiaries and adjust interventions and instruments accordingly. The COSOP states that differentiated strategies and instruments will be adopted. However, the COSOP does not acknowledge the need – as recommended by the CPE – to address specifically the needs of the most vulnerable groups and to balance value instruments (competitions, transfers and horizontal training) with instruments that enable greater achievements in food security and poverty reduction, such as nutrition programmes.
6. Set up sound monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and knowledge management systems. One of the country programme's weakest areas has been M&E. The sixth recommendation of the ACP/CPE indicated that the new programme should set up sound M&E and knowledge management systems that can enhance the quality of interventions and the potential for scaling up. The COSOP states the intention to strengthen M&E, focusing more on results and impacts, and to reinforce evaluations of existing projects. The COSOP would have benefited from additional attention to the specific need to set up a sound M&E system linked to a clear M&E

strategy, including establishing baselines, ensuring adequate funding and strengthening M&E capacity.

7. Strengthen primary production to improve food security. The strategic objectives section of the COSOP indicates the need to strengthen primary production to improve food security as one of the four strategic lines of action for the programme (para. 31). However, the attention to smallholder agriculture – IFAD’s core business and a key driver to achieve food security – is rather limited in the COSOP’s two strategic objectives.
8. The role of grants, including regional grants. The COSOP mentions identification of "complementary" grants as part of IFAD’s responsibilities under the country programme management section. However, there is no suggestion as to how such grants would specifically be used to support the achievement of COSOP objectives. Neither does it discuss the role of grant activities in ensuring an integrated country programme. At the same time, there are ongoing regional grants in IFAD’s Latin America and the Caribbean Division with activities that could contribute to enhancing IFAD’s support to the country. The COSOP could map such activities with a view to building more coherence and synergies between investment projects and other activities financed through regional grants.
9. Cooperation with Rome-based agencies (RBAs). Under the partnership section, the COSOP indicates that IFAD will pursue collaboration with international cooperation agencies by participating in the Bolivia Development Partners Group through the working groups on gender, environment and rural development. However, the COSOP should clearly define possible areas of cooperation with the RBAs based on their respective mandates and comparative advantages.
10. Past results, impact and performance. The section on past results, impact and performance is useful. Nonetheless, it would have benefited from taking a more balanced view of the situation. In this regard, for example, the CPE found several areas for improvement, including weak sustainability of the businesses supported, and limited results in addressing the desertification process.

## Final remarks

11. With the above qualifications, IOE wishes to reiterate its overall appreciation for the document and for the efforts made to follow up on the 2014 CPE recommendations and agreement at completion point.