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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 Republic of Turkey

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For: Review

# Comments of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on the country strategic opportunities programme for the Republic of Turkey

## General comments

1. The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) welcomes the new country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) for the Republic of Turkey and finds it to be overall a well-prepared country strategy. The COSOP was developed by IFAD and the Government, drawing on the findings and recommendations of the 2015 country programme evaluation (CPE), and the corresponding agreement at completion point (ACP) signed in March 2016.
2. The COSOP is a concise and clear document. It contains a valuable country diagnosis section describing Turkey's characteristics as an upper middle-income country, and the remaining challenges for rural poverty reduction related to marked regional disparities, gender inequality and progress in integration into the European Union. The COSOP demonstrates good alignment with government priorities and takes into consideration some lessons from past cooperation between IFAD and the Government.
3. IOE acknowledges that the COSOP builds on the findings of the CPE. It addresses several of the CPE's recommendations by focusing on innovation and scaling up, strengthened non-lending activities, the need to leverage the country programme on both the policy and the operational/financial front, and increased attention to South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) to enable the programme to benefit from Turkey's dual role as a borrower and a donor.
4. IOE supports the broad strategic directions contained in the COSOP, which partially correspond to the five recommendations of the 2015 CPE, even though some elements and areas deserve more attention. 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

5. Analysis of IFAD's strengths and limitations in Turkey. The first recommendation of the ACP/CPE is to improve the strategy formulation process so as to enable a proper analysis of IFAD's strengths and limitations in Turkey. The COSOP describes a rigorous and participatory preparation process that includes background studies and in-country meetings and consultations. However, it does not sufficiently discuss IFAD's comparative advantage in Turkey or the need for a strategy that is tailored to Turkey's specific characteristics as a middle-income country including, for example, the need to address marked regional disparities and the potential to scale up IFAD-supported development interventions, leveraging IFAD's limited resources in the country.
6. Improve targeting in terms of scope and accessibility of project benefits. The second recommendation of the ACP is that the programme should improve targeting, particularly of poorer farmers. The CPE emphasizes that adequate targeting is essential for the IFAD-financed programme to remain relevant in Turkey, given the context of robust growth accompanied by high inequality. However, the COSOP does not provide a clear-cut definition of the target group, which would consist of "productive smallholders (men and women), farmers, pastoralists, and rural women and youth willing to engage in small- and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs)" (para. 13) and does not present a robust targeting strategy that would ensure a focus on the poorer farmers. This is particularly important in view of strategic objective 1 on productive poor smallholder farmers' access to markets. Moreover, in terms of geographic targeting, the decision to

move away from an exclusive focus in the past on the lagging regions of Eastern and South-Eastern Anatolia to concentrate operations in the upland areas requires further justification, including discussion of the implications of working in even more inaccessible areas with low population density.

7. Innovation and scaling up. The fourth recommendation of the ACP is that the COSOP should emphasize innovation and scaling up as two key strategic priorities for the programme, particularly in view of relatively limited availability of resources under the performance-based allocation system (PBAS). On innovation, the COSOP proposes to capitalize on existing innovations and explore new ones on climate-smart agriculture. However, on scaling-up, while the COSOP proposes the adoption of a programmatic approach, it does not discuss potential scaling up pathways, for example through projects, policy dialogue or knowledge management. Neither does it explain what type of partnerships will be needed to boost the level of ambition of the programme to significantly scale up the benefits of IFAD-financed interventions in Turkey.
8. Strategic focus on women and youth. The CPE found that the participation and benefits achieved for women in terms of empowerment have been limited. The fifth recommendation of the ACP is the adoption of a consistent, strategic focus on gender equality and women empowerment as well as a strengthened focus on youth. The COSOP mentions the development of a gender strategy, an implementation action plan and reinforced gender focus through policy engagement, which is very positive. On the other hand, the COSOP would have benefited from also including youth as a primary target group in order to respond to youth unemployment and rural outmigration.
9. Strengthen and diversify partnerships in Turkey. The third recommendation of the CPE states that IFAD needs to strengthen and diversify its partnerships in Turkey to enhance its ability to leverage its country programme both in policy dialogue and on the operational/financial front. Under the partnership section, the COSOP indicates that stronger partnerships with a wider range of actors would be explored. However, the COSOP could have defined areas of cooperation that are clearly possible, including cofinancing with international donors such as the European Union, World Bank and United Nations Development Programme and partnering with technical services providers (for example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations).
10. Previous lessons and results. The section on previous lessons and results is useful. It would have benefitted from a more balanced and comprehensive account of lessons emanating from the recent CPE. The evaluation found, for example, a number of areas for improvement, including weak sustainability, limited progress on gender equality and insufficient results in non-lending activities, mainly on policy dialogue and partnerships.

#### Final remarks

11. With the above qualifications, IOE wishes to reiterate its overall appreciation for the document and the efforts made to follow up on the 2015 CPE recommendations and ACP.