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Kingdom of Eswatini
Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation
Agreement at completion point

Note to Executive Board representatives

Focal points:

Technical questions:

Indran A. Naidoo
Director
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2274
e-mail: i.naidoo@ifad.org

Kouessi Maximin Kodjo
Lead Evaluation Officer
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2249
e-mail: k.kodjo@ifad.org

Dispatch of documentation:

Deirdre Mc Grenra
Chief
Institutional Governance and
Member Relations
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2374
e-mail: gb@ifad.org

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For: Review

Agreement at Completion Point

A. Introduction

1. This is the first country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) in the Kingdom of Eswatini, conducted by FAD's Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE). The CSPE aimed at: (i) assessing the results and performance of the IFAD strategy and programme in Eswatini; and (ii) generating findings and recommendations for the future partnership between IFAD and the Government of Eswatini for enhanced development effectiveness and rural poverty alleviation. Furthermore, the CSPE also intended to inform the formulation of the third Eswatini results based COSOP, under elaboration in 2021.
2. The CSPE covered the period 2000-2021 and assessed the four IFAD strategic documents developed for the country and the performance of the four lending operations and of the non-lending activities implemented over two decades. The CSPE also analysed the role and contribution of IFAD and the Government to the design and management of the overall country programme.
3. This agreement at completion point (ACP) contains recommendations based on the evaluation findings presented in the CSPE report, as well as proposed follow-up actions as agreed on by IFAD and the Government of Eswatini. The ACP is signed by the Government of Eswatini (represented by the Principal Secretary for the Ministry of Finance) and IFAD Management (represented by the Associate Vice-President of the Programme Management Department). The signed ACP is an integral part of the CSPE report in which the evaluation findings are presented in detail, and submitted to the IFAD Executive Board as an annex to the new country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) for the Kingdom of Eswatini. The implementation of the recommendations agreed upon will be tracked through the President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions, which is presented to the IFAD Executive Board on an annual basis by the IFAD Management.

B. Recommendations and proposed follow-up actions

4. **Recommendation 1. IFAD should address through its strategy and programme in Eswatini the fundamental constraints that prevent rural smallholder producers, women and youth, from achieving more sustainable livelihoods.** Most prominent issues that require attention include access to land, dependency on imported inputs for agriculture and livestock, and strengthening and empowerment of producers' organizations in both irrigated and rain-fed agriculture.
5. **Proposed follow-up:** The draft COSOP (2022-2027) recognises women and youth as well as other vulnerable groups such as people living with disabilities as particularly important target groups for current and future projects. Projects under this COSOP such as the Financial Inclusion and Cluster Development Project (FINCLUDE) and the new concept that is under elaboration identify not only innovative strategies to target these groups but also differentiated support to enhance their income earning opportunities and ensure sustainability of their livelihoods. Lessons from the ongoing country programme have provided a better understanding of the profiles and needs of youth, which better informs targeting and retention of this group. Youth interventions in the current programme include SMLP's engagement of a specific youth business development service provider to identify concrete entry points for youth in agricultural value chains. FINCLUDE developed a detailed analysis of the youth dividing them by gender and into

younger (15-25 years old) and older (26-35 years old) youth to design more tailor-made support. The FINCLUDE youth communication strategy is focused on changing the mind-set of youth and to stimulate interest in agriculture and related enterprises. Furthermore, the new COSOP recognises the importance of skilling of the youth to enable them to participate gainfully in their enterprises of choice. The Eswatini country programme continues building on these approaches with specific interventions that support the interests and talents of the youth.

6. The issue of women and youth's access to land in rural Eswatini has been identified in the draft COSOP as one of the focus areas for policy engagement. Initiatives towards increasing women and youth's access to land will include work with Chiefdom Development Planning structures at project inception on models and best practices on women and youth's access to agricultural land. The Smallholder Market-led Project and Climate-Smart Agriculture for Resilient Livelihoods (SMLP-CSARL) addressed issues of access to land through the Chief's letters of consent and mapping of land resources using GIS and remote sensing has helped the project identify land use systems, natural resources and land degradation hot spots, thus assisting chiefdoms in the allocation of land. Opportunity to scale up these innovations and to increase land access for youth and women will be explored in the new project.
7. Addressing the dependence on imported inputs is an important consideration for the new design. The findings of the Government of Eswatini-commissioned Commodity Sector Development Plan value chain studies, ongoing consultations with national stakeholders and analysis of current supply chains for inputs will inform specific interventions in this regard.
8. Capacity building for smallholder producers and their integration in the value chains is a key focus of the COSOP. The cluster approach under the FINCLUDE project is a way to organize producers, which is beginning to show some early results. Lessons from this approach will be used in the design future interventions. The new design takes farmer organisation to the next step by taking a value chain approach and seeking to address constraints along the entire commodity value chain to facilitate expansion opportunities for smallholder producers.

Responsible partners: IFAD, the Government of Eswatini and Project teams

Timeline: Ongoing until end of the new COSOP 2027.

9. **Recommendation 2. IFAD should further engage, at a minimum in an advocacy and advisory role, in addressing the emerging threats to the livelihoods of smallholder producers who have their holdings in the LUSIP I PDA.** IFAD and the Government should collaborate to develop a programme aimed at tackling the challenges faced by the producers of irrigated sugar cane and other crops in the LUSIP I PDA, so as to avoid the collapse of the scheme and of the livelihoods of those who depend on it. The programme development should be followed by an effort to leverage resources for its implementation.
10. **Proposed follow-up:** The Government of Eswatini and IFAD will undertake an in-depth evaluation of the obtaining situation with regards to challenges faced by the producers of irrigated sugar cane and other crops in the LUSIP I PDA. Based on the evaluation, specific interventions will be designed to improve economic viability for the beneficiaries and technical capacity for management of the associated infrastructure. Actions will include linking the farmers who have their holdings in the LUSIP I PDA with new agricultural programmes for sustainability of the scheme and livelihoods of those who depend on it.

Responsible partners: The Government of Eswatini and IFAD

Timeline: By December 2023.

11. **Recommendation 3. IFAD and the Government of Eswatini, drawing on the rich lessons learned over time, should define which are the most efficient and effective implementation arrangements for their joint initiatives, that will also allow smallholder producers to benefit the most.** The thrust of this recommendation entails an explicit discussion with the Government about the advantages and disadvantages of the various implementation arrangements deployed so far, to identify what will be the best approach that maximises positive results for the intended target population. The currently on-going projects represent an opportunity for contributing to the development of an efficient and effective model of collaboration across Government-level organizations, parastatals and other stakeholders.
12. **Proposed follow-up:** In development of the new design of and future projects, IFAD and the government of Eswatini will review the implementation arrangements of the current and previous projects and design a robust structure to improve delivery and overall efficiency. IFAD and the government of Eswatini will organize a workshop to discuss the implementation arrangements of past and current projects considering various aspects such as effectiveness, sustainability, technological and methodological innovations as well as value for money, to identify aspects in each model that can be incorporated in new projects and those that need to be improved. Outcomes of the workshop will inform more effective and relevant implementation arrangements for the new and future projects to ensure efficient implementation to the end that smallholder producers including men, women, youth obtain sustainable benefits.

Responsible partners: The Government of Eswatini and IFAD

Timeline: The workshop will be conducted by July 2022.

13. **Recommendation 4. Project monitoring and evaluation systems and procurement units should be considered fundamental pillars of project management and be adequately staffed and capacitated to perform in an effective and efficient manner.** IFAD should continue to provide enhanced support on these topics during implementation, while project management units should ensure the necessary follow-up. The project M&E systems should also consider including indicators that contribute to the Government's own databases.
14. **Proposed follow-up:** To improve monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems and practices IFAD is taking a two-pronged approach of i) strengthening national capacities in M&E through increased technical support and adequate staffing of M&E units; and ii) focusing on improving M&E systems and tools. From project inception, competent M&E staff will be recruited with attention to the adequacy of staffing in each M&E unit including relevant data management support staff. On capacity strengthening, IFAD will continue to invest in early and ongoing capacity building, rolled out through highly competent consultants that are made available for ongoing implementation support; as well as trainings and workshops which are provided periodically and as needed. IFAD also facilitates learning and exchange of best practices and innovation in M&E with other countries through south-south-triangular cooperation. Currently a collaboration between FINCLUDE and the Rural Enterprise and Remittances Project (RERP) project in Nepal introduced the innovative digital farmer diary tool for participatory monitoring and collection of production-related data. The tool also facilitates improved frequency, timeliness, accuracy and management of farm-level data. Additionally, the current country programme introduced M&E innovations which include geotagged M&E data. Recognising that a link between project and government M&E systems is not

intuitive, going forward IFAD and government will collaborate more closely for a more deliberate link for sustainability and to support agriculture information systems at government level. The collaboration with government will also provide an opportunity for improving quality and timeliness of data.

15. To improve procurement processes, in 2020 IFAD migrated to an online system NOTUS which has greatly increased efficiency and minimised mistakes. To ensure that procurement processes are not needlessly protracted, IFAD conducts regular follow-up of the implementation of the procurement plans and provides continuous technical support and capacity building. The recruitment of qualified and competent staff will be supported by staff retention systems to ensure that the developed capacities continue to benefit the country programme without procurement staffing gaps that slow-down implementation progress.

Responsible partners: IFAD, the Government of Eswatini and the project teams

Timeline: Ongoing until end of the new COSOP 2027

Signed by:

Ms Sizakele P. Dlamini
Principal Secretary for the Ministry of Finance in the Kingdom of Eswatini

 _____ **Date:** 04/03/22

and

Mr Donal Brown
Associate Vice-President
Programme Management Department
International Fund for Agricultural Development

 _____ **Date:** 10/03/2022

