
Response of IFAD Management to the thematic evaluation of IFAD's support to nutrition

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Action: The Executive Board is invited to review the response of IFAD Management to the thematic evaluation of IFAD's support to nutrition.

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Response of IFAD Management to the thematic evaluation of IFAD's support to nutrition

I. Considerations on the main findings

1. Management welcomes the thematic evaluation (TE) of IFAD's support to nutrition and appreciates the comprehensive review, which captures the evolution of efforts to mainstream nutrition in IFAD's investments. Management also appreciates the consultative process of collecting multiple perspectives across the institution and with external partners.
2. The evaluation confirmed that IFAD's strategic commitment to nutrition is well aligned with global commitments, initiatives and existing evidence on nutrition, recognizing that IFAD has laid down strong foundations to pursue an ambitious nutrition agenda. Findings from the TE, together with the lessons emerging from the 2022 nutrition stocktake and the 2024 self-assessment of IFAD's nutrition action plan 2019–2025, will inform the new nutrition action plan. In addition to identifying key areas of improvement, the TE findings will contribute to enabling the delivery of commitments under the Thirteenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD13).
3. Management agrees, in principle, that the grant envelope could be used to support mainstreaming of cross-cutting themes, including nutrition. However, setting a fixed portion of the grant envelope to be allocated to nutrition is not possible ex ante. As per IFAD's Regular Grants Policy,¹ at the last Executive Board session preceding the start of each replenishment cycle, Management presents a summary of priority replenishment commitments that could benefit from grant-funded activities.
4. IFAD uses the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) markers if requested by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development or bilateral donors, and will follow the same on-demand approach for nutrition. However, given that the DAC methodology does not fully fit with the particularities of IFAD's portfolio, the Fund uses DAC markers as policy markers and not for financial reporting. IFAD thus minimizes the possibility of overestimating or underestimating nutrition-related amounts.
5. Management concurs with the view of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) that using the same service provider for baseline and completion surveys would minimize the chance of methodological misalignment. However, governments' project management units (PMUs), not IFAD, lead the process of contracting the agency that undertakes these surveys. This process needs to comply with project procurement guidelines.
6. Finally, Management welcomes the recognition that IFAD's interventions focus on regions and countries where undernutrition prevails and that women's empowerment has been central to IFAD's nutrition interventions and the progress in working with Indigenous Peoples. Management is also aware that it needs to make additional efforts related to youth as part of the overall targeting approach to improved nutrition. To address this gap, IFAD strengthened the updated Poverty Targeting Policy 2023 to align with the mainstreaming priorities of climate change, gender, nutrition and youth. IFAD envisages an integrated approach in the ongoing updating of its action plans on nutrition and youth and in the policy on gender equality and women's empowerment. This will make it possible to better tailor nutrition interventions to youth, with a focus on adolescent girls, taking into consideration the linkage of nutrition to climate, environment and biodiversity challenges.

¹ [EB 2021/132/R.3](#).

II. Management's perspective on recommendations

7. Management carefully reviewed IOE's findings and recommendations, which provide valuable learning, and generally concurs with their overall direction. However, there are some important considerations that Management would like to put forward, as detailed below.

Recommendation 1: In the next nutrition action plan, IFAD should frame its nutrition work within the sustainable food systems approach, with the ultimate goal of achieving sustainable healthy diets, and define a more flexible approach to reflect context specificities

8. **Management agrees with recommendation 1.** IFAD is currently updating its action plan on nutrition. The new plan will adopt a food systems approach, focusing on the following three key dimensions: (i) food production and value chains; (ii) food environment; and (iii) consumer behaviour. Through identified nutrition impact pathways and entry points, the new action plan will strengthen the direct linking of investments, including entry points for promoting sustainable healthy diets throughout the supply chain. IFAD will adopt an inclusive, integrated, people-centred approach in coordination with the other mainstreaming priorities. Under the new action plan, the focus on overweight and obesity will also be enhanced, and IFAD will update the [how-to-do note on mainstreaming nutrition into country strategic opportunities programmes \(COSOPs\) and investment projects](#). This will guide design and implementation support for nutrition-sensitive agricultural investments through a food systems approach, in line with the new action plan and countries' priorities and specificities.

Recommendation 2: IFAD should prioritize and scale up its efforts to ensure that human resources and capacities at different levels (global, regional and country) are commensurate with its nutrition ambitions and commitments

9. **Management agrees with recommendation 2.** Over the period covered by the evaluation, IFAD made progress in staffing for nutrition, particularly through supplementary funds. In addition to staff at headquarters, IFAD created staff positions in decentralized regional offices in the East and Southern Africa Division and the West and Central Africa Division. IFAD also established a roster of consultants and experts on nutrition-sensitive agriculture in 2023 and will keep it regularly updated. Consultants on the roster will need to take periodic training courses to remain up to date on IFAD's nutrition-sensitive approach and guidelines. Management is aware that, while much has been achieved, the ambition to achieve more must be balanced with considerations on the relative priority of mainstreamed themes and budget availability. Management will continue to evaluate staffing based on identified gaps and strengthen capacities at all levels through the identification of agreed trade-offs elsewhere in the administrative budget.
10. The new action plan will guide partnership-building with United Nations organizations, academia, research centres and local actors. IFAD will strengthen partnerships with the Scaling up Nutrition Movement and with organizations such as the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, to strengthen capacities, enhance policy dialogue and ensure collective advocacy for nutrition at the country level.
11. Additionally, Management recognizes the importance of strengthening support to PMUs and their implementing partners throughout the project cycle. To this end, IFAD field missions will pursue systematic inclusion of experts on nutrition-sensitive agriculture during key stages of the project cycle (design, start-up, midterm and completion). Missions will also provide the opportunity to organize capacity-building sessions. Continuing technical backstopping beyond mission timeframes is already a practice with several PMUs. However, capacity-building for implementing partners relies on funding from sources outside of IFAD's administrative budget. Projects'

programmes of work should make budgetary provision for technical expertise and capacity enhancement requirements for PMU staff, which line ministries should then prioritize and country steering committees should approve. Capacity development efforts will continue to be reinforced for all relevant actors, including decision makers, implementing partners, IFAD staff and experts on mission.

Recommendation 3: IFAD should strengthen its nutrition-related knowledge management and its monitoring system for nutrition-sensitive interventions, and use this knowledge to improve accountability and delivery against its nutrition agenda

12. **Management agrees with recommendation 3.** Management supports the recommendation to strengthen nutrition-related knowledge management, monitoring and accountability for delivery. The new nutrition action plan, to be ready by the end of 2025, will define action needed to this end, taking into account the findings and recommendations stemming from the evaluation, as well as availability of resources. Both the new nutrition action plan and the nutrition targets agreed upon for IFAD13 will prompt structured follow-up and periodic assessment to ensure that nutrition remains an integral part of IFAD's agenda. Management agrees to strengthen nutrition-related knowledge management and will explore how to enhance the use of existing budget resources for knowledge-building, dissemination and policy engagement. As part of this effort, Management will need to consider interlinkages between nutrition and other mainstreaming themes (e.g. nutrition and gender, nutrition and climate change).
13. IFAD recognizes the need for more strategic communication and dissemination of nutrition knowledge products. To this end, IFAD will consolidate and update guidance tools and products, including those documenting innovation, for implementing partners, service providers, IFAD staff and experts on mission. The knowledge generated will feed into IFAD's operational manuals and its design, supervision and completion guidelines. IFAD will also make its resources more visible and accessible to the public. The Fund will work with partner organizations and networks, such as UN-Nutrition (the United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanism for nutrition) on a joint repository of knowledge products and a collective nutrition advocacy strategy.
14. Management acknowledges the need to strengthen monitoring systems, data gathering, analysis and reporting of core indicators to measure nutrition results and impact. Management also acknowledges the existing capacity gaps in data collection and analysis, as PMU service providers and monitoring and evaluation teams often lack the expertise needed to measure minimum dietary diversity and knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP). IFAD has been at the cutting edge in adopting the Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W) as one of its core indicators since 2017. The United Nations Statistical Commission recently adopted MDD-W in March 2025 as a new indicator to measure Sustainable Development Goal 2. During IFAD11, the Fund established mandatory criteria for validating nutrition-sensitive projects, including the adoption of at least one outcome indicator (MDD-W and/or KAP). The TE noted "insufficient time for mainstreaming efforts" and acknowledged that it is still early to demonstrate significant effects. Nevertheless, assessing project quality and measuring project results and impact on the ground is a key priority for IFAD, as reflected in the creation of the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE). Guided by ODE, Management will enhance guidance and support for monitoring and reporting of portfolio performance, including nutrition indicators, during IFAD13 and beyond.
15. In developing the new action plan on nutrition, Management will explore opportunities to complement MDD-W and KAP corporate indicators with additional project-level indicators that can capture immediate and medium-term progress towards nutrition objectives.

Recommendation 4: To advance its nutrition agenda effectively, IFAD should adopt a more strategic and sustainable approach to resource mobilization by leveraging both internal and complementary external resources

16. **Management partially agrees with recommendation 4.** With regard to sub-recommendation 4(a), Management agrees that nutrition-sensitive projects should be adequately resourced; however, prioritization of activities during implementation falls under the purview of the government concerned. Project delivery teams can nevertheless engage with governments during design to ensure that projects' budget distribution is commensurate with the ambition of each nutrition-sensitive project, and they can also follow up during implementation. At the same time, Management's position is that financial tracking of nutrition would not be relevant to the current results management framework, especially in the absence of a rigorous methodology agreed across multilateral development banks (such as the methodology that exists for climate finance). However, in the light of interest from its donors, IFAD will continue to monitor international best practices and engage with multilateral development banks in assessing the feasibility of such a system.
17. Management agrees with sub-recommendations 4(b) and 4(c). The latter reflects the need to mobilize funding for nutrition through complementary approaches. These would include both the mobilization of core resources (which results in the approval of nutrition-sensitive projects, in line with IFAD13 commitments) and the use of dedicated thematic supplementary funds, leveraging grants for successful implementation of nutrition-sensitive projects.
18. Management does not agree with sub-recommendation 4(d), which calls for the introduction of core additional nutrition contributions. IFAD has just introduced additional climate contributions, and it would be premature to seek to replicate this approach until its effectiveness and efficiency is assessed. In addition, IFAD Member States were very clear about their intention not to have additional climate contributions set a precedent for the creation of other thematic contributions to the resources of the Fund in the future.²
19. In line with IFAD13 commitments, the Fund will work on strategic partnerships with other international financial institutions, sister United Nations organizations and the private sector to advance a common agenda on nutrition and enhance the impact of investments on food systems and rural transformation.
20. IFAD can fulfil its commitment to promote nexus interventions, as outlined in the IFAD13 commitments, by leveraging climate resources to support integrated approaches. This was further affirmed by IFAD's endorsing the Global Compact on Nutrition Integration, launched on 26 March 2025 on the eve of the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Paris. These approaches can effectively address interconnected challenges, enhancing nutrition outcomes while also improving natural resource management and strengthening rural people's resilience.

² [GC 47/L.5](#), para. 46.