

Document: EC 2019/107/W.P.4/Add.1  
Agenda: 5  
Date: 1 October 2019  
Distribution: Public  
Original: English

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Investing in rural people

## IFAD Management Response to the Impact Evaluation of the Food Security and Development Support Project in the Maradi Region

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Evaluation Committee — 107<sup>th</sup> Session  
Rome, 29 October 2019

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For: Review

## IFAD Management Response to the Impact Evaluation of the Food Security and Development Support Project in the Maradi Region

1. Management welcomes the evaluation findings of the Food Security and Development Support Project in the Maradi Region (PASADEM) conducted by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE).
2. Management is pleased to note that PASADEM was relevant to the policies and strategies of the Government and IFAD. Management agrees that PASADEM was ambitious, but the design judiciously combined support for agropastoral productivity, market access and food resilience of the most vulnerable households. The sustainability of all these efforts depended upon significant capacity-building of rural organizations and other groups.
3. Management agrees that the underestimation of implementation time and market infrastructure costs affected the project's performance on agricultural productivity, the strengthening of farmers' organizations and the completion of an economic development "hub" along with its intended investments. Although still satisfactory, this situation reduced the scale of the project's impact.
4. Management also agrees with the assessment that: (i) through PASADEM, food security has improved overall in the project area; and (ii) PASADEM has had an additional positive impact on the food and nutrition security of recipient households compared to control households. This impact is especially reflected by a significant reduction in the wedding period.
5. Management appreciates the recommendations that are already being internalized and acted upon by the ongoing Family Farming Development Programme in Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder Regions (PRODAF). Utilizing a country programme approach, PRODAF has integrated lessons learned from previous projects in Niger. In this regard, Management would like to acknowledge the following:
  - (i) Social engineering and capacity development of farmers' organizations.  
 Agreed. Social engineering efforts and strengthening of farmers' organizations to provide services related to production (extension services, supply of inputs) and post-production (storage, processing, transport, marketing) are key elements for achieving results and impact. The ongoing PRODAF emphasizes the structuring of farmers' organizations to carry out economic, management and representation functions. Farmers' organizations are critical actors in management committees of semi-wholesale markets and collection centers supported by PRODAF.
  - (ii) Enhance food and nutrition security of poor and vulnerable households as part of the hub approach to economic development  
 Agreed. The ongoing PRODAF and the upcoming Project to Strengthen Resilience of Rural Communities to Food and Nutrition Insecurity (PRECIS) have intensified resilience-building actions such as cash for work, women's wedding granaries and goat kits, which have demonstrated positive impacts on food security for very poor and vulnerable households. PRECIS aims to scale up good practices and strategies from previous IFAD projects in Niger. However, better analysis is needed of the interactions among different interventions, which have not always produced synergies. As a nutrition-sensitive project, PRECIS will contribute to improving food and nutrition security through a preventive approach to malnutrition and nutrition-education activities.

- (iii) Fully establish and ensure the proper functioning of at least one economic development hub.

Agreed. To ensure the continuity of PASADEM, PRODAF will see the completion of all the three economic development hubs initiated under PASADEM, including: (i) the development of satellite collection centers around semi-wholesale markets; and (ii) the rehabilitation of rural roads to connect production basins to these markets in order to minimize transportation-related transaction costs. The mid-term review of PRODAF, which took place in June and July 2019, concluded that the economic development pole model has significant positive impacts on production, farmers' revenue and rural transformation overall. Cofinancing of market infrastructure, which has high costs, was effective within PRODAF and PRECIS (cofinancing was provided by the OPEC Fund for International Development [OFID] in PRODAF and by OFID and the African Development Bank in PRECIS).

The ongoing PRODAF, which is continuing and scaling up most PASADEM interventions, is focusing on strengthening farmers' organizations, from grassroots groups to apex structures, in order to assist them in providing producers with high-quality and sustainable production and post-production services. The support provided by PRODAF will be continued through PRECIS to ensure that farmers' organizations carry out essential functions including the: collection, storage and transport of agricultural products from villages to markets; and organizing the sale of agricultural inputs at the village level.

6. Management thanks IOE for the fruitful process. It will ensure that lessons learned from this exercise are disseminated widely to improve the performance of IFAD-funded projects in Niger and elsewhere.