



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

THE WAY WE DO BUSINESS

Going beyond efficiency



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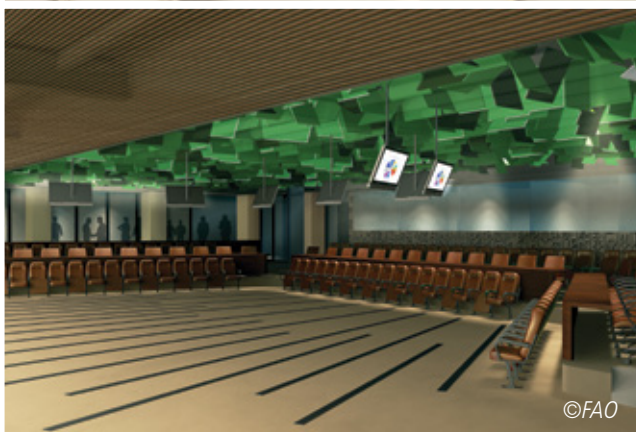
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At FAO, we are committed to fulfilling our mandate of building a sustainable world with food security and nutrition for all, while ensuring the most efficient and effective use of resources. Our work is guided by our Strategic Objectives and a clear vision of what we aim to achieve: providing greater support to countries to help create a world without hunger. We work continuously to strengthen collaboration with our Rome-based sister agencies, and we strive to streamline and simplify our operations to obtain better value for the money we are entrusted. By joining forces with governments and building effective partnerships, we create opportunities for transparent dialogue, advocacy and communication, and knowledge sharing, all of which enable us to work better and faster.

Here is a glimpse at what we have done:

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

The pursuit of efficiency gains and savings remains a high priority for the Organization. The Director-General's transformational change for FAO, starting

in 2012, included as a prime element the need to institute a mindset of value-for-money within the Organization. This has already resulted in substantial efficiency savings: USD 67.5 million in 2012-13, and USD 36.6 million during the 2014-15 period, while delivering the approved Programme of Work.

The approach taken was framed by the overarching principle of minimizing the impact on decentralized offices and the technical departments of the Organization.

PROCUREMENT AND FINANCE

FAO has introduced several reforms and innovations to its finance and procurement functions to maximize efficiency.

THE ROME-BASED AGENCIES' (RBAs) ELECTRONIC TENDERING PORTAL

Interagency collaboration by the Common Procurement Team of the three RBAs and their legal offices led to the use of the same software for the electronic tendering portal and the United Nations Global Marketplace supplier-registration website, helping to create a common vendor database. The RBA Common Procurement Team also adopted the reverse-auction process to promote competition among service suppliers and guarantee the transparency and confidentiality of tendering. An example is the 10 percent annual savings to the RBAs on the cost of electricity services at the headquarters of the three agencies.

THE ELECTRONIC FUNDS TRANSFER SYSTEM ADOPTED IN DECENTRALIZED OFFICES

We implemented the Electronic Funds Transfer system (EFT) in 27 decentralized offices that bank with one of six global banking partners (Barclays, Citibank, Ecobank, HSBC, Standard Bank and Standard Chartered Bank). The system allows offices to make online payments from our global management system (GRMS) directly to the banks. The result: we reduced processing times and costs and created a more secure payment method compared to cheques, cash or manual transfers.



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ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Estimated efficiency gains of USD 4.3 million were achieved by transferring the responsibility of budget-related support for the technical cooperation programmes to the Shared Services Centre and to regional offices; and by extending the replacement cycle of FAO vehicles, especially in the field.

We are the first in the UN system to have financial and HR data shared with the Pension Fund.

Most recently, we built an interface enabling the consolidation of financial contributions and human resources data. Having all the data in one place makes for a more reliable system to report and reconcile financial information with eligibility rules. We have been sharing this with other UN agencies so that their staff can avail of the same benefits.

PERSONNEL

A NEW RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The combined effects of a more business-like approach, a streamlined recruitment process and the advantage of having the Professional Staff Selection Committee (PSSC) members present during interviews have had remarkable impact on how we hire. Thanks to the new recruitment process and the close cooperation between the decision-makers involved, hiring time for professional staff was reduced by over 40 percent. The recruitment process is now time-bound to a maximum of 120 days from the approval of a vacancy announcement to acceptance of the Selection Report by the Departmental/Regional Professional Staff Selection Committees.



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HIRING CONSULTANTS

We have revised the payment method for consultants and subscribers to Personal Services Agreements (PSAs) to reflect “days actually worked”. We introduced new hiring guidelines which provide parameters that ensure that the appropriate category (A, B, or C) is selected when a consultant is employed and that the correct remuneration package is offered. These categories reflect the consultant’s years of experience relevant to the assignment, ranging from 12+ years for A-level to 5 years for B-level and 1 year for C-level.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

FAO is changing the paradigm of how IT infrastructure and support services investments are provided, with a fundamental shift from building technology within FAO to a model that exploits the outsourcing opportunities now readily available in the IT marketplace. As a result, the number of employees providing support services to IT systems has been substantially reduced from 98 to 51. We are exploring opportunities to transfer IT services currently managed by FAO personnel—such as the data center, email and registry services and other IT functions—to external companies at increased efficiency and at the same or reduced costs.

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES

The deployment of the Publications Workflow System in 2014 has resulted in a substantial reduction in expenditure on formal publishing activities thanks to better planning. Standardization of the published output, i.e. covers and layout, is also reducing the need to hire external design companies with a substantial reduction in costs. Additional efforts are being made to improve the language balance of publications through partnerships, particularly for Arabic, Chinese and Russian.

INTRODUCING QR CODES

At the forefront of innovation is the use of Quick Response (QR) codes, in specially-designed cards for FAO publications. There is enormous potential to use QR codes in documents and publications to reduce the costs of printing and to improve user experience, as electronic documents can be more easily searched and annotated. All FAO publications and meeting documents also carry a QR code to allow users to easily retrieve the electronic version. The overall expenditure in printing of publications was reduced by 44 percent since 2012, with total savings of about USD 1 million.



OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

NEW RULES FOR TRAVEL TIMES

As of April 2014, the business class threshold for official travel was modified from 9 to 12 hours. This means flying time of less than 12 hours is now done on economy class via the most direct and economical route. This change amounted to total savings of around USD 1.4 million from April to December 2014. This has also resulted in reduction in carbon footprint - by flying first class, one person is usually attributed 2-3 times the share of emissions for a single flight than economy class.

ASSISTING DECENTRALIZED OFFICES WITH PROCUREMENT AND OPERATIONAL PLANNING

We have pioneered a programme of posting procurement professionals in countries with high volumes or complex procurement environments. By February 2015, we had 14 specialists covering 17 countries. This has led to better planning and has significantly reduced delays in procurement activities. It has also proved to be an important element to attract donors and improve FAO's image in terms of its capacity to deliver.

IMPROVED SECURITY SERVICES

We have improved security services by removing non-security related functions and streamlining administrative responsibilities. The goal is to significantly reduce the functions performed by the Security Service allowing it to return to guard duty.





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"We will keep up our efforts to increase efficiencies, streamlining, coordination, and improve our delivery. We have made changes. We will continue to make the changes that may be necessary to improve our work."

José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General

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