



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**Seventy-sixth session**

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Management issues: report on the evaluation activities of the Commission during the biennium 2018–2019 and outcomes of the evaluation/review of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization and the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management**Report on the evaluation of the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization pursuant to resolution 71/1****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The present document is submitted pursuant to paragraph 5 of resolution 71/1 of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in which the Commission decided to review the continued substantive relevance and financial viability of each regional institution. The present document contains an overview of the independent evaluation of the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization, which was conducted by an external evaluation consultant, including the conclusions and recommendations for improving the results-orientation, relevance, sustainability and efficiency of the Centre. The present document also contains a description of the actions taken by the secretariat to address the recommendations of the evaluation and further actions it may wish to consider in that regard.

I. Background

1. In resolution 71/1, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) decided to review the continued substantive relevance and financial viability of each regional institution every five years. In line with that decision, the secretariat commissioned an independent evaluation of the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization in 2019. The evaluation consultant gave a presentation on the outcome of the evaluation to the members of the Governing Council of the Centre at its fifteenth session, held in Jeonju, Republic of Korea, on 29 November 2019. The conclusions and recommendations of the

* ESCAP/76/L.1/Rev.1.

evaluation are excerpted from the full report¹ and included in the present document for the information of the Commission.

II. Purpose and method

2. The aim of the evaluation was to provide information for the Commission's review of the Centre, including recommendations on how to improve the Centre's substantive relevance and financial viability, in particular in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the preparation of the Centre's 2020–2024 strategic plan. The evaluation comprised an assessment of the Centre's performance as measured against standard evaluation criteria, such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and mainstreaming of gender and human rights. It also yielded recommendations for improving the results-orientation and performance of the Centre.

3. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the norms, standards and procedures on evaluation as set out in the ESCAP monitoring and evaluation policy and guidelines² to ensure the evaluation would be independent, objective and of high quality. The evaluation was conducted from August to December 2019 by Mr. Ganesh Prasad Rauniyar, an evaluation professional.

4. The evaluation included a comprehensive review of relevant documents, consultations, interviews and an online survey of the stakeholders of the Centre. The evaluator conducted missions to Thailand and China from 19 to 28 August 2019 and consulted with various government and non-government stakeholders including the Permanent Representative of China to ESCAP and officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of China, as well as staff of ESCAP including the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization. Interviews were conducted with members of the Governing Council. Furthermore, face-to-face interviews with Centre stakeholders were conducted during country visits to Cambodia, Nepal and Sri Lanka from 18 to 26 September 2019. Skype or telephone interviews were also conducted from September to October 2019 with the Centre stakeholders from Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Tajikistan and Viet Nam, reflecting various subregions.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

5. The evaluation included conclusions and action-oriented recommendations to enhance the performance of the Centre. It found that the Centre is the only recognized regional multilateral institution dedicated to promoting sustainable agricultural mechanization in the Asia-Pacific region. Its mandate and the updated statute adopted in 2016 are closely linked to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The objectives of the Centre are consistent with the agricultural development policy and strategies of the member States in the Asia-Pacific region.

6. While the Centre has made efforts to link its activities to the Sustainable Development Goals and the Governing Council has highlighted the importance of such linkages, the Centre's operations are largely driven by activities instead of by results based on the Sustainable Development Goals. In the absence of an institutional theory of change, the road maps to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals are not explicit, although efforts have been made to link activities implicitly. It is crucial that the Centre adopt a theory of change and develop pathways to achieve the relevant Sustainable Development Goals by

¹ See ESCAP/76/INF/3.

² See www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAPME2017.pdf.

focusing on selected Goals and associated targets and indicators rather than trying to link its activities to a higher number of Goals. The following Goals would be of particular relevance: Goal 13 (Climate action), Goal 5 (Gender equality), Goal 12 (Responsible consumption and production), Goal 1 (No poverty), Goal 2 (Zero hunger), Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy), Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

7. The Centre has responded to member State demand, conducting several activities and organizing events while providing a platform for policy dialogue, knowledge-sharing, the dissemination of new skills through training and training-the-trainer programmes, information exchange, and bilateral collaboration on topics of mutual interest. The stakeholders' feedback suggests that, overall, the delivery of support from the Centre has been satisfactory.

8. With regard to coverage of countries in the region, the Centre's operations had to be limited owing to resource constraints and relatively higher unit costs in delivering services, particularly in the case of member States in the Central Asia and Pacific subregions. Moreover, resource limitations affected the achievements of the Centre in the area of web-based data and information on good practices and sustainable agricultural development for poverty reduction, as well as the establishment of a data information hub.

9. According to the findings of the evaluation, the Centre has operated efficiently. Leveraging in-kind and cash contributions from partners has helped to keep the unit cost of activities and events reasonable. Member States have appreciated the competence and dedication of the Centre's team. The Centre can further enhance efficiency by adding to its team a technical expert in the area of sustainable agricultural mechanization so that member States' requests for support can be addressed without delay.

10. According to the evaluation's conclusions, with the current level of funding from the host Government and voluntary contributions from other member States, the Centre can sustain its current level of operations. However, increasing demand for more and newer interventions, expansion of coverage of countries in the region, and research and development work would require additional financing, which could potentially be sourced by reaching out to prospective donors and industry interest groups and by encouraging member States to increase their voluntary contributions.

11. Generally, member States have a favourable opinion on the support they have received from the Centre. However, in the absence of a proper monitoring and evaluation system for impact data collection, analysis, and reporting at the country and regional levels, the Centre's impact cannot be adequately assessed in greater depth at this point. It is recognized that, in the context of ESCAP, evaluating impact is challenging because of difficulties in quantifying attribution. Evidence in support of such attribution is thin at present. Nevertheless, the Centre needs to continue to pursue its contribution to national policies, strategies and development programmes.

12. The evaluation contains seven recommendations, based on its findings and conclusions, for improving the results-orientation, relevance, sustainability and efficiency of the Centre. The secretariat welcomed the recommendations of the evaluation and incorporated concrete actions in line with the recommendations in the Centre's five-year development strategy (2020–2024). The secretariat appreciated the full cooperation that the member States, the Centre's host Government and other development partners accorded to the evaluation consultant by engaging in constructive interviews and discussions

and providing relevant information for addressing the issues covered by the evaluation.

13. Excerpts from the evaluation recommendations are provided below, together with a description of the actions taken by the secretariat to address the recommendations and further actions it may wish to consider in this regard.

Recommendation 1: The Centre should improve the outreach of its services to the member States by promoting good practices and lessons learned in sustainable agricultural mechanization based on the principles of economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

14. With regard to recommendation 1, ESCAP has taken steps to enhance the Centre's programme outreach to promote successful practices and lessons learned in sustainable agricultural mechanization. Through its programmes and events, the Centre has extended greater opportunities to member States to learn about and scale up good technologies and institutional models in areas such as climate-smart mechanization, testing of agricultural machinery and financing for sustainable agricultural mechanization. The Centre has also incorporated pilot projects on innovative technologies and experiential learning modalities such as demonstrations and study tours in new project proposals. These efforts will be further strengthened in the coming period.

15. To enhance the visibility of its programmes, the Centre will promote senior-level engagement in member States and engage in targeted outreach to raise awareness about its achievements as a regional institution of ESCAP, which will also assist in strengthening collaboration with partners. Furthermore, the Centre will place emphasis on expanding its programme footprint in Central Asia, deepen its engagement with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and explore opportunities to further engage Pacific island States in its programmes.

Recommendation 2: The Centre should increase access by member States of technical expertise in sustainable agricultural mechanization by actively promoting North-South and South-South cooperation and sharing good practices and lessons applicable to different agroecological conditions.

16. With regard to recommendation 2, ESCAP has included the promotion of regional, South-South and triangular cooperation as a key component for executing the Centre's five-year development strategy (2020–2024). As part of this strategy, the Centre will strengthen cooperation with member States and relevant regional and subregional organizations on sustainable agricultural mechanization in order to identify shared priorities for the region and address transboundary, regional and subregional issues that are difficult to resolve through national efforts alone. The Centre will intensify efforts to enable the sharing of innovative and sustainable technologies and practices suitable for different agroecological conditions, including among least developed and developing countries. Innovative mechanisms for the sharing of policy experiences, data and best practices among countries through forums, meetings, working groups and online interactions will also be promoted.

Recommendation 3: The Centre should actively engage with agricultural policymakers on the sidelines of intergovernmental forums and events related to the Sustainable Development Goals. Based on need, the Centre should be able to step in to support updating government policies and strategies.

17. With regard to recommendation 3, ESCAP will promote the increased engagement of policymakers in the Centre's activities to enhance awareness of the role of sustainable agricultural mechanization in enabling sustainable agricultural and rural development in the region. To that end, the Centre will leverage opportunities during intergovernmental forums and events focused on the relevant Sustainable Development Goals. Through its programmes, the Centre will also enable the exchange of experience in policy formulation and implementation among countries, including developing and least developed countries.

Recommendation 4: The Centre should increase its footprints by engaging current and potential new partners in both public and private sectors and international development partners by creating synergies and strategic alliances for collaboration and cooperation to promote sustainable agricultural mechanization.

18. With regard to recommendation 4, ESCAP will increase emphasis on promoting collaboration with a wide range of public, private and civil society partners to optimize the scale and impact of the Centre's programmes for sustainable agricultural mechanization, both by building upon existing partnerships and leveraging new ones. In this regard, the Centre has made progress in increasing its footprints through the expansion of membership in two of its regional cooperation networks, namely the Regional Council of Agricultural Machinery Associations in Asia and the Pacific and the Asian and Pacific Network for Testing of Agricultural Machinery. The Centre will continue its partnership expansion efforts during the period 2020–2021 to further increase its footprints.

Recommendation 5: The Centre should ensure that its programme of work is fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and relevant Sustainable Development Goals, including responding to the unfolding impacts of climate change, with a clear road map for achieving corresponding targets.

19. With regard to recommendation 5, ESCAP has developed a five-year development strategy (2020–2024) for the Centre, including a new theory of change, which was adopted following the review and endorsement of its overall direction by the Governing Council at its fifteenth session, held in November 2019. The new strategy and theory of change clarify the Centre's contributions to specific targets of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 13 (Climate action), and ensures alignment of the Centre's programme of work with the 2030 Agenda.

Recommendation 6: The Centre should seek additional resources to meet demand from the member States, expand its operations in more member States and address new challenges relevant to sustainable agricultural mechanization.

20. With regard to recommendation 6, the Commission may wish to reiterate its encouragement to all members and associate members of ESCAP to make the necessary regular annual contributions, on a voluntary basis, which is essential to the operation of the regional institutions, pursuant to its resolution 71/1.

21. In that regard, ESCAP will explore additional opportunities for resource mobilization for the Centre including donor funding for South-South cooperation initiatives, development of joint proposals with partners, encouraging increased voluntary contributions from member States which are existing donors, and approaching development banks and non-traditional donors. Efforts will also be made to mobilize increased in-kind contributions for the Centre's activities in order to realize budgetary savings that can in turn be directed towards the expansion of operations to cover new areas of programmatic work and more countries.

Recommendation 7: The Centre should implement the ESCAP gender equality policy and continue to promote gender empowerment and social inclusion in its operations. In addition, it should carry out an outcome-based evaluation at periodic intervals regarding the progress made by member States as a result of the Centre's support and report to ESCAP. Also, the Centre needs to improve its communication strategy with the United Nations country teams, other development partners, including United Nations agencies, and implementation partners in participating countries as well as in the Asia-Pacific region.

22. With regard to recommendation 7, the Centre will implement the ESCAP gender equality policy and continue to promote women's empowerment and social inclusion in its operations. The dimensions of gender equality, youth involvement and the needs of elderly farmers have been incorporated in the Centre's five-year development strategy (2020–2024).

23. The Centre has included a provision for an end-of-term outcome-based evaluation in its new project proposals in line with the ESCAP monitoring and evaluation policy and guidelines. At the institutional level, the secretariat will commission an independent evaluation of the Centre once every five years to inform the review by the Commission of the continued substantive relevance and financial viability of each ESCAP regional institution in accordance with resolution 71/1.

24. The Centre will strengthen external communication for enhanced engagement with the United Nations country teams and United Nations funds, programmes and agencies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme, in order to facilitate fruitful partnerships and the implementation of activities at the national, subregional and regional levels. In addition, the Centre will intensify outreach and collaboration with other international organizations and development partners such as the ASEAN secretariat, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Italian Agency for Testing of Agricultural Machinery - European Network for Testing of Agricultural Machinery. Both online and offline means of communication will be leveraged including website content, electronic publications, social media platforms, press releases, contributions to the ESCAP newsletter, printed communication material and presentations at relevant conferences and forums.