



Concept note

Enhancing the evaluability of Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2):

"End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture"

Technical seminar jointly organized by the evaluation offices of CGIAR, FAO, IFAD and WFP

**Date: 17-18 November 2015
Rome, Italy**

1. **Background.** One of the main outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference was the agreement by Member States to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will build upon the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and converge with the post-2015 Development Agenda. The SDGs should be coherent with and integrated into the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015. The Secretary-General, in his report "A life of dignity for all" (A/68/202), observed that "Strong monitoring and accountability will be crucial for the implementation of the post-2015 Development Agenda."
2. The preparation of the SDGs is currently underway. They will be adopted during the high-level plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly from 25 to 27 September 2015. After this, the technical discussion on how to evaluate the achievement of the various SDGs can start.
3. Since 2015 is also the International Year of Evaluation, the evaluation offices of the Rome-based agencies (RBAs), which are comprised of the CGIAR (formerly known as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), are jointly organizing a technical seminar within the framework of their 2012 joint statement of collaboration. The proposed theme of this seminar is "*Enhancing the evaluability of Sustainable Development Goal 2. How can we evaluate progress towards achieving SDG2 - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture?*" The focus of SDG2 is in line with the mandates of the RBAs, which cover a wide range of issues associated with SDG2, in contexts ranging from humanitarian crisis to development.
4. The seminar will provide an opportunity to critically reflect on the experiences from previous attempts made to monitor and evaluate progress towards the MDGs. It will identify the pitfalls that should be avoided as well as the foundations that have been laid with regards to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) at national and global levels, which may enable the SDGs to be effectively evaluated in the future. The seminar's approach will be based on an understanding that any future evaluation of SDGs will require data originating from sound monitoring of SDGs, as is proposed

by the United Nations initiative "Sustainable Development Solutions Network".¹ SDG evaluations will complement the monitoring by analysing the factors that enable, impede or prevent progress on SDGs. The seminar will therefore focus on the conditions that will make progress towards SDG2 evaluable and the evaluations themselves useful and effective.

5. For a forward-looking perspective, the seminar will also reflect on the changing context and emerging challenges for evaluation in the SDG era. Issues to consider include: the increasing fragmentation of aid, the importance of non-aid links and the emergence of new actors and partnerships in development and humanitarian aid that require a wide range of disciplinary approaches to evaluation; and greater attention to equitable and sustainable development outcomes and the need to integrate values into evaluation for a better understanding of the poverty dimension, beyond material deprivation, as well as new ways to measure qualitative growth.²
6. The seminar will focus on the evaluability of SDG2. Evaluability assessments were introduced in the 1980s as a procedure and method to determine whether programmes were ready for evaluation.³ Since then, evaluability studies have been used as a preparatory step in evaluation design to: define the exact purpose and subject of the evaluation; review the availability of evidence; and decide whether complex programmes or issues could be evaluated at all.⁴ Evaluability assessments explore the conditions, options and limitations to conduct future evaluations, which increases the probability that evaluations will be feasible, relevant and useful. By focusing on evaluability, this seminar will inform participants about how SDG2 can and should ultimately be evaluated.
7. **Objectives.** The objective of the seminar is *to contribute to a shared understanding of how SDG2 could be evaluated and identify actions needed to enable evaluations of SDG2 through the United Nations system, other international organizations or countries themselves*. Specific objectives of the seminar are to: (i) share lessons learned on the evaluability of the MDGs and other partnership initiatives of similar scale (for example the Paris Declaration); (ii) jointly review key challenges for evaluation in relation to the post-2015 development agenda in general and SDG2 in particular; and (iii) identify concrete steps for RBAs towards building evaluability of SDG2.
8. **Discussion group themes:** The seminar will start with keynote speeches on broad issues defining the new context for evaluation in the post-2015 era, thus setting the stage for subsequent discussions on the evaluability of SDG2. The discussions will be forward-looking, but also draw on the experiences and lessons learned from past evaluations of global partnership initiatives and M&E of MDGs. Discussions will take place in four discussion groups, each of which will address one of the following themes:
 - **Theme 1: The relevance of 'new metrics' for the evaluation of SDG2 – data revolution and innovative approaches for assessing human wellbeing**, e.g. food availability, nutrition and food security and their

¹ Sustainable Development Solutions Network. 2015. Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for Sustainable Development Goals. Draft for consultation, 16 January 2015.

² Picciotto, Robert. 2014. Have Development Evaluators Been Fighting the Last War... and If So, What Is to Be Done? IDS Bulletin Volume 45, N° 6. November 2014.

³ Trevisan, Michael S. and Yi Min Huang. 2003. Evaluability assessment: a primer. Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 8 (20).

⁴ E.g. NORAD. 2010. Evaluability Study of Partnership Initiatives Norwegian Support to Achieve Millennium Development Goals 4 & 5, Report 9/2010 – Study. UNEG. 2016. UNEG Study on the Evaluability of the UN Development Assistance Framework.

implications in humanitarian and development contexts. The discussion will explore appropriate ways to define and measure hunger, food security and agricultural sustainability, and how the proposed SDG2 indicators will be able to draw from existing indices and data sources. The discussion will benefit from expert inputs on new directions of research on the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of hunger, food security, nutrition and agricultural sustainability, their interconnectivity within the overall concept of sustainability and appropriate methods for measuring complex changes and trends within the SDG2.

- **Theme 2: Partnerships and development actors – dealing with the increasing complexity of development processes** and implications for evaluation in light of new emerging thinking on evaluation of complexity. The discussion will focus on approaches to evaluate complex partnerships within the new development agenda, where various actors within countries drive their own development processes and where international partners only play an auxiliary/supporting role in such processes – hence their contributions do not entail a direct causal relationship with the results to be achieved. The discussion will benefit from short presentations of lessons learned from previous evaluations of global partnerships, such as the evaluation of the Paris Declaration.
 - **Theme 3: National M&E systems and data availability – building on the progress made and addressing existing (capacity) gaps.** The discussion will focus on the progress and current trends in building M&E capacities at the country level and on understanding to what extent the improved data availability and the strengthened capacities for data analysis will contribute to the evaluability of SDG2. It will also explore existing capacity gaps that need to be addressed in order to ensure evaluability of SDG2. The discussion will benefit from short presentations of experiences of national governments in developing M&E systems and managing data, contributing to their own ability to monitor and assess progress on global commitments, such as the MDGs.
 - **Theme 4: Demand for and use of evidence from evaluation – understanding the political economy of evidence and developing a joint evaluation agenda for SDG2.** Broad-based ownership of SDG2 should, in principle, fuel the demand for M&E-related information at country level. However, experience has shown that at policy levels the demand for credible evaluations of development outcomes has greatly varied and that, in general, development policies and strategies have not been informed by evaluative evidence. The discussion will focus on trends and challenges within the political economy of partner countries that will determine the demand for and use of evaluations under SDG2. The discussion will benefit from presentations of case studies on the political economy of evidence in different contexts, from stable to humanitarian crisis.
9. **Participants.** The event will gather a wide range of partners with technical expertise and/or a pivotal role in the evaluation of SDG2. These include experts or technical staff from: multilateral and bilateral development and humanitarian organizations; academic institutions, including specialized research centres (e.g. 3ie, ALNAP, CGIAR, IFPRI, IDS, ODI);⁵ foundations (e.g. Gates Foundation, Kofi Annan Foundation); think tanks; the private sector; national-level counterparts from evaluation and policy institutions; and Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluators (VOPEs) from regions and countries that could provide reflections on

⁵ 3ie = International Initiative for Impact Evaluation; ALNAP = Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action; CGIAR = formerly known as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research; IFPRI = International Food Policy Research Institute; IDS = Institute of Development Studies; ODI = Overseas Development Institute.

realistic options on the evaluability issues; and delegates from Member States accredited in Rome. Plenary discussions will be open to a wider group of participants from interested organizations and RBA staff members. Criteria for participation in the round-table discussion include – as expert or researcher – specialist knowledge on at least one of the thematic issues; and/or – as delegate – an organizational mandate to influence and guide M&E of SDG2 at global or country level; prior engagement on and experiences with monitoring and evaluating the MDGs; ability to contribute to the seminar (through papers, presentations or other inputs); and significant role as influencer or multiplier in promoting the evaluability of SDG2 at country level. The list of invited participants should not exceed 100 people, to facilitate a focused technical exchange. Invitations will be sent by the heads of evaluation offices of the RBAs.

10. **Sponsored participants.** The seminar will draw from expert inputs on a range of issues related to the evaluability of SDG2. Therefore, RBA convenors of the seminar will sponsor the participation of four keynote speakers and approximately 16 experts with specialist knowledge on selected issues under the four discussion themes. The sponsored participants will be asked to contribute presentations and/or issues papers and actively participate in the seminar discussions. The expenses of other participants will be covered by their own organizations.
11. **Outcomes and follow-up.** The seminar will identify issues affecting the evaluability of SDG2 at global and country levels, and a set of broad actions for RBAs and governments to address those issues.
12. **Place and timing.** The one and a half day seminar will be held at IFAD Headquarters in Rome, Italy on 17-18 November 2015.
13. **Communication and reporting.** The RBAs will undertake communication and outreach activities before and after the seminar, as proposed in the communication strategy for the event (separate document). The proceedings of this event will include the agenda, participant list, abstracts of keynote presentations and links to related materials, summaries of discussion groups, and a summary of issues and ways forward. In order to produce a high-quality final report which can be widely circulated and published online, the working group (through IFAD) will employ a professional writer who will attend the event and support the final documentation. The report will be synthesized into a two-page brief. A short video summary about the event and its conclusions will also be prepared. A website will be developed (hosted by IFAD) to facilitate participants' preparation for the event and to house the final materials.
14. **Management.** Oversight and leadership for the event will be provided by the directors of the RBAs' evaluation offices. A working group comprised of staff members from RBAs' evaluation offices will be responsible for the technical content and overall management of the seminar. The logistics will be coordinated by the Evaluation Communication Unit of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD.