

Update on the Process for Prioritization of the Technical Work of the Organization

I. Background

1. The Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal (IPA) includes a series of actions on the priorities and programmes of the Organization. In line with these actions, the Conference in 2009 approved a set of changes to the Basic Texts, as well as a new results-based Strategic Framework 2010-19, Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2010-13 and Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2010-11, which will help to focus and prioritize FAO's work under an integrated budget covering assessed as well as estimated voluntary contributions. Under the new arrangements the Regional Conferences, Technical Committees and Programme Committee will advise the Council on priority areas of technical work for use in preparation of the programme and budget documents of the Organization.
2. The Conference emphasized the need for improvements in prioritization and recognized that this is a long-term exercise. Therefore, the Secretariat prepared for consideration by the 103rd Session of the Programme Committee (April 2010) an overview of previous prioritization efforts, a timeline for preparation, approval and adjustment of the MTP and PWB 2012-13 during 2010-11, and a possible process for setting priorities under the new arrangements (see document PC 103/4 in Appendix 4).
3. This note provides an update on the process for prioritization of the technical work of the Organization as of early June 2010. Substantive priorities are not covered, as they are a matter for meetings of the Governing Bodies.

II. Prioritization process – timeline and main phases

4. The timeline in 2010-11 for preparation, approval and adjustment of the MTP and PWB 2012-13 under all sources of funds has five main phases with regard to prioritization (steps refer to detailed timeline in Appendix 4).
 - a) **Advice on priorities provided by the Regional Conferences (including regional technical commissions) and Technical Committees** to the Council via the Programme and Finance Committees (steps 1-10, 13, 14) from March to October 2010. It should be noted that the sessions of the Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC) and the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) are scheduled to take place outside of this timeframe in the 2010-11 biennium.
 - b) **Guidance on priorities provided by the Programme and Finance Committees** to Council and by the Council to the Secretariat (steps 11 and 12) during October and November 2010.
 - c) **Preparation by Secretariat of the MTP and PWB 2012-13** (step 15) from October 2010 to February 2011, reflecting guidance provided by the Council on priorities, and translated into action at country, regional and global levels.
 - d) **Governing Body review of and decision on the MTP and PWB 2012-13** (steps 17-20) during March-June 2011.
 - e) **Any necessary adjustments to the PWB 2012-13 based on Conference decisions**, prepared by the Secretariat (Step 21) during July-September 2011, with review by the Programme and Finance Committees and approval by Council (step 22) in October-November 2011.

III. Process measures put in place by Council

5. In considering the recommendations of the Programme Committee (see Appendix 1), the Council in May 2010 acknowledged that the priority-setting cycle during 2010-11 for the 2012-13 biennium would be one of transition. It agreed with the aim to have a systematic and synchronized approach to prioritization in place for the subsequent biennium (see Appendix 2).

6. For 2010-11, the Council endorsed a series of process measures, as recommended by the Programme Committee, intended to ensure that the Regional Conferences and Technical Committees provide structured advice on priorities. As a result, the Independent Chairperson of the Council (ICC), in his new facilitation role, was able to advise the first three Regional Conferences (Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Europe), held during April-May 2010, on how to provide clear recommendations on regional areas of priority action. The Secretariat has prepared supporting documentation on priorities for the June sessions of the Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP) and the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) in line with guidance provided by the Programme Committee and Council. The ICC also facilitated a meeting of the Chairs of the Programme Committee and the Technical Committees on the approach to handling the discussion on priorities in their 2010 Sessions.

IV. Experience with process to date

7. Each Regional Conference in 2010 has an agenda item on *Implementation of the PWB 2010-11 and Areas of Priority Action for the Region in the following biennium*. The starting point for discussion at each of the three Regional Conferences held in April-May was a Secretariat paper setting out the new Strategic Framework, the regional priorities for 2010-11, and proposed regional priorities for the next biennium as formulated by the Regional Offices (see at www.fao.org/unfao/bodies/regconferences/rc2010/index_en.htm). The paper and discussions were informed by related documentation on technical issues prepared in the regions. The three Regional Conferences provided views and recommendations on the prioritization process and documentation, and regional areas of priority action. Relevant extracts from the Reports of the three Regional Conferences are provided in Appendix 3.

8. Each Technical Committee session in 2010 (and COFI in 2011) has an agenda item under which the Committees will provide recommendations for priorities within the relevant Strategic Objectives. The paper prepared by the Secretariat for the 22nd Session of COAG (16-19 June) on *Priorities and Results under the Medium-Term Plan and Programme of Work and Budget 2012-13* (see at www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/018/k8260e.pdf) follows the guidance of the Programme Committee on format. The paper proposes shifts in emphasis within each Strategic Objective of interest to the Committee, starting from the approved results frameworks in the MTP-PWB, and taking into account emerging issues and lessons learned from initial operational planning and major evaluations.

V. Next steps

9. The Secretariat is preparing similar documentation on priorities for the remaining Regional Conference and Technical Committee sessions in 2010 and early 2011. As called for by the Programme Committee and Council, the Secretariat will prepare a synthesis document in August 2010 on the outcome of Regional Conference and Technical Committee discussions on priorities, for consideration by the Programme Committee at its October 2010 Session.

10. The Programme Committee will hold an additional session in early 2011 to consider inputs on priorities from the sessions of NERC and COFI to be held in December 2010 and January 2011, respectively. To ensure a more synchronized consideration of priorities, the Council endorsed the Programme Committee's recommendation that future sessions of the Regional Conferences and Technical Committees be scheduled within the new cycle of Governing Body input to the PWB as approved by Conference, that is within the first three quarters of the first year of the biennium.

11. The CoC-IEE may wish to consider the experience to date with the process of prioritization of the technical work of the Organization.

Appendices

1. Extract of Report of the 103rd Session of the Programme Committee, 12 - 16 April 2010, Item 3: Prioritization of Technical Work of the Organization
2. Extract of Report of the 139th Session of the Council, 17-21 May 2010, Programme planning and priority setting
3. Extracts from Reports of the three Regional Conferences held April-May 2010 related to Areas of Priority Actions in Regions
4. Document PC 103/4 *Prioritization of Technical Work of the Organization*

**Extract of Report of the 103rd Session of the Programme Committee
Rome, 12 - 16 April 2010**

Item 3: Prioritization of Technical Work of the Organization

6. The Committee took note of the significant past efforts by Members and the Secretariat in developing priority setting methodologies, tools and processes. It recognized that priority-setting at FAO was essentially a political process of Members while the Secretariat also had a role in the process of prioritization. It recalled that the Conference had emphasized the need for improvements in prioritization of the technical work of the Organization under the new results-based Medium Term Plan 2010-13.
7. The Committee resolved to focus its own work on improving the prioritization process at FAO over the next four years, recognizing the ongoing and iterative nature of the process and the opportunity to learn from experience. It acknowledged that the priority setting cycle for the upcoming 2012-13 biennium would be one of transition, with the aim to have a systematic approach to prioritization in place for the 2014-15 biennium.
8. The Committee took note of the tight timeline for the first full cycle of results-based planning in 2010-11 leading to the preparation, approval and any necessary adjustment of the PWB 2012-13. It emphasized the importance of receiving clear advice with supporting information from the Regional Conferences and Technical Committees at its October 2010 Session to advise on its consideration of priorities and recommendations to Council.
9. With regard to the 2010 sessions of the Regional Conferences, the Committee noted that the documentation on regional priorities had been prepared by the Secretariat for the three sessions scheduled in April and May. The Committee recommended that the Independent Chairperson of the Council, supported by the Secretariat, take steps to ensure that the Regional Conferences would be in a position to provide clear recommendations on areas of regional priority to Council through the Programme and Finance Committees.
10. With regard to the 2010 sessions of the Technical Committees, the Committee was informed that the documentation on priorities had not yet been finalized by the Secretariat. The Committee therefore recommended that the Independent Chairperson of the Council convene a meeting with the Chairpersons of the Technical Committees and the Programme and Finance Committees to discuss and agree on the approach to handling the discussion of priorities in the Technical Committees. The Committee requested that supporting documentation on priorities be prepared by the Secretariat for the Technical Committees, which should start from the approved results frameworks in the MTP-PWB and take into account emerging issues, lessons learned from initial operational planning, major evaluations and any resulting proposed shifts in emphasis within the relevant Strategic Objectives.
11. The Committee acknowledged its unique role in advising on priority-setting for matters transcending individual Strategic Objectives. The Committee resolved to specifically treat cross-cutting issues as an integral part of its discussion on priorities at its October 2010 Session.
12. In order to facilitate discussions in the October Session, the Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare a summary paper drawing on the outcomes of the Regional Conferences

and Technical Committees on priorities, and giving clear indications on where shifts in emphasis were being recommended.

13. The Committee considered that informal meetings with the Strategy Teams would provide useful input to its discussions of priorities, and resolved to organize such meetings allowing adequate time to feed into the prioritization process.

14. The Committee was concerned that the 30th Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC) and the 29th Committee on Fisheries (COFI) were scheduled to take place after its October 2010 Session. The Committee requested an additional session in early 2011 to consider the reports of NERC and COFI concerning priorities and shoulder the heavy workload in this shorter biennium planning cycle. The Committee recalled that the Conference had eliminated the summary PWB. It recognized that the draft MTP-PWB documentation would not be available until late February and that its recommendations would be considered by the Council in April 2011. The Committee recommended that future sessions of the Technical Committees and Regional Conferences be scheduled within the new cycle of governing body input to the MTP-PWB as approved by Conference.

15. The Committee resolved to undertake a self-assessment of its performance in facilitating priority-setting by the end of the current biennium.

**Extract of Report of the 139th Session of the Council
Rome, 17 - 21 May 2010**

Programme planning and Priority-setting

21. The Council reaffirmed the importance of prioritizing the technical work of the Organization within the new Strategic Framework and Medium Term Plan. It endorsed the series of process measures recommended by the Programme Committee to ensure that the Regional Conferences and Technical Committees provide structured advice to the Programme and Finance Committees and Council on priorities for the 2012-13 biennium. The Council acknowledged that the priority-setting cycle for the 2012-13 biennium would be one of transition, and agreed with the aim to have a systematic and synchronized approach to prioritization in place for the subsequent biennium.

22. The Council requested the Secretariat to provide supporting documentation on prioritization in a timely manner in all languages to enable effective consultations among Members prior to meetings of the relevant Governing Bodies.

23. The Council supported the Committee's request for an additional session in early 2011 to consider, *inter alia*, the Reports of the 30th Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC) and the 29th Committee on Fisheries (COFI), which would take place after the next meetings of the 104th Programme Committee and 140th Session of the Council. The Council endorsed the Programme Committee's recommendation that future sessions of the Regional Conferences and Technical Committees be scheduled within the new cycle of Governing Body input to the PWB as approved by Conference.

**Extracts from Reports of the three Regional Conferences held April-May 2010 related to
Areas of Priority Actions in the Regions**

Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean	Regional Conference for Africa	Regional Conference for Europe
1. Process and documentation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognized the importance of conducting a first complete cycle of planning within the framework of results-based management and pledged to contribute to the process; ▪ recognized that group discussions to identify the priorities of each subregion contributed significantly to FAO's plan of work for the region; ▪ recommended that henceforth the Technical Committee be allowed to hold subregional meetings earlier, in advance of the Regional Conference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appreciated the coherence between the proposed priority areas and the CAADP objectives; ▪ recommended that FAO ensures that sufficient data will be available to monitor the results by the end of 2013. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expected that the regional areas of priority action would help REU to develop coordinated and targeted operational instruments and programmes for FAO's work in the region, including collaboration with partners and mobilization of resources; ▪ stressed that the background document did not provide the basis for a thorough discussion on areas of priority action in the region for the current and future biennia; ▪ recognized that the process of prioritization was work in progress, involving Members and the secretariat, and improvements were to be expected in future documentation; ▪ expected in future a document detailing challenges and shortfalls etc., including their analysis; ▪ consider results of informal consultations such as the one held in Budapest in March 2010; ▪ link elaboration of regional areas of action to indicators in the results frameworks, identification of opportunities for use of the TCP and leveraging of voluntary contributions; ▪ requested that a more detailed breakdown of the proposed priority activities for each Strategic Objective be given with the indication of the required regular and extrabudgetary funding including partnerships; ▪ suggested that this information should be

Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean	Regional Conference for Africa	Regional Conference for Europe
		provided and further dialogue should be carried out between the secretariat and the Executive Committee of the European Commission for Agriculture (ECA), the ECA serving as the formal intersessional forum.
2. Regional Areas of Priority Action		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Endorsed the report on implementation of the PWB 2010-11 and on suggested priority areas for FAO action in the region during the 2012-13 biennium. <p>The subregion of the Caribbean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identified the following priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ risk management ○ food and nutrition security ○ certified quality seeds ○ health and safety ○ climate change ○ transboundary diseases ▪ identified other issues that need to be considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ agricultural insurance ○ agricultural credit ○ South-South cooperation ○ FAO support in accessing existing funds for food security ▪ stressed the need for FAO to devote a specific programme for technical assistance to Haiti. <p>The subregion of Central America, Mexico and Dominican Republic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identified the following priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ family farming ○ territorial rural development ○ integrated water management ○ plant and animal health and food safety ○ sustainable development of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Endorsed the priority areas for 2010-11 and 2012-13 as proposed by the secretariat, taking into account sub-regional and country needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ promote sustainable increase in agriculture production and crop diversification; ○ promote sustainable use and management of natural resources, including land and water, fisheries and forestry; ○ support market access and sanitary measures for better trade; ○ stimulate information and knowledge management; ○ incorporate emergency preparedness and risk management; and, ○ formulate and implement effective agricultural policies, while integrating gender concerns as a cross-cutting issue; ▪ recommended that FAO supports Member Countries to prepare appropriate investment plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agreed that continuation of the present areas of priority action for the 2012-13 biennium was an appropriate approach linked to the four-year MTP, with adjustments to take account of emerging issues and linkages to the reformed Committee on World Food Security, and partnerships; ▪ emphasized that priority should be given to regional activities involving advocacy, policy support, capacity-building, knowledge management and neutral fora for discussion in the following areas of action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ provision of basic global data and statistics; ○ assistance to define national economic, social, food and nutrition policies, with a focus on capacity-building for least-developed countries to meet global expectations and benefit from market opportunities; ○ normative role at global level, as well as capacity-building to reinforce technical and institutional capacities, especially for least developed countries; ○ implementation of food safety, sanitary and phytosanitary standards including global conventions; ○ animal and plant

Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean	Regional Conference for Africa	Regional Conference for Europe
<p>livestock with a focus on small-scale production</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ linkages between small-scale producers and the market <p>▪ identified cross-cutting topics that need to be considered within FAO cooperation in the region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ integrated development of human resources associated with agriculture ○ institutional strengthening to enhance government response capacity ○ review of agricultural policy in the region ○ strengthening capacity for research and technological innovation, knowledge management and access to information, with creation of regional institutional links ○ strengthening of extension, training and technology transfer to small producers ○ discussion and agreement on concepts relating to family farming ○ strengthening of institutional capacities on climate change mitigation and adaptation as related to agriculture ○ development of institutional capacity for the management of financial alternatives. <p>The subregion of South America:</p> <p>▪ identified the following priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ right to adequate food ○ family farming ○ rural development ○ social technologies ○ quality and safety ○ climate change ○ biodiversity <p>▪ also identified gender and youth as cross-cutting themes.</p>		<p>transboundary diseases;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ emergencies and rehabilitation; ○ interface between climate change and agriculture and rural development; ○ gender; ○ conservation and management of plant and animal genetic resources, and ○ sustainable management of forests.

Document PC 103/4

Prioritization of Technical Work of the Organization

April 2010

PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

Hundred and Third Session of the Programme Committee

Rome, 12 - 16 April 2010

PRIORITIZATION OF TECHNICAL WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION

I. Introduction

1. The prioritization of the technical work of the Organization has been under consideration by the governing bodies for many bienna. The Council approved a set of priority-setting criteria in 1995; these were modified based on experience and incorporated in the Strategic Framework 2000-2015 adopted by Conference in 1999; and during 2003-2005 the Programme Committee considered a series of proposals on priority setting in the context of programme planning.
2. In 2005 the Conference decided to undertake the Independent External Evaluation of FAO (IEE) and in 2007 decided to develop an immediate plan of action after a systematic review of the IEE report and its management response. The resulting Immediate Plan of Action (IPA) for FAO Renewal (2009-2011) approved by the Conference in 2008 included a series of measures concerning priorities and programmes of the Organization and reform of governance, programming and budgeting.
3. In 2009 the Conference approved a series of changes to the Basic Texts, as well as a new results-based Strategic Framework 2010-19, Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2010-13 and Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2010-11, that provide a new basis for further prioritization of the technical work of the Organization. Under these new arrangements, the Regional Conferences and Technical Committees will report to the Council, through the Programme and Finance Committees, on priority areas of work which should be taken into account in preparation of the planning, programme and budgetary documents of the Organization.
4. In considering the next steps in IPA implementation, the Conference Committee for IEE Follow-up (CoC-IEE) in 2009 “..recognized that prioritization is a long-term exercise dependant on the availability of adequate complementary information from the Technical Committees and Regional Conferences, which should be provided in the first full cycle of results-based planning in 2010-11.” The Conference in 2009 “...emphasized the need for improvements in prioritization” and specifically requested COAG, COFI and COFO to consider priorities for FAO’s technical work at their next sessions.
5. This paper provides an overview of prioritization efforts to date, sets out a roadmap for preparation, approval and adjustment of the MTP and PWB 2012-13, and proposes an approach for advising on priorities by the Regional Conferences, Technical Committees and Programme and Finance Committees within this roadmap.

II. Consideration of Prioritization prior to 2006

6. Prioritization has been addressed on numerous occasions in FAO inter-governmental fora. This took place either via specific items on the agenda, especially in the Programme Committee, or when discussing MTP and PWB proposals.

7. Discussions have covered three main aspects of prioritization:

- *definitions* and *semantics*, especially to take account of the specificity of UN system contexts, as opposed to concepts, terminologies and practices widely used by national governments or individual institutions;
- *methodologies* and *tools* to assist with priority-setting;
- *process*, including the involvement of various instances and how to ensure complementarity of advice, and the articulation and scope of forward-planning documents, especially in conveying the necessary priority choices inherent in proposals.

8. Prioritization has been defined as a process of making relative choices among areas of work which eventually lead to the allocation of resources. At FAO the setting of priorities is essentially a political process in view of the inter-governmental nature of the Organization. It is also a complex process in view of FAO's worldwide coverage and action at global, regional and country levels; the breadth of its mandate; and the type of products and services provided to member countries.

9. In terms of methodological tools, an important historical milestone was the approval of a set of priority-setting criteria by the Council at its 110th session of November 1995. Subject to minor successive adjustments, the criteria for priority setting have been consistently confirmed for use during the formulation and examination of the MTP and PWB. The Strategic Framework 2000-2015 recognized that the development of practical and effective criteria was an evolutionary process and that, based on experience, the criteria for priority-setting presented in *Annex I* would be applied.

10. Over the 2003-2005 period, the Programme Committee examined as specific items on its agenda, various aspects of priority-setting.¹ As regards possible tools to assist in prioritization, the Committee addressed the merits of such supportive information as:

- the results of multi-criteria analysis (including the possibility to apply different "weights" to the criteria being used) especially if they could assist with "relative ranking" of priorities;
- compendia of views expressed by Members at pertinent FAO's inter-governmental instances on the degree of priority they attached to specific programmes and activities; and
- historical patterns of resource allocation to substantive programmes.

11. There was a general feeling that such supportive information had considerable limitations and that it should not, in any event, detract from the recognition that priority-setting was essentially a political process, during which compromises had to be found among Members in seeking to reconcile diverging or different interests.²

12. The Committee also addressed the potential of auto-evaluations in assisting with priority-setting. It recognized the valuable insights which auto-evaluations could provide, at the same time acknowledging their limitations in terms of priority-setting decisions at higher levels of aggregation, since they are generally directed at specific component activities or projects within broader substantive areas.³

¹ PC 89/4, PC 90/4, PC 91/7, PC 93/4a

² CL 124/14, CL 125/3, CL 127/11

³ CL 128/11

13. As regards process, there were many discussions on specific aspects, in particular concerning the format and programme structures used in programme planning and reporting documents, including the messages they could convey in terms of priority-setting. These have now been overtaken by the revised cycle of governing body input to the programme and budget process approved by Conference in the wake of the IPA.

III. The IEE, IPA and new Strategic Framework

14. The IEE recommended the development of a new, clearly enunciated corporate strategy and medium-term plan covering the full range of FAO work. This new strategy was intended to provide a guiding framework to direct the Organization's human and financial resources to a set of priorities reflecting the following criteria, which were applied by the IEE in analysing the FAO technical programme:

- priority in terms of needs expressed by Members, including those from the national medium-term priority frameworks;
- topicality and interest to providers of extra-budgetary funds;
- use of the Organization's potential comparative strengths, considering existing capacity and track record, cross-disciplinarity and integration of advocacy, normative work and technical cooperation;
- potential for partnership – based on FAO's absolute and dynamic comparative advantage;
- set the general magnitude of resource requirements for its objectives, fully integrating extra-budgetary voluntary contributions into the plan.

15. The IPA stipulated that the elements of the new Strategic Framework and Medium Term Plan were to be based on an integrated results-based structure, that would permit prioritising and focusing work in line with Members' needs and clarify the means-ends relationships through which FAO would contribute to agreed impacts in member countries. The enhanced results-based approach to programming consists of a hierarchy of:

- a) Three *Global Goals* representing the fundamental development impacts in the areas of FAO's mandate which the member countries aim to achieve;
- b) *Strategic Objectives* contributing to the Global Goals and expressing the impact, in countries, regions and globally, expected to be achieved by Members with a contribution from FAO;
- c) *Organizational Results* defining the outcome expected from the use by member countries and partners of FAO's products and services in the pursuit of each Strategic Objective; and
- d) *Core Functions* representing the critical means of action to be employed by FAO to achieve results, drawing on the Organization's comparative advantages.

16. In line with the new results-based hierarchy, the Strategic Framework 2010-19 and MTP 2010-13 elaborated a set of results frameworks with 56 Organizational Results specifying how the Organization would contribute to the achievement of each of the eleven Strategic Objectives and two Functional Objectives. Each Organizational Result represents a focused "package" of interventions which provide a blueprint for FAO's actions, providing:

- a limited number of key performance indicators with associated two and four-year targets, to form the basis of accountability for achievements to Members;
- a set of primary tools specifying precisely how FAO would intervene to achieve each outcome; and
- a summary of which of the core functions of the Organization were to be applied.

17. The IPA recognized that prioritization and focusing of FAO's work is essential at all levels of the results-based framework, but is particularly critical at the level of Organizational Results, whereby:

- absolute priority should be accorded to Members' existing needs and meeting emerging challenges, combined with
- a structured analysis of the potential for application of the Organization's strengths, as embodied in the core functions, including considerations such as organizational performance in each area of work; existing technical capacity, including for cross-disciplinarity; and the integration of strengths in advocacy, normative work and technical cooperation.

18. Other major tools stipulated in the IPA to help inform the development of the Organizational Results and Strategic Objectives include:

- a) National Medium-Term Priority Frameworks (NMTPFs) developed with individual governments to focus FAO's efforts on national needs;
- b) structured and consultative development of sub-regional and regional areas of priority action, including the Regional Conferences in the consultation; and;
- c) at the global level, a limited number of Impact Focus Areas.

19. The National Medium-Term Priority Frameworks (NMTPF) and sub-regional and regional areas of priority action currently represent work-in-progress. The NMTPFs are not yet prepared for many countries or, where available, have yet to be formalized and agreed with national authorities. Initial versions of areas of priority action at regional level are being prepared for the Regional Conferences, but these first iterations are necessarily limited by the quality of the "bottom up" information coming from country level. This illustrates the long-term, iterative nature of the prioritization exercise.

20. Through a revision of the timeline of the major governing body sessions, the IPA set-forth a structured process to allow systematic and timely Member review and input on priorities to be used by the Secretariat in developing proposals for the Strategic Framework, MTP and PWB:

- the role of the Regional Conferences has been strengthened to become a full part of the governance process, reporting to the Council through the Programme and Finance Committees on areas of priority action at the regional level to be taken into account in the preparation of the planning, programme and budgetary documents;
- the Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP), the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), the Committee on Forestry (COFO), the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) (the so-called Technical Committees), whose timing was moved forward from the second to the first year of the biennium to permit timely input into the development of the MTP and PWB, are to advise the Council through the Programme and Finance Committees on programme and budget matters including technical priorities;
- the Programme and Finance Committees will receive the Regional Conference and Technical Committee advice on priorities, and will be required to make clear recommendations on policies, strategies and priorities to the Council;
- the Council will consider the advice of the Regional Conferences, Technical Committees and Programme and Finance Committees in making clear recommendations to Conference on the content of the MTP and PWB, including on the budget level.

IV. Road map to MTP and PWB 2012-13 including prioritization

21. Based on the revised cycle of governance input to the programme and budget process and the calendar of FAO governing body sessions 2010-11⁴, the Secretariat has prepared a draft timeline, shown in *Annex II*, setting out 22 steps in the preparation, approval and adjustment of the MTP and PWB 2012-13. With regard to prioritization, the timeline has five main phases.

⁴ Approved by CL 138 for 2010 and noted for 2011

- a) Advice on priorities provided by the Regional Conferences (including regional technical commissions) and Technical Committees to the Council via the Programme and Finance Committees (steps 1-10, 13, 14) from March to Oct 2010. It should be noted that for the cycle of governing body meetings in 2010-11, the sessions of the Regional Conference for the Near East and the Committee on Fisheries will take place outside of this timeframe, while the 30th Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific will take place from 27 September to 1 October 2010.
- b) Guidance on priorities provided by the Programme and Finance Committees to Council and by the Council to the Secretariat (steps 11 and 12) during October and November 2010.
- c) Preparation by Secretariat of the draft MTP and PWB 2012-13 (step 15) from October 2010 to February 2011, reflecting guidance provided by the Council on priorities.
- d) Governing body review of and decision on the draft MTP and PWB 2012-13 (steps 17-20) during March-June 2011.
- e) Any necessary adjustments to the PWB 2012-13 based on Conference decisions, prepared by the Secretariat (Step 21) during July-September 2011, with review by the Programme and Finance Committees and approval by Council (step 22) in October-November 2011.

22. Recognizing that priority-setting is a long-term exercise, and taking into account past experience and the new results-based Strategic Framework, an approach to providing advice and guidance on prioritization of the technical work of the Organization is proposed within the first phase (Regional Conferences and Technical Committee advice) of preparation of the MTP and PWB 2012-13, based on an overview of requirements for the Programme Committee in the second phase.

23. As regards priority-setting, and as provided in the new cycle of preparation and governing body decision making on programme and budget matters, the Programme Committee, at its session in the second half of the first year of the biennium, would normally review and provide Council with guidance on:

- the performance implementation report for the previous biennium, including performance against indicators (which will only be available in 2012 for the new results frameworks);
- budgetary and implementation performance in the second half of the year, and any necessary adjustments to the agreed PWB;
- the reports of the Regional Conferences and Technical Committees on programme and budget matters, including priorities for the next biennium; and
- major evaluations.

24. In providing guidance to the Council on prioritization, being the relative choices in the technical work of the Organization, the Programme Committee will need to consider any need to adjust the results frameworks of the MTP and PWB, including the application of the core functions and any changes in emphasis between and within Objectives (i.e. between Organizational Results), based on emerging challenges and issues, expressions of technical and regional priorities, and implementation performance to date.

Process for advice on priorities by the Regional Conferences

25. In their new functions, the Regional Conferences will:

- advise on and identify the special problems of their respective regions and priority areas of work which should be taken into account in the preparation of the planning, programme and budget documents of the Organization and suggest adjustments to these documents;
- review and advise on the performance of the Organization in the region in contributing to the achievement of results against relevant performance indicators, including any pertinent evaluations.

26. The Secretariat has prepared, for the first three Regional Conferences taking place during April-May 2010 (LARC, ARC, ERC), a document that presents the issues and priorities that FAO will be addressing in the region during 2010-11 (based on the approved PWB 2010-11) and the proposed priorities for 2012-13. The priorities for the current and next biennium contribute to addressing the regional challenges and needs in food, agriculture and rural development that fall under FAO's Strategic Objectives.

27. In this first experience in advising on regional areas of priority action for FAO, the expectations should be tempered by several factors:

- this is the first year that the regional conference will perform its new mandate and the reform of the ways of working of Regional Conferences have just begun, so that agendas are crowded;
- the likelihood that not all sectors covered by the Strategic Framework will be represented among the delegates;
- varying levels on consultations with regional and sub-regional economic organizations and stakeholders;
- limited number of NMPTF's prepared and available as a major instrument to inform country regional and sub-regional priorities;
- since the new MTP/PWB only started from 2010, there is no basis to take into account performance in this context;
- the challenge in focussing the global priorities while preserving the regional perspective.

28. The aim, therefore, should be for the Regional Conferences to provide advice in their reports on the priorities for technical work proposed by the Secretariat for action within and among the Strategic Objectives.

Process for advice on priorities by technical committees

29. In line with the Conference Resolution 1/2008 on the IPA, some of the technical committees (COAG, COFI, COFO) were asked to provide advice on priorities during preparation of the MTP 2010-13 and PWB 2010-11 during 2009. Lessons can be drawn from this experience to inform the process for advice on priorities in 2010.

30. At its 100th session in October 2008, the Programme Committee recommended that technical committees provide advice on prioritization based on drafts of the results frameworks, in the format agreed in the IPA, for the Strategic Objectives most relevant to each Technical Committee.⁵ At its 101st session in May 2009, the Committee recognized the constraints experienced with regard to advice on priorities, due in part to the novelty of the enhanced results-based approach and also to timing constraints. The advice was generally more in terms of calling for additional activities and resources, without indication of areas of lower priority, although useful guidance for further refinement of the results frameworks was provided. The Committee recommended that the documentation for future sessions of Technical Committees be conducive to greater input on priority-setting, and that guidance to the Technical Committees should be more specific in the next round.⁶

⁵ CL 135/5 paragraphs 9-14

⁶ CL 136/9 paragraphs 10-13

31. In preparing such guidance to the Technical Committees, the Programme Committee may wish to take into account the following factors and suggestions:

- the MTP/PWB presents indicators of achievement with four- and two-year targets at the level of Organizational Results, for which the Organization is held accountable;
- since the new MTP/PWB only started from 2010, there is no basis to take into account performance against the indicators and targets in the Organizational Results frameworks at sessions of the Technical Committees in this first biennium of the new cycle;
- thus the basis for changing priorities within and among the results frameworks will be changes in the external environment, refinements being undertaken by the Secretariat within Organizational Results during operational planning for 2010-11, the results of evaluations, and views expressed by Members;
- the Technical Committees will advise on priorities on a limited set of Strategic Objectives within their mandate and thus do not have the basis for advising on priorities among Strategic Objectives as a whole. In fact, when considering the draft MTP/PWB in July 2009, the Committee recognized that the set of Organizational Results presented in the MTP was a first attempt to express the substantive priorities of the Organization, and that advice from the Technical Committees had been applied at this level.⁷

32. Therefore, it is proposed that the Technical Committees consider priorities at the level of Organizational Results within pertinent Strategic Objectives, providing advice on relative shifts of emphasis within and among the Organizational results, taking account of emerging challenges, in particular those of a cross-cutting nature, refinement of indicators and targets, and the results of evaluations.

⁷ CL 137/3 paragraphs 11-13

Annex I: Criteria for Priority Setting of the Strategic Framework 2000-15

33. Criteria will be used to determine the priority to be accorded to the medium-term programme entities that will contribute to achievement of the strategic objectives. The development of practical and effective criteria will be an evolutionary process. The following criteria, based on experience, will be applied:

- conformity to the Organization's mandate and relevance to the strategic objectives of the Organization as specified in the Strategic Framework, keeping in view the need to maintain a balance between normative and operational activities;
- expressed priority and usefulness to a broad section of the membership or to special groups identified by the governing bodies (least-developed countries, the small island developing states, etc.);
- justification, in terms of FAO's comparative advantage, potential for synergies through collaboration with partners, and avoidance of duplication with the work of other institutions;
- quality of programme design, including clarity of the causal link between the inputs provided and the planned outputs and objectives;
- probable cost-efficiency of the programme entity in mode of operation, including the use made of internal and external partnerships;
- likelihood of achieving desired objectives and substantive and sustainable impact;
- extent to which the achievement of objectives can be evaluated through the criteria and indicators proposed.

Annex II: Draft Timeline of Preparation, Approval and Adjustment of the PWB 2012-13

Step	Process/Milestones	Timing
1	Preparation of documents on regional areas of priority action – for review and advice by Regional Conferences	March 2010 for LARC, ARC and ERC; August 2010 for APRC; October 2010 for NERC.
2	Preparation of documents on priorities under Strategic Objectives – review and guidance by the technical committees (<i>103rd Programme Committee and 132nd Finance Committee meetings 12-16 April</i>)	April 2010 for CCP and COAG; August 2010 for COFO and CFS; December 2010 for COFI
3	<i>31st Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC)</i>	<i>26-30 April 2010</i>
4	<i>26th Regional Conference for Africa (ARC)</i>	<i>3-7 May 2010</i>
5	<i>27th Regional Conference for Europe (ERC)</i>	<i>10-14 May 2010</i>
6	<i>68th Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP)</i>	<i>14-16 June 2010</i>
7	<i>22nd Committee on Agriculture (COAG)</i>	<i>16-19 June 2010</i>
8	<i>30th Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC)</i>	<i>27 Sept – 1 Oct 2010</i>
9	<i>20th Committee on Forestry (COFO)</i>	<i>4-8 October 2010</i>
10	<i>36th Committee on World Food Security (CFS)</i>	<i>11-14 October, 2010</i>
11	<i>104th Programme Committee and 133rd Finance Committees – review recommendations of the Regional Conferences and technical committees to-date and provide advice on priorities to be taken into account in the formulation of the MTP and PWB 2012-13</i>	<i>25-29 October 2010</i>
12	<i>140th Council – review of the advice of the Regional Conferences, technical committees, Programme/Finance Committee; advice to the Secretariat on priorities for the MTP and PWB 2012-13</i>	<i>29 Nov-3 Dec 2010</i>
13	<i>30th Regional Conference for the Near East</i>	<i>4-8 December 2010 (possible change compared to calendar approved to 138th session of Council)</i>
14	<i>29th Committee on Fisheries</i>	<i>31 Jan – 4 Feb 2011</i>
15	Strategy Teams and Organizational units prepare revisions to MTP 2010-13 and contributions to PWB 2012-13	November 2010-February 2011; dispatch to Programme and Finance Committees by 21 February 2011
16	<i>Informal meeting of interested Members and other potential sources of extra-budgetary funds and partnership, to exchange information on extra-budgetary funding requirements</i>	<i>First quarter of 2011</i>
17	<i>105th Programme Committee and 134th Finance Committee – review of MTP and full PWB 2012-13</i>	<i>21-25 March 2011</i>
18	Dispatch of full PWB 2012-13 to Members (90 days before Conference)	<i>25 March 2011</i>

Step	Process/Milestones	Timing
19	<i>141st Council – review of MTP and full PWB 2012-13; recommendation of budget level to Conference</i>	<i>11-15 April 2011</i>
20	<i>37th Conference – decision on budget level 2012-13</i>	<i>25 June – 2 July 2011</i>
21	Preparation of 2012-13 results-based work plans based on Conference- approved budget.	July-December 2011
22	<i>106th Programme Committee and 135th Finance Committee – review of PWB adjustments</i> <i>143rd CL – approval of PWB adjustments</i>	<i>10-14 October 2011</i> <i>21-25 November 2011</i>