

**Uzbekistan Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation
Validation workshop (Virtual)**

24 February 2022

Introductory Statement by Ms. Dina Saleh

NEN Regional Director of behalf of IFAD Management

Words: 793 words

Excellency, Mr. Shukhrat Vafaev, Deputy-Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade;

Excellency, Mr. Kakhramon Yuldashev, Deputy-Minister of Agriculture

Excellency, Mr. Otabek Akbarov, Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations' Rome-based agencies,

Distinguished participants;

Dear colleagues;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I. Introductory remarks and overall context.

1. It is my great pleasure to convey a statement on behalf of Mr Donal Brown, the Associate Vice President of Programme Management Department of IFAD and IFAD management for the validation workshop of the Uzbekistan Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation (CSPE). Let me thank above all the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, but also the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD, for successfully conducting and concluding this evaluation – despite the challenges brought on by the COVID19 pandemic.

2. Since joining IFAD in 2011, Uzbekistan has been an important partner. The Fund has approved 3 rural development programmes amounting to USD 435 million [including USD 200 million of World Bank parallel financing], with IFAD's investment of USD 130 million. This reflects both Government's substantial contribution and ownership, as well as the increasingly strong partnership between IFAD and Uzbekistan.
3. As acknowledged by the evaluation, IFAD responded to the historical policy shift towards agricultural diversification by pioneering support to the horticulture and dairy sub-sectors. With an overall country programme aiming at directly and indirectly benefitting close to 500,000 rural people, IFAD has targeted small-scale producers and dekhani farmers, as well as rural women and youth.
4. The completed Horticultural Support Project has exceeded its outreach target by 50%, reaching in total over 100,000 people, with the objectives to increase agricultural outputs, improve assets of value chain actors and generate incomes for the target groups.
5. Building on the lessons learnt from this initial investment, the two ongoing projects continue introducing innovative approaches such as climate-resilient rural infrastructure, support to multi-stakeholder platforms and strengthening of market linkages.

II. A timely Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation

6. The Evaluation gives us an opportunity to take stock of the IFAD country programme in Uzbekistan, draw lessons from the experience, and – as we move forward – adjust to the

weaknesses and build on the successes in the context of the rapidly evolving context of Uzbekistan.

7. The evaluation acknowledges the relevance of the country programme in supporting the contribution of small-scale producers and dekhan farmers, women and youth, to the development of commercially viable businesses and the revitalization of the rural economy.
8. Management appreciates the recommendations provided by this evaluation and recognises the need for stronger focus on areas such as knowledge management, partnership development and policy engagement. Furthermore, management concurs with the assessment and the recommendations of the evaluation to continue embedding targeting strategies at the core of IFAD's intervention, invest in robust Monitoring and Evaluation systems and enhance programme management support.

III. Evaluation laying the ground for a successful Country strategy design

9. In fact, this evaluation comes at the right time. The findings and lessons will inform the upcoming design of the new Country Strategic Opportunities Programme, or COSOP.
10. The COSOP will take as its starting point the Government of Uzbekistan's priorities for the rural sector set out in the Agri-food Development Strategy 2020 – 2030 as well as the New Uzbekistan Strategy 2022 – 2026, in particular the goals of doubling farmers' income and reducing poverty.

11. Management would also like to recognise the Government's commitment to sustainable and inclusive food systems as reflected in Uzbekistan's National Food Systems Pathway towards 2030.
12. Under the IFAD12 financing cycle, the new Country strategy will offer opportunities for continued engagement through a menu of financial instruments and non-lending activities. For instance, there will be opportunities to access additional funds through the new Borrowed Resources Access Mechanism and dedicated funding to increase climate resilience, but also opportunities to work with the new private sector window and explore new implementation modalities such as a programmatic approach. This enhanced Business model offers solid ground for strong alignment and partnerships opportunities in the next 6 years.

IV. The way forward for a renewed partnership

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. Allow me to conclude by commending the commitment of the Government of Uzbekistan to strengthening partnership with IFAD. The historical increase of Uzbekistan's replenishment contribution will help IFAD double its impact on the Sustainable development goal 1 (no poverty) and 2 (zero hunger) and effectively improve climate resilience of rural people across the world.
14. Moreover, Management believes that IFAD country presence in Uzbekistan will be an additional step to forge stronger partnerships, leverage proximity and better serve beneficiaries.

15. Let me close by expressing the hope that together we will use this evaluation to build a more relevant, effective and efficient IFAD country programme, that ultimately delivers the best possible development impact for the rural people of Uzbekistan.
16. Thank you.