



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Sixtieth session
22-28 April 2004
Shanghai, China

**PROGRAMME PLANNING AND EVALUATION: REALIGNMENT
OF THE WORK OF THE REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

(Item 5 (d) of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

This document presents a description of the progress made by the secretariat in the proposed realignment of the work of three regional institutions, namely, the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT), the Regional Coordination Centre for Research and Development of Coarse Grains, Pulses, Roots and Tuber Crops in the Humid Tropics of Asia and the Pacific (CGPRT Centre) and the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP). It also describes the overall strategy and direction in the work programme of the newly established Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery (APCAEM) in terms of its alignment with the programmatic priorities of ESCAP.

Introduction

1. This document presents the progress made by the secretariat in the proposed realignment of the work of three regional institutions, namely, the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT), the Regional Coordination Centre for Research and Development of Coarse Grains, Pulses, Roots and Tuber Crops in the Humid Tropics of Asia and the Pacific (CGPRT Centre) and the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP). It also presents the overall strategy and direction in the work programme of the newly established Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery (APCAEM) in terms of its alignment with the programmatic priorities of ESCAP.

I. BACKGROUND

2. In the context of ESCAP's broader revitalization efforts, endorsed by the Commission at its fifty-eighth session in 2002, the secretariat in early 2003 conducted independent evaluations of the three regional institutions, with a view to assessing their current roles and realigning their work with the programmatic priorities of ESCAP. The objectives of the evaluation exercise were to review the operational, institutional and programming needs of the three regional institutions and to formulate recommendations on how each of them could better serve the needs of the ESCAP members and associate members in its respective mandated area on a long-term sustainable basis. The newly created APCAEM was excluded from the evaluation exercise.

3. The following are the main findings and recommendations of each of the evaluations, particularly as regards the programmatic aspect.

A. APCTT

4. The evaluation found the professional quality of the staff members of APCTT to be high and the institution's record in capacity-building to be good. However, the small number of contributing members to APCTT was seen as affecting its financial sustainability and the effectiveness of its programmes detrimentally. It was also observed that APCTT was generally not well known in the region, as the thrust of its work was targeted at the least developed countries. As much of APCTT's work concentrated on low technology, its programme did not reflect the different development levels and technological needs of the region. The programmatic links with ESCAP were also considered to be tenuous.

5. Recommendations included developing strong programmatic links with ESCAP and adopting a programme strategy that would balance the needs of the subregions. The evaluator also encouraged greater participation of the private sector and technology institutes in the work programme implementation of APCTT.

B. CGPRT Centre

6. It was found that the CGPRT Centre had performed relatively well but lacked the critical mass of Professionals to be able to make an impact. The Centre's declining financial support from member countries was seen as being attributable to (a) the outputs of recent activities that did not effectively match the countries' priority needs and (b) the lack of effective interaction with key institutes and persons in member countries. Furthermore, it was pointed out that the Centre had not been so effective in generating regional networks among relevant institutions and that its activities were not needs-oriented.

7. Among the recommendations were to redesign the Centre's programme to match the priority needs of member countries and to better align it with ESCAP's focus on poverty reduction. Long-term partnerships with national institutes should also be established to undertake joint activities, while fostering links with other agricultural research institutes. CGPRT Centre should also raise annual financial resources and increase the number of Professional staff.

C. SIAP

8. The evaluation found that SIAP was generally performing well within its current niche. It had built a good reputation within the region, and its work was highly regarded and supported by national statistical offices, particularly by least developed countries. With the strong support of the Government of Japan, SIAP also appeared to be financially secure. While SIAP had focused primarily on the delivery of statistical training courses, it also had considerable potential to develop into a coordination agency for statistical training in the region. However, the evaluator observed that programmatic links with ESCAP were weak and should be further strengthened in support of ESCAP's work programme, particularly in support of monitoring the progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

9. The evaluator recommended that SIAP position itself as the regional coordination agency for statistical training and significantly expand its activities to better meet the statistical training needs of the region. Its focus on ESCAP's priority themes should also be sharpened, while adopting a more strategic and systematic approach to planning and evaluation.

II. REVIEW OF THE STATUS OF THE REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS BY THE COMMISSION AT ITS FIFTY-NINTH SESSION

10. The findings and recommendations of the three regional institutions, along with the action plans proposed by the secretariat in follow-up to the specific recommendations, were reviewed by the Commission at its fifty-ninth session. The Commission strongly supported the realignment of the work of the regional institutions concerned within the framework of ESCAP's thematic priorities. The specific views and recommendations of the Commission with respect to the programmatic realignment of the institutions included the following.

/...

11. **APCTT.** In order to improve the effectiveness of APCTT activities, the Centre should engage in a more thorough needs assessment of its member countries. Comprehensive programme planning should also be undertaken to ensure the allocation of reasonable financial sources.
12. **CGPR Centre.** The Centre should realign its programme of work with that of ESCAP and the three thematic priorities, particularly poverty reduction, and expand its programme activities to better serve the needs of member countries.
13. **SIAP.** The Commission noted SIAP's effective efforts in promoting statistical capabilities in the member countries. The Commission held the view that SIAP was well-placed to take on the important role of coordinating the delivery of statistical training in the region with other agencies and institutions. It agreed that SIAP's current courses had to be designed more explicitly in order to respond to the thematic priorities of ESCAP and the Millennium Development Goals. It also recommended that regular monitoring and evaluation be undertaken to assess the contribution of SIAP activities to ESCAP's programme achievements.

III. PROGRESS BY THE SECRETARIAT IN REALIGNING THE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE REGIONAL INSTITUTES

14. With respect to the programmatic realignment of the three regional institutions and the alignment of the newly established APCAEM, the Executive Secretary requested the Programme Management Division to provide the regional institutions with active support in strategic planning of their work programmes. The aim was not only to obtain better coherence between the work programmes of ESCAP and the regional institutions, but also to achieve a greater needs-orientation, clearer focus and more efficient use of available resources.
15. Furthermore, under the existing statutes of the regional institutions, the work programmes of the regional institutions are approved by their respective governing boards and are not subject to the established procedures for intergovernmental review by the Commission as well as various global intergovernmental review bodies (Committee for Programme and Coordination, Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, Fifth Committee and the General Assembly). The secretariat will ensure that appropriate intergovernmental review of the programmes of work of each regional institution is undertaken through relevant revision of the current procedures.

A. Training and programme planning workshops

16. In line with the directives of the Executive Secretary, the secretariat has begun the process of training and consultations with staff members of all regional institutions to assist them in developing results-based work programmes aligned with ESCAP's programmatic priorities and its expected accomplishments.

17. As a first step towards realigning of the work of the three regional institutions, the secretariat is helping to transform them into results-oriented organizations in line with the ongoing initiatives of ESCAP. Beginning in February 2004, the secretariat organized training and programme planning workshops for the staff members of the regional institutions concerned. The objective of the training was twofold: (a) to equip the staff members with the tools and skills necessary to put results-based planning and management into practice within their respective regional institutions and (b) to link clearly the institutional work programmes with the objectives and expected accomplishments of the relevant ESCAP subprogrammes.

18. The workshops, led by staff of the Programme Management Division with the participation of the substantive ESCAP staff concerned, introduced staff members of the regional institutions to the concepts of results-based planning and management, based on the logical framework approach. In parallel with the reform efforts under way at ESCAP, the workshops sought to steer the regional institutions away from activity-focused to more results-based approaches to their work and encouraged integration of a performance dimension in all aspects of their institutional work programmes. It was expected that the trained staff members would in turn train other staff at their respective duty stations in the concepts and application of the results-based approach.

19. The first workshop, conducted for the staff of the CGPRT Centre, proved to be highly constructive. In addition to being acquainted with the conceptual aspects of results-based planning and management (including setting clear and realistic goals and targets, planning activities to achieve desired results and developing indicators to measure results), extensive discussions also took place on the institutional stocktaking of the current role of the Centre and the substantive issues to be tackled.

20. With the participation of the staff concerned at ESCAP, the CGPRT Centre staff further applied their newly acquired tools and skills to develop a long-term strategic work plan for the priority activities, taking into consideration the comparative advantages of the Centre. The work plan also took into account the needs of the ESCAP members and associate members and was linked to the programme priorities of ESCAP and the expected accomplishments of specific subprogrammes as contained in the biennial programme of work.

21. During the workshops, extensive consultations among staff of the regional institutions and ESCAP also took place to discuss ideas on joint project proposals, which would further strengthen collaboration and realignment. It was agreed that future project proposals by the regional institutions would directly seek to contribute to the objectives of the relevant ESCAP subprogrammes in the biennial programme of work.

22. The secretariat continues to provide support to the regional institutions in refining the draft work plans produced during the workshops. Results from the initial workshop with the CGPRT Centre also contributed to the further refinement of the approaches to be used for realignment of SIAP and APCTT, the workshops for which are tentatively scheduled to take place in April 2004.

B. The programmatic alignment of APCAEM

23. APCAEM was established in China in 2003 with strong financial support from the Government of China. The secretariat has assisted staff of the regional institution in developing a results-oriented programme of work that is closely aligned with the objectives of the ESCAP subprogramme on Trade and investment under the theme of managing globalization.

24. In line with the overarching objective of the ESCAP subprogramme on trade and investment “to enhance the capacity of ESCAP members and associate members to integrate effectively into the world economy through sustained trade and investment”, the work of APCAEM is aimed at strengthening the capacity of its members in agro-based enterprise development, with a focus on the promotion of cost-effective agricultural machinery and associated engineering practices, which would enable them to benefit effectively from related trade and investment opportunities. To achieve capacity-building in this area, APCAEM will focus on relevant technology transfer (with particular focus in rural small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)), information networking, human resources development and policy analysis. APCAEM will also assist countries in developing policies for agricultural mechanization and modernization.

25. Specifically, the activities of APCAEM will be closely linked with the work of the ESCAP subprogramme on Trade and investment as follows:

- **Trade policy.** Conducting research and studies on global and regional trade policy issues related to agriculture and rural development, with a focus on trade policy issues for rural SMEs;
- **Trade efficiency and facilitation.** Promoting trade facilitation and capacity-building for export promotion for rural SMEs;
- **Investment and enterprise development.** Promoting investment and SME development in agro-based industries and export promotion by agro-based small and medium-sized industries.

26. In terms of its vision and strategy, APCAEM seeks to become a “centre of excellence” in Asia and the Pacific for promoting cost-effective technologies for rural farmers and agro-industrial linkages for productivity improvements, thereby contributing to improved regional capacity to benefit from increased global and regional trade and investment flows.

C. Next steps

27. Much progress has been made in realigning the future work of the regional institutions with the thematic priorities of the secretariat in pursuance of the directive of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission. By mid-2004, the strategic direction of all the regional institutions will have been developed fully as part of the realignment exercise. This will be followed by the development and incorporation of the work programmes of the regional institutions into the ESCAP programme of work for the biennium 2006-2007. Hence, the results of the realignment will be reflected in the ESCAP programme of work for consideration by the Commission at its sixty-first session.