The Russian Federation and FAO
Partnering for global food and nutrition security

The Russian Federation and FAO are engaged in cooperation supporting a wide array of development initiatives in the region and around the world. What was already a strong partnership took a further step forward in 2015 with the opening of an FAO Liaison Office in Moscow. The Russian Federation hosted and chaired the 31st FAO Regional Conference for Europe (16-18 May 2018, Voronezh) (ERC). The Chairperson of the 31st Session of the ERC was invited to present the Report of the Regional Conference on programme and budget matters to the FAO Council (4-8 June 2018).

Food safety and antimicrobial resistance

The importance that Russia attaches to cooperation for food safety and international food standards programmes is reflected in the concrete support it provides to FAO’s food and nutrition-related initiatives.

An international conference on “Food Safety and Risk Analysis” was held in Sochi on 18-19 May 2017 with the support of the Russian Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing (Rospotrebnadzor). With 227 delegates from 23 countries, including government officials, representatives of international organizations, the private sector, consumer protection agencies and academic community, the conference highlighted the need for strengthened national food safety regulatory frameworks, including an increased emphasis on collecting data in support of science-based food safety risk assessment at regional and international levels.

As part of its global efforts to counter antimicrobial resistance, the Russian Federation is ready to strengthen its cooperation with FAO in this field. Within this context, an FAO project of nearly US$3.3 million is helping national authorities of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan address the threats posed by antimicrobial-resistant microbes in agriculture and food systems.

The 31st FAO Regional Conference for Europe and Central Asia

The city of Voronezh, in southern Russia, was the venue for the FAO’s 31st Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) in 2018. Located in the heart of Russia’s world-famous “Black Soil” region, the city is an important agricultural and urban centre with more than 1 million inhabitants.

FAO Director-General has expressed his gratitude to the Russian Federation as host, noting that this reflects “the spirit of increased collaboration between FAO and Russia.”

“One of the reasons for choosing the city of Voronezh as the conference venue was to highlight the contribution that this region has made and continues to make to global food security and the development of rural areas,” said Vladimir Rakhmanin, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia, during his visit to Voronezh in 2017. On that occasion, in recognition of the support by Voronezh region to the activities of FAO, he presented an FAO commemorative medal to the Governor.

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Food loss and waste reduction

FAO has been promoting SAVE FOOD, the Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste (FLW) reduction in Russia with a series of events to bring the FLW issue into the limelight of national debate in the country.

“I would like to see the Russian Federation become even more involved in global issues such as food security and nutrition. Russia has enormous expertise in many of FAO’s technical areas, and it would be important for Russia’s technical expertise to be channelled into solving today’s global challenges.”

José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General

Together with FAO’s corporate partner Messe Düsseldorf, the Liaison Office in Russia co-organized major sessions at “Upakovka” packaging industry fair in Moscow both in 2017 and in 2018. In January 2017, as part of a large conference on FLW in Russia, the Dairy Union of Russia, the “Foodbank Rus” Charity Foundation, “Sfera” Publishing House, and the “Package and Packaging” magazine became the first Russian organizations to join the SAVE FOOD initiative. In January 2018, a seminar on innovative packaging solutions and modern technologies designed to reduce FLW gathered high-level speakers and participants from industry associations, the private sector and the expert community.

Strong emphasis was placed on FLW in fisheries and aquaculture during the Global Fishery Forum, a key event in the fishing industry calendar, held in St. Petersburg in September 2017. The Russian Federation’s Strategy for the Development of the Fisheries Sector up to 2030 was presented at FAO’s special session on FLW in fisheries and aquaculture. The Strategy envisages the construction of a modern fleet and onshore processing plants, which would in turn require measures aimed at reducing losses.

Partnering with academia

Partnerships continue to expand FAO’s visibility and impact in the Russian Federation. The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between FAO and Russian State Agrarian University – Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy marked a major step in jointly promoting FAO’s agenda in the country through active engagement with leading academic institutions. The signing ceremony took place as part of the celebrations of World Food Day on 16 October 2017 in Russia.

This cooperation is expected to combine the parties’ scientific and technical knowledge, and practical experience to successfully implement activities to strengthen the sustainability of agri-food systems. The MoU shows FAO and the Timiryazev Academy’s shared commitment towards achieving Zero Hunger through sustainable food and agriculture development and management of natural resources.

Presentations of FAO flagship publications

Russia’s Central Scientific Agricultural Library is one of the largest agricultural libraries in the world. In December 2017, FAO and the Library jointly celebrated the ten-year anniversary of the Library’s status as depository library of FAO publications.

Since the opening of the Liaison Office in Moscow, the Library has regularly hosted presentations of FAO flagships and other key publications, including Europe and Central Asia Regional Overview of Food Insecurity 2016, OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook, Gender equality, social protection and rural development, and the State of the World’s Forests 2016. Presentations are web streamed to FAO offices and partners across the region.

Accessing major international agreements

FAO has been working to encourage the Russian Federation’s accession to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA). In February 2018, FAO organized a seminar at the All-Russian Research Institute of Plant Industry named after Nikolai Vavilov in St. Petersburg attended by renowned and influential representatives of academic institutions. “Dr Vavilov influenced the development of the International Treaty in two major ways by: defining the centers of origin and diversity of the origin crop plants, which is remains central to the Treaty; developing a forward-looking vision on the systematic need to mobilize plant resources for the benefit of humankind. No other single scientist has ever influenced more the development of a global agreement”, affirmed Kent Nnadozie, Secretary of the International Treaty. The forum filed a recommendation to the Russian Federation Government to ratify the Treaty.

In March 2018, FAO organized a webinar on the platform of its long-standing partner, the Central Scientific Agricultural Library, focused on the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA), which is the first binding international agreement to specifically target IUU fishing. Russia has signed, but has not yet ratified the Agreement. The webinar participants highlighted Russia’s extensive experience on dealing with IUU fishing, expressing the country’s readiness to share best practices with other nations, in particular through tutoring of foreign students at Russian universities.