Since land reforms of the 1990s, dualistic farm structures characterize the landscape of most transition countries in Europe and Central Asia, with large numbers of small subsistence and semi commercial family farms. Poverty, social vulnerability and other difficulties prevent rural communities from fulfilling their role as important building blocks of food security. Society as a whole tends to undervalue the potential of family farming to produce quality goods and services and contribute to economic, environmental and social sustainability.

By enhancing productivity and income levels through sustainable intensification of production, better organization, adequate services and integration into agrifood value chains, this Regional Initiative can contribute to the global goals of eradicating rural poverty and achieving food security and sustainable growth.

Areas of support include policy, institutions and governance, support to farmers and communities.
The Regional Initiative pays attention to technical, social, economic and environmental aspects. Inclusiveness of women, youth and vulnerable groups is also a key principle. Activities focus on the following areas:

- Sustainable management of agricultural land and water resources.
- Sustainable intensification of smallholders’ production.
- Strengthening the organizations of small producers and family farms.
- Enhancing access to rural services – such as advisory services and micro-loans.

Efforts will be geared towards:

- Disseminating sustainable agricultural best practices.
- Strengthening governance to support producers and resource managers.
- Enhancing equitable access for smallholders to productive resources, services, organizations and markets.
- Developing inclusive and efficient agribusinesses and agrifood chains.

The Regional Initiative complements regional and global integration processes, such as the European Union’s European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD), and the “Voluntary Guidelines on The Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security” and builds upon results of the United Nations International Year of Family Farming 2014.

FAO is working with partners to achieve even more in this area: the European Union, the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group for South Eastern Europe, and Landnet, an informal regional network dealing with land tenure issues.

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More information