Europe and Central Asia is a vibrant region of nearly one billion people, living in more than 50 countries across 13 time zones, and speaking more than 300 languages.

Chronic hunger has been all but eradicated from this part of the world, but pockets of food insecurity continue to exist, especially in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Different forms of malnutrition, including stunted growth in children and rising rates of obesity, are a serious concern for all countries in Europe and Central Asia.

With levels of prosperity as diverse as the cultures, climates and landscapes, a ‘one-size fits all’ approach does not apply to this dynamic part of the world.

Former communist countries have largely transitioned to market orientation and are eager to export their agrifood products.
More than half the region’s countries are members or candidates for membership in the European Union, many of them already extending technical or policy assistance to neighbouring countries. The Eurasian Economic Union is also expanding its role in the region.

Climate and topography also vary widely. Hardwood and evergreen forests, fertile soils and frequent flooding are common in some areas, while others are characterized by water scarcity and harsh growing conditions.
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FAO’s technical and operations teams support countries as they combat transboundary animal and plant diseases, advise on land tenure and agricultural sector reform, promote safe handling of pesticides and good hygiene and manufacturing practices for safer food, analyse gender disparities in access to land, encourage conservation of soils and biodiversity, and provide training on international trade rules.

With expertise in crops, livestock, trade economics, food safety, nutrition, fisheries, forestry, climate change, food waste, and more, FAO is a desirable partner for countries as they pursue their national and regional priorities and work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

As custodian United Nations agency for 21 indicators – for Sustainable Development Goals 2, 5, 6, 12, 14 and 15 – and as a contributing agency for six more, FAO assists member countries with data collection and validation and contributes to annual reports.
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From its regional office in Budapest, its sub-regional hub in Ankara and a network of country offices across the region, FAO advises on policy, tackles technical problems, publishes high-quality studies and guidelines, and conducts training on the pressing issues these countries are facing.
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FAO IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

2. ZERO HUNGER
6. CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
14. LIFE BELOW WATER
15. LIFE ON LAND

5. GENDER EQUALITY
12. RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
FAO’s portfolio of work is large and diverse. All countries in the region benefit from FAO expertise, but field projects and policy advice are focused where the need is greatest.

In light of global and regional trends, to guide its work FAO established two Regional Initiatives – with a third under consideration – and keeps four priorities designated by member countries in the forefront.

The Regional Initiatives focus on:

- Empowering smallholders and family farms for improved livelihoods and poverty reduction,
- Improved agrifood trade and market integration, and
- Sustainable agriculture and natural resources management in a changing climate (under consideration).
The Regional Priorities are: 1) smallholder Development, 2) policy work and value-chain development in support of enhanced trade of agricultural products and WTO integration, 3) natural resource management and climate change, and 4) food security. This is under an overarching goal of working to increase the wellbeing and livelihoods of rural populations.

On the ground in each country, work is guided by the FAO Country Programming Framework – a “living document” agreed by FAO and individual national government – which matches national priorities with the expertise available from FAO.

Nutrition, climate change, gender equality, social protection, and decent rural employment are concerns that cut across all of FAO’s work in the region.
FAO’s Investment Centre is active in Europe and Central Asia, designing and supporting the implementation of investment projects in cooperation with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the World Bank, the European Investment Bank (EIB), and others.

Work with EBRD concentrates on facilitating private-sector investment in agriculture, building market opportunities for farmers throughout the region.

The World Bank has financed work on improved land administration, as well as equality of legal property rights for women in the western Balkans, sustainable aquaculture development in the region, and more.

The Investment Centre directly contributed to the approval of US$ 300 million worth of investment projects by financing partners in 2016. Through its work on creating an enabling policy environment for private investment, the Centre also contributed to a broader inflow of investment into the sector. Since 1964, FAO’s investment expertise has helped mobilize over US$ 15 billion in investment for agriculture and rural development in the region.

Examples of work include development of export opportunities for Ukraine’s agriculture, upgrading standards in Georgia’s dairy sector, and linking Tajik and Moldovan fruit and vegetable producers with the retail sector.
Since 1964, FAO’s investment expertise has helped mobilize over US$ 15 billion in investment for agriculture and rural development in the region.
FAO is there when disaster strikes, too. Floods in the Western Balkans in 2014 destroyed crops, livestock and infrastructure. Together with the European Union and other partners, FAO is helping vulnerable farm families get back on track and prepare for possible emergencies in the future.

Rural families coping with armed conflict in eastern Ukraine have received emergency help, too. Here, FAO’s own funds have been complemented by the generous donations of Canada, and by the Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation, or SFERA.

Climate change makes extreme weather events and related disasters more likely. Working with countries to improve farmers’ preparedness and resilience to these events is an important part of FAO’s work.

After six years of conflict in Syria, more than 2.5 million refugees are hosted in Turkey, which is part of FAO’s Europe and Central Asia region. The Organization is working with donors, partners and the Turkish government to provide an agricultural livelihood response. FAO’s programme aims to improve food security, strengthen livelihoods and enhance the resilience of the Syrian refugees and the host communities.
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SAVING LIVELIHOODS SAVES LIVES
FAO IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

PROJECTS
FAO currently operates roughly 130 projects in the Europe and Central Asia region.

ANALYSIS, STANDARD-SETTING
FAO’s analytical and standard-setting work is equally important for the region. Gender disparities, food safety laws and regulations, international trade, food prices, social protection, and crop and livestock genetic diversity are just some of the areas where FAO carries out research and publishes studies.

FINANCING
The European Union and its countries, Turkey, Russian Federation, Hungary, Finland, Canada, Norway and Switzerland are major resource partners. They have come forward to help their neighbours recover from emergencies, build resilient agricultural sectors, achieve food security, and develop more sustainable food systems. In Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey and Ukraine, FAO is managing important projects financed by the Global Environment Fund (GEF).

PEOPLE AND OFFICES
FAO’s highly qualified staff and consultants carry out FAO’s work in the region. They are based in the Regional Office in Hungary, a Subregional Office in Turkey, country offices in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, liaison or partnership offices in Azerbaijan, Belgium, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation and Switzerland, and project teams in Bosnia and Herzegovina, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo*, Serbia and Ukraine.

PARTNERS

Partners add value to FAO’s work in the region. The Organization has established partnerships with research and academic institutions, civil society organizations, and intergovernmental institutions across the region. Each partner brings advantages that complement FAO’s own strengths.

Jointly organized thematic workshops, conferences and training events – as well as information and knowledge sharing – are some of the activities carried out with partners.

To ensure ongoing dialogue and efficient cooperation with civil society organizations in the region, FAO recently established a CSO Facilitation Committee.*

Intensive dialogue and coordinated efforts to reach common goals characterize FAO’s cooperation with the range of inter-governmental institutions across Europe, such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Commission, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Eurasian Economic Commission, Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group of South Eastern Europe, and many others. Intergovernmental institutions are key partners for FAO work in the region, providing access to expertise, information and policy dialogue.

In view of its importance in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, closer cooperation with the private sector in the region is also being pursued – particularly at the local level.

* http://food-cso-europe.org/home/about-us
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FAO in Europe and Central Asia
A vast and diverse region

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