Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT UNDER A CHANGING CLIMATE

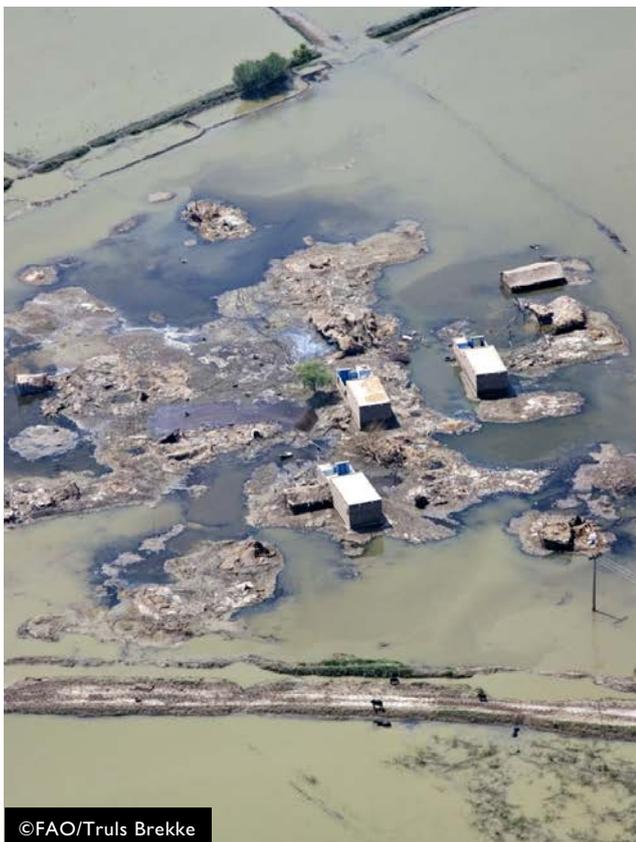*AN FAO REGIONAL INITIATIVE IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA*

BACKGROUND

In the face of climate change and an increasing number of severe weather events, agriculture in the Europe and Central Asia region must cope with many risks while continuing to provide adequate and nutritious food for the region's population of nearly one billion.

Water stress, defined as pressure on the quantity and quality of water resources, exists in many places throughout the region. Serious problems of water shortages, flooding, pollution, and ecosystem damage are prevalent.

Due to past unsustainable use of natural resources, the Europe and Central Asia region also faces problems of deforestation, biodiversity loss, land degradation, and desertification.

Forest degradation on a large scale has resulted in a loss of forest carbon, biodiversity, and other key ecosystem goods and services.

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Climate change affects the agriculture sectors in a multitude of ways. For example, it increases temperature and precipitation variability, reduces the predictability of seasonal weather patterns, and increases the frequency and intensity of severe weather-related events such as floods, drought and water shortages. The impact of natural disasters on agriculture – including disasters attributable to climate change – has been steadily increasing in the Europe and Central Asia region. Increasing temperatures lead to changes in the location and incidence of pest and disease outbreaks. Even slight warming will decrease yields in low-latitude regions. Greater frequency and intensity of extreme weather events will increasingly affect climate patterns and food production.

FAO, through the Regional Initiative "Sustainable Natural Resources Management Under a Changing Climate," helps Member States in the region transition to more climate-resilient, sustainable agriculture and food systems by providing them with important tools, knowledge, information and technical support.

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AIMS AND TOOLS

The Regional Initiative aims to strengthen countries' knowledge, enable them to manage natural resources sustainably, and assist them in their adaptation to and mitigation of climate change and reduction of disaster risk in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

The Regional Initiative also focuses on improving policies and governance mechanisms to address sustainable production, climate change and environmental degradation in a coherent and integrated way by strengthening the elements of governance to undertake programmes to improve natural resources management.

Furthermore, the Regional Initiative promotes approaches for the effective integration of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in international governance mechanisms related to the 2030 Agenda, climate change, biodiversity, and environmental agendas and international agreements. It supports countries in the design and implementation of comprehensive, gender-equitable policies, strategies and programmes in the context of disaster risk reduction and climate change – for example, by helping countries integrate a gender perspective in their National Adaptation Plans and nationally appropriate mitigation actions and in the implementation of their nationally determined contributions.

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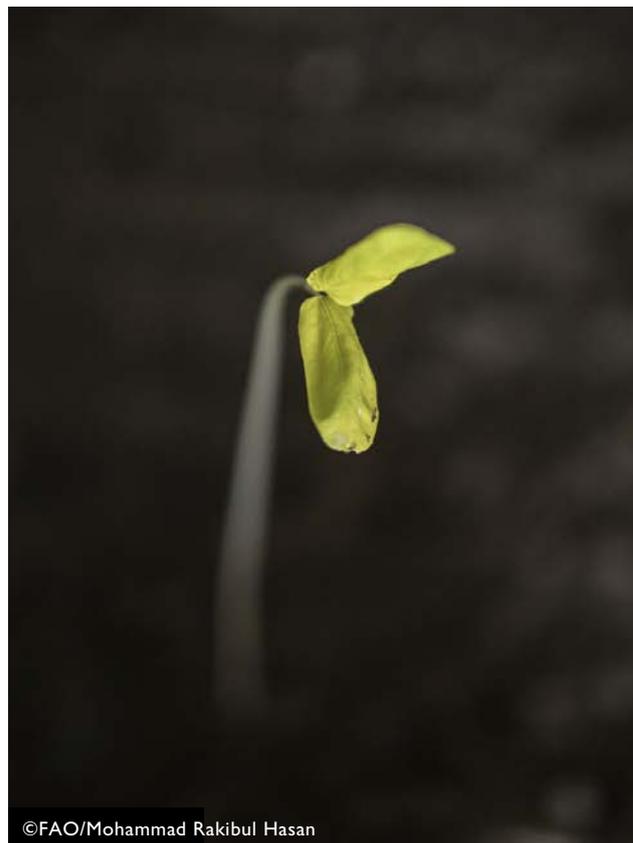## FAO WORKS TO ACHIEVE THIS REGIONAL INITIATIVE THROUGH:

1. Improved policy alignment, coordination, and cooperation for the sustainable management of natural resources and reduction in risks from climate change and disasters.

2. Effective provision and/or collection of data, tools, and services for effective decision-making on addressing the management of natural resources, adaptation to climate change, and reduction of disaster risk.

3. Development of capacities for the sustainable management of natural resources, adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, and reduction of disaster risk, thus strengthening national capacities to respond to threats and crises and to access climate funds.

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CLOSING THOUGHTS

This Regional Initiative is a platform to facilitate dialogue and coordination, both at country and regional level, and to build climate change and disaster resilience for sustainable food systems. The main goal is to strengthen countries' knowledge, enabling them to manage natural resources sustainably. To that end, the Regional Initiative supports the improvement and implementation of policies for the sustainable management of natural resources and reduction in risks from climate change and disasters. Working with countries, the Regional Initiative supports the development of context-specifi¬c interventions that address multiple objectives, including Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Regional Initiative also contributes to generating the required enabling environment to mainstream coherent climate action and poverty reduction efforts into national policies.

The Regional Initiative has created regional mechanisms to support Member States in accessing environmental climate finance, such as the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility.

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THE REGIONAL INITIATIVE SUPPORTS COUNTRIES TO BUILD:

• *Resilience to climate change for empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods and poverty reduction*

• *Resilience to climate change for improving agrifood trade and market integration*

• *Resilience to climate change for managing natural resources sustainably*

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