FAO IN Europe AND Central Asia
FAO in Europe and Central Asia

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Serving both developed and developing countries, FAO acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy. FAO is also a source of knowledge and information. It helps developing countries and countries in transition modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices and ensure good nutrition for all. Since its founding in 1945, FAO has focused special attention on developing country rural areas, home to 70 percent of the world’s poor and hungry people.

In 2006, FAO embarked on a major strengthening of its decentralization process, aimed at bringing FAO expertise closer to its member nations and improve effectiveness of FAO’s work at country, subregional and regional levels. FAO works through five decentralized regional offices – Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Near East, and Europe and Central Asia.

The Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU), based in Budapest, covers a range of disciplines that support FAO’s mandate to defeat hunger, raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity in a sustainable manner that accounts for the need to conserve and protect natural resources, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy.

**Member countries:** Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, TFYR of Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan

**Member organization:** European Union

**Associate member:** Faroe Islands

REU technical experts provide support to member countries in areas of:

- Animal health and production
- Plant production and protection
- Statistics
- Forestry
- Fisheries and aquaculture
- Food safety and consumer protection
- Agribusiness and enterprise development
- Land tenure and rural development
- Agricultural Research, extension and innovation
The area covered by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) stretches halfway around the globe. A heterogeneous region, it includes some of the richest and poorest countries in the world. With 53 member countries and one member organization (the European Union), the region has more than doubled its membership since 1990 when it had 23 members.

The increase reflects the consequence of the political upheavals and ethnic conflicts that occurred after the break-up of the Soviet Union, in 1991–1993. These events had enormous social and economic consequences that resulted in an unprecedented increase in poverty in the region – from 16 million living in poverty in 1986 to 101 million in 2000. Today the number has reduced greatly, to 65 million, as the newly independent countries have set up supportive government mechanisms, especially in their agriculture sectors. In addition to the 27 countries that are members of the European Union (EU), FAO in Europe serves countries preparing for EU accession, countries still in transition from planned to market economies, and countries marked by civil conflicts and extreme climatic conditions.
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Transition economies

The transition economies in the region are extremely diverse, with rural poverty a widespread and common problem. Agriculture remains an important sector that employs a high percentage of the labour force and contributes significantly to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In a total population of more than 260 million, 65 million are classified as poor and 25 million, almost 10 percent, as undernourished. Six countries were classified as low-income food deficit countries (LIFDCs) and three as low income countries by the World Bank in 2011.

PROGRESS AND SETBACKS

Factors behind progress and setbacks in hunger reduction vary across the region. Economic transition and political instability in the early 1990s disrupted economic and political systems, dismantled social policies and social safety nets, and cut back employment opportunities. In addition, conflict and war in some countries had debilitating economic and social effects with ensuing problems of refugees and displaced persons. Today, increasing poverty, especially in rural areas, has a major impact on the region, while natural disasters – in particular prolonged droughts – have a role in increasing food insecurity. FAO works to reverse these trends through development efforts in rural areas.

Even though there is a great deal of poverty in many rural areas of Central and Eastern European countries, and there are pockets of extreme poverty, they are not necessarily food insecure. The Soviet Union left a legacy of well educated citizens, many of whom have emigrated from the region and now provide their families with remittances.

REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

The diversity among FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia member countries runs the gamut from diverse economic and political situations to diverse geographic situations and constraints. The developed countries in the region, most of which are members of the EU, rely on FAO’s vast databases and standard-setting bodies for information on global food and resource regulations, best practices and standards for planned to market economies and enabling them to meet standards set by the EU for both accession and trade. FAO increased its presence with the establishment of the Subregional Office for Central and Eastern Europe (SEU) in Budapest in 1996.
in agriculture, fisheries and forestry. At the same time, FAO provides support to countries working to meet the standards required for EU accession or for trade with EU countries. With some 20 million people in Central Asia still considered undernourished, FAO focuses on activities to improve their food security. It provides assistance in a range of capacity- and institution-building areas including natural resource management, food safety and value chain development. It also works with governments to develop policies that support market economies and private sector agriculture while also recognizing the importance and needs of smallholders and family farms, and to provide technical assistance according to each country’s needs.

Countries in Central Asia are in transition from planned to market economies and thus in the process of reforming their institutions. FAO provides analyses and advice in policy reform concerning agriculture, land tenure, natural resource management, rural poverty alleviation and food security, while also providing technical assistance in institution and capacity building and training, and in establishing regional networking.

**ECONOMIC CONTEXT**

The global economic and financial crises, climate change and volatile food prices have had serious impacts on economic development in many countries in the European and Central Asian region, which is highly differentiated by income levels, policy agenda and assistance requirements. In addition, as many Central European countries have joined the EU, FAO’s work has shifted further east.

Wheat is the main staple crop in the region, a commodity which the smaller and poorer countries import. Historically high food prices in 2007–2008 and 2010–2011, exacerbated by export barriers in the region, caused an increase in poverty in some of the poorer importing countries and have shaped FAO efforts in support of food security in the region. FAO provides early warnings of crop shortages and rising prices, and emergency support to the most food insecure, ensuring that the needs of smallholders, who are often overlooked, remain at the forefront of support efforts.

The diversity among FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia member countries runs the gamut from diverse economic and political situations to diverse geographic situations and constraints.
FAO PROVIDES SERVICES TO
THE REGION

Policy advice. FAO can delve into the vast store of knowledge it has gathered, and call upon its range of information systems and analyses in order to hone policy advice for member countries. Because of its global outreach, FAO provides comparisons of developed and less-developed countries and can call upon its store of information in areas such as crop prospects, animal health and global food standards – all of which can be factored into the policy advice it offers to member countries of the region.

FAO Investment Centre. As part of the FAO Technical Cooperation Department, the Investment Centre works with FAO technical departments and field offices to formulate viable agricultural and rural development investment projects and programmes. The Investment Centre works in partnership with the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), among others, to mobilize the financing needed for agricultural and rural development. Support is provided in the form of analyses and reviews of current situations, assistance to strategy development and action planning, detailed project planning and monitoring of project implementation. The work of the Investment Centre is particularly important, as low investment in agriculture has been identified as one of the major causes of limits to development and food insecurity.

Field programme. FAO field activities in the region support countries in their transition to market economies and contribute to revitalizing rural sectors by involving a cross section of stakeholders. The big-picture goal is to launch practical, on-the-ground agriculture, forestry and fisheries projects that, in turn, help improve rural livelihoods, prevent migration from rural to urban areas and provide a future for rural youth and women. The portfolio of activities constantly evolves, but each year FAO supports between 40 and 60 projects in the region, covering about 20 beneficiary countries.

Technical expertise. FAO’s staff of technical officers supports its member countries through establishing fora for sharing information, including workshops, training sessions, publications and Web-based learning. In general, FAO offers ongoing support to the region through:

- providing data, analysis and technical support on world food insecurity, agriculture, forestry and fisheries,
- monitoring world and regional food production and trade,
- controlling plant and animal diseases,
- assisting in the establishment and application of food standards,
- providing a neutral forum for discussion,
- offering training and capacity building in meeting standards, e.g. related to the World Trade Organization or the EU,
- studying and analyzing national agricultural policies and rural development issues.
THERE IS NO QUESTION that fisheries provide crucial resources for both food and income. The contribution of fish to global diets has reached a record average of 17 kg per person per year, now supplying more than 3 billion people with at least 15 percent of their average protein intake. This increase is mainly due to aquaculture, which is now growing at almost 7 percent a year globally and will soon overtake capture fisheries as a source of food fish. Together, fisheries and aquaculture support the livelihoods of an estimated 540 million people, and fish products account for more than US$100 billion in annual food trade. Fisheries also have potential to help meet the increased need for animal protein that will be required by the world’s increasing population. Yet, about 32 percent of world fish stocks are estimated to be overexploited, depleted or recovering. In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, inland fisheries and aquaculture predominate the sector. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia provides support ranging from guidance on careful and responsible fisheries management to establishing scientific cooperation among the countries of the region that share lakes, rivers and watersheds. FAO also works to ensure that the needs of smallholders are not overlooked, especially by governments prone to making investments in large-scale aquaculture or inland fisheries infrastructure.

DRAMATIC DECLINE IN REGIONAL FISHERIES PRODUCTION
Production in inland capture fisheries and aquaculture declined dramatically with the transformation from planned to market economies that began in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the early 1990s. In Central Asia, production in some countries dropped between 70 and 90 percent, with fish and fisheries products largely disappearing from the population’s diet. Causes are similar to those that hit other sectors due to the changing economic situations, such as reduction of investment in research, modern production facilities and infrastructure, and depleted resources from decades of unsustainable fisheries management.

Policy support. As a result of FAO support to the countries of the region in setting appropriate policy and institutional frameworks to develop modern fisheries sectors and establish sustainable fisheries management plans, there has been a significant increase in the capacities of national fisheries administrations.

The FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, adopted by many countries in the region, includes guides and plans of action for undertaking an ecosystem approach to fisheries and for combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the region. FAO has translated the Code and six of its technical guidelines into Russian and supported their dissemination. In addition, FAO works with governments to help them develop the regulatory and certification procedures needed to participate in trade of fish and fisheries products.

Practical support. FAO responds to requests from the countries in the region for tangible help – meaning practical technical support in building or building back their fisheries and aquaculture sectors. This practical support, usually in the form of field activities that introduce good practices and bring lessons learned at policy level to the field, aims at introducing modern production systems and technologies across the value chain, including aquaculture production and reproduction, fish
feed production and pond construction. In addition to capacity-building workshops, FAO produces manuals in response to member requests, such as guides on carp and trout propagation.

FAO also has produced a basic training manual on water re-circulating systems, as opposed to flow-through, aquaculture systems. These systems clean and re-use water and thus do not pollute rivers and streams and, at the same time, reduce the risk of diseases and reduce the need for antibiotics in the system. By sharing basic information on the system, FAO supports decision-makers in determining in advance if they have the capacity to develop and operate such a system.

Regional collaboration. The challenges to achieving sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture are global and need to be addressed by coordinated action. In addition to the dominance of the Black, Caspian, Adriatic and Mediterranean Seas, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia are connected by huge networks of watersheds and rivers that run through many of the countries. FAO’s numerous regional- and national-level capacity-building activities have brought countries together to find joint approaches for overcoming their similar problems.

This has resulted in increased collaboration and partnerships within the region and between public and private sectors at national level. In the past, with the centralized governance systems, dams, hydroelectric power stations and large irrigation systems were built with no consideration for impact on other countries, with results such as blocking fish from accessing their spawning grounds.

FAO has established and supports regional fisheries bodies to facilitate the ability of these countries to work together, insuring that developments in one country do not have negative impacts on other countries.

- Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFISH), unanimously approved by the FAO governing Council in 2009, came into force in 2010, with a programme to promote development, conservation, resource management and aquaculture development in the region.
- European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) assists in the collection of information, facilitates cooperation among governmental organizations, and advises on sustainable development of inland fisheries and aquaculture.
- General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) covers the Mediterranean and Black Seas and connecting waters, promotes the development, conservation and management of marine resources and encourages cooperative training and research projects.

FAO is currently working to facilitate fisheries cooperation specifically focused on the Black Sea and the fisheries sectors of the six countries that border it. FAO is in a position to bring the countries together for discussions on developing fisheries science cooperation and management.
THE DEVELOPMENT of competitive agribusiness and agro-industries is crucial for opening avenues to rural development as well as for developing markets for farm products. Agro-industry has the potential to provide employment in off-farm activities such as packaging, processing, transporting and marketing of food and agricultural produce. In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the opportunity for agricultural producers – especially smallholder farmers – to participate in markets is limited, not only by the farmers’ lack of entrepreneurial skills but also by inadequate infrastructure and limited competitiveness. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia contributes to the development of agribusiness and agro-industries at national, subregional and regional levels, providing support to improve farmer-market linkages and develop value chains which, in turn, offers promise of improved employment and livelihoods. These activities not only improve government and institutional capacity, they empower farmers and rural entrepreneurs in the region to improve their positions in the markets and value chains.

AGRIBUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

It has been more than 20 years since the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia began the process of moving from planned to market economies. Since the fall of the iron curtain the countries have pursued different courses. Some European countries have become EU members and others are preparing for accession, while in most of Central Asian countries, governments still have important roles in managing their rural sectors.

In addition, the context has changed – the world has globalized. Many farmers now participate in longer value chains. No longer driven just to provide food to meet national demand, they now provide products for global markets. At the same time, those markets are evolving, due to changes in technology and new trade rules, structural developments, expansion of the retail sector and the proliferation of demanding market and consumer standards.

BUILDING CAPACITY AND SHARING BEST PRACTICES

Globalization of agrifood value chains requires informing those involved along the chain, and other stakeholders, of developments in international markets and providing them with the capacity to exploit market opportunities. To this end, FAO in Europe, in collaboration with international partners, organizes information exchanges and capacity-building opportunities that address issues pertinent to agribusiness and rural enterprises development. Given the region’s natural, social and economic heterogeneity, these meetings also serve to support the collection, dissemination and exchange of best practices for supporting agribusiness and enterprise development.
Agribusiness refers to all activities related to adding value to farm products such as packaging, processing and distribution. Agribusiness also requires setting up retail links that open pathways to the consumer, including product development, marketing and advertising.

Enterprise development refers to the entrepreneurial aspect of agribusiness, meaning the farmers develop a new product and then commercialize it themselves, usually destined for niche markets or tourist outlets. For example, in Montenegro farmers package and promote honey from their farms, and make flour from a traditional wheat variety that has a unique texture. These products are not available in supermarkets. Farmers sell directly to tourists from their farms or to local tourist shops.

DIVERSIFICATION AND COMMERCIALIZATION

Strengthening rural livelihoods

Diversifying crops in the field and introducing new enterprises to support the market chain contribute to income generation which, in turn, can reduce the vulnerability and increase the resilience of smallholder farmers. FAO in Europe sets up workshops and exchanges that allow the countries of the region to share information about their activities in integrating diversified production into value chains – information they can use to formulate sound policies and strategies for diversifying livelihoods and developing market linkages.

VALUE CHAIN SUPPORT

Linking producers to markets, improving market infrastructure and access to services

As the agro-food value chains in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia expand, they require more planning and coordination, and in particular, improved linkages among farmers, agribusinesses and retailers, to improve their competitive positions in the markets. FAO works with governments to strengthen national capacity for identifying needs and priorities, and for determining which measures to use for improving food chain management and performance.

BUSINESS PROMOTION

Building a pro-business environment to drive competitiveness

Many of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia still have critical gaps between policies, institutions and farm-household systems. FAO in Europe is working with national institutions and practitioners to build the kind of effective relationships that will ensure policy-makers are behind moves to improve the business environment, such as establishing local linkages and the kinds of institutions needed for the development of competitive market-oriented agriculture.

Agro-industry has potential to provide employment in off-farm activities such as packaging, processing, transporting and marketing of food and agricultural produce.
THE LIVESTOCK SECTOR provides livelihood support to many of the most vulnerable people who live in rural areas. Although it only generates 1.4 percent of global GDP (2005), it represents income and employment for millions and provides livestock products such as leather, wool and fibre. Livestock also add taste, texture and variety to diets, accounting for about 13 percent of global calories and 27 percent of protein through provision of meat, milk, eggs and offal. Livestock also contribute transport and provide manure for crop production. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia provides support in animal health and production to both developed and developing countries in the region. While there has been an overall growth in consumption of meat products since the early 2000s, it has been mainly in developing countries. Consumption in countries of the European Union has increased only slightly since 1990.

FAO IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Animal Health and Production

During the days of centrally planned economies in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, governments gave each farm a plan for production, provided all supplies, and kept the costs for inputs such as feed, petrol and building products to a minimum. Many countries in the region had a tradition of unregulated backyard slaughter.

Market transition. The transition from centrally planned to market economies, which began in the 1990s, meant privatization and restructuring, with animals transferred from large collective farms to private households and an accompanying decline in livestock investment, inventories and production. Today, due to improved economic conditions in many countries, the demand for livestock products has increased, bringing with it market opportunities for local producers. However, to take advantage of these opportunities, producers must bring their operations to a level that meets food quality and safety requirements, which is especially difficult in an area where most local producers are smallholders.

Globalized economies. In the past decade, the livestock sector in Europe and Central Asia has faced the impacts of global economic crises and spiking prices for commodities and inputs, as well as growth in demand for animal products. It has responded to the increased demand through more intensive livestock production, which often has come at the expense of the environment. At the same time, climate change has put pressure on the sector, with impacts ranging from water shortages to increased spread of animal diseases. FAO assistance has focused on three major areas: providing policy advice and capacity building for sustainable livestock sector development; supporting better management of animal genetic resources; and improving the capacity of veterinary services for surveillance and control of major transboundary animal diseases and zoonoses.
POLICY AND PRODUCTION
Supporting livestock sector modernization and revitalization
FAO in Europe and Central Asia provides livestock policy advice and technical assistance aimed at supporting smallholders as well as large producers. It focuses on increased and more responsible livestock production, and improving food quality and safety to meet market and trade standards. Activities range from establishing young farmers’ clubs that encourage young people to remain in rural areas to supporting establishment of cooperatives that enable smallholders to pool resources.

Throughout the year, FAO organizes activities to demonstrate best practices to farmers, as well as livestock experts from ministries of agriculture and to introduce technology for both large- and small-scale production. FAO helps open communication networks among its member countries for sharing ideas on production and marketing. It also co-hosts workshops with leading scientific institutions, NGOs, universities and research institutes to share ideas in areas such as improving feed management and husbandry or increasing traceability along the food chain which is required for food trade. FAO fosters public private partnership in the meat sector through, for example, upgrading and developing hygienic and safe meat chains and capacity-building for state and private meat processors.

ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES
Stemming loss through management and conservation
In Europe, half of all domestic animal breeds that existed at the turn of the century have become extinct and 43 percent of the remaining breeds are endangered. The first comprehensive assessment of livestock biodiversity, The State of the World’s Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, revealed clearly that the diversity of animal genetic resources is decreasing. In absolute terms, Europe and the Caucasus have by far the highest number of at-risk breeds (28 percent of mammalian breeds and 49 percent of avian breeds), in part because they have highly specialized livestock industries, in which production is dominated by a small number of breeds.

Today, with changing climates and increased global trade, it has become even more urgent to conserve animal genetic diversity. Maintaining diversity means that farmers and breeders have the options they need for selecting stocks or developing new breeds that can cope with the new climates, have resistance to new or re-emerging animal pests and diseases or have other valuable traits. FAO supports countries in developing and implementing national action plans for conserving their animal genetic resources and has organized a number of capacity-building workshops on characterization, inventory and monitoring, in vivo and in vitro conservation, and valorization of local breeds for maintaining agro-biodiversity.

ANIMAL HEALTH
Strengthening surveillance and control of transboundary animal diseases
Europe and Central Asia have a history of transboundary animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), African swine fever (ASF), highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and brucellosis. In addition, several events have contributed to disease emergence and spread such as:
• privatization of veterinary services which often has led to inadequate surveillance and border control, at the same time that there is increasing global and cross-border trade;
• changing climatic conditions which have led to emergence and spread of disease vectors; and
• increased consumer demand for animal products which has led to more intensive livestock production systems that are conducive to disease spread.

FAO provides assistance to strengthen national veterinary services for surveillance, detection, diagnosis, control and timely reporting of disease. Often these are new diseases, such as H1N1, which are unknown to the national services. FAO fosters regional and crossborder cooperation among veterinary services of Europe under the Global Framework for Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Disease (GF-TADs) for Europe. FAO also works with local authorities to clarify the drivers of diseases, identifying unsustainable and risky practices and the role of wildlife and ecosystems in disease emergence and spread, such as HPAI and ASF in Eastern European countries. FAO animal health experts in Europe and Central Asia are in daily contact with FAO’s Global Early Warning and Response System (GLEWS) at its Rome headquarters, providing timely surveillance information on animal and zoonotic disease threats.
IN RECENT YEARS, food safety concerns have increased worldwide. Emerging and re-emerging food-borne pathogens, antimicrobial resistance, transboundary food threats, technological changes in food production, preservation, packaging and distribution, and increased consumer awareness have raised awareness that food safety is more than a public health issue – it also is an economic, political, scientific and technical issue. The countries with economies in transition have shown growing interest in World Trade Organization (WTO) membership, which is linked with new opportunities to enhance economic development by increasing food and agricultural exports. However, this also implies the need to apply internationally agreed risk assessment-based food standards, according to the WTO Agreements on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). The EU accession of countries in the region is an additional incentive to improve the food safety control systems. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia supports countries’ efforts to strengthen and modernize their food safety control systems by promoting modern approaches to food safety, such as integrated food chains, improved inter-sectoral cooperation, risk-based inspection and traceability. FAO provides policy support and technical assistance to countries working to establish appropriate legal and administrative food safety frameworks, and harmonize national food standards with international requirements which, in turn, increases their abilities to participate in regional and global food trade.

**FAO IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA**

**Food Safety and Nutrition**

**FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION**

*Valuing the implications of food safety for food and nutrition security*

Globalization has brought with it an increased transcontinental movement of food which enhances the possibilities for the spread of food-borne diseases and contamination. This has increased focus on the need to monitor product safety throughout the food chain – from farm production through processing, packaging and transporting food to local, regional or global markets. Governments and agrifood industries must share responsibility for ensuring that all foods are safe and suitable for consumption. In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, FAO has responded by assisting countries in the region through training, workshops, technical meetings and advocacy events that raise the understanding of the modern paradigms in ensuring food safety; increase institutional and individual capacities for their application; and encourage the public and private sectors to engage in building a stronger food control system.

**FROM FARM TO FORK**

*Monitoring an expanded global food supply chain*

Food safety risks in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia can range from unsafe pickling or canning in the households to food-borne diseases that can move rapidly through intensive farming systems. Whether due to microbial contamination or consumer exposure to foods with unsafe levels of chemical residues, veterinary drugs or environmental contaminants, countries need to have the scientific and inspection capacity to make sure their food safety regulations are followed and standards are met. FAO works with governments, policy-makers, scientists and academia to ensure food regulations are science-based and continuously strengthened to meet the changing realities of the food supply landscape. This includes support in data collection to assist countries in assessing their current food safety situations, as well as guidance in setting up science-based risk assessments that can pinpoint potential risks.
and find optimal ways to avoid or mitigate them. It also includes supporting food producers – from small-scale to large agro-industries – to raise their awareness of, and ability to implement, food safety management systems and comply with food safety and production standards.

**IMPROVING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY**

**Contribution to the promotion of sustainable diets**

Sustainable rural development, a key contributor to food security, is essential for improving nutrition and quality of life. In Europe and Central Asia, the increasing demand for traditional agricultural and food products comes from local consumers but increasing tourism in the region also has raised demand for local specialties. This consumer preference for authentic and quality food linked to a particular region or country creates the potential for development of niche markets that, in turn, can support the rural economy, increase farmers’ income and create opportunities to maintain the population in less-favored or remote areas. FAO in Europe and Central Asia provides support and guidance for the development and implementation of new origin-linked labeling schemes that include geographical indications, and also promotes the production and preservation of traditional agricultural and food products which serves to diversify diets and support rural development.

**CODEX ALIMENTARIUS**

**Promoting global standards to support health and trade**

Codex Alimentarius was established by FAO and the World Health Organization in 1963 with the mandate of setting food standards applicable throughout the world – standards based on science that guide global food production and ensure that it is safe and traded fairly. Most countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia have become members of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, enabling them to participate in the development of Codex standards. FAO supports the countries in establishing the policies necessary to place food safety on the political agenda and also in raising the levels of scientific expertise they need to make technical contributions to the work of Codex and participate in the international standards-setting process.

FAO provides policy support and technical assistance to countries wishing to establish appropriate legal and administrative food safety frameworks, and harmonize national food standards with international requirements which, in turn, increases their abilities to participate in regional and global food trade.
Rising oil prices and recognition of the climatic impacts of greenhouse gas emissions have led to a refocus on wood as a renewable resource, as opposed to finite fossil fuels. If managed properly, wood and wood products and forests in general can contribute to climate change mitigation through their ability to store carbon. In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, use of forest resources has played an important role in economic recovery during the transition to market economies and has the potential to do even more.

Western Europe’s production of roundwood and forest products is increasingly competing with imports from the countries to the east, and its net imports are expected to double. In addition, focus on the social and environmental benefits of forests and the services they provide have challenged the way Western Europe uses its forest land. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia supports its members in protecting this critical resource but also in ensuring that forests are managed in a way that enables them to fulfil their economic and environmental potential. In Central Asia, which is prone to desertification, forests fulfil environmental functions, such as fixing the soil.

PARTNERSHIPS

Working together to solve current and avoid future forestry problems

The level of forest management varies across the countries of Europe and Central Asia, depending on their ecological, social and economic conditions as well as the specific policy frameworks they have in place. FAO’s work in the region focuses on building partnerships. This includes bringing together individuals and organizations working for the sustainable management of forests, and facilitating their ability to find solutions for the most challenging issues facing forests and forestry today: climate change, energy and water. FAO sponsors workshops, seminars, and on-site visits and exchanges that include countries from across the region.
UNECE. FAO and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) have formed the FAO/UNECE Forestry and Timber Section, which works with other international organizations and governments to strengthen the forestry sector and its contribution to sustainable development throughout the region. It monitors the state of the forests, collecting, analyzing and disseminating information.

Common forest strategy. Many countries in the region had little tradition in forest management. Thus, FAO has worked with governments to develop a common strategy on forest-related activities. The strategy includes fostering state and private forest management and marketing, strengthening the policy and institutional framework of the forestry sector, and improving forest information management and communication.

PRIVATIZATION AND RESTITUTION
Putting the forest pieces together
While the rest of Europe steadily progresses towards sustainable forest management, Eastern European countries still face many challenges, often related to the restitution of forests from the state to their previous owners. The process of privatizing forests and restituting forest land resulted in a breakup of forests into literally millions of small 1–3 ha parcels. In many cases, these parcels are now owned by people who have moved to cities, unaware of the opportunities the forests offer. Many owners cannot afford professional advice, and many sold all their timber to the first buyer, abandoned active management and, thus, left behind a tremendous amount of underutilized resources. This has led to other problems such as the threat of fire, which increases without proper on-site management.

On the positive side, many countries in Eastern Europe restructuring their economic and social systems from centrally planned to market-based systems have made huge progress in developing a private forestry sector and adapting their institutions. As national governments have returned forests to former owners or their heirs, changes have been made in policy and legislation for greater private sector involvement in the forestry sector as forest institutions, notably state forest services, are adapting to the market economy. As a result, the forestry sector in Eastern Europe is benefiting from a general recovery, its production of forest products is growing, its trade of forest products with Western Europe is increasing significantly and many new forest owners are seeking new skills and resources to manage their forests in a sustainable way.

FAO in Europe is working to help countries in the region take advantage of the economic opportunities the forests have to offer by ensuring that they are managed properly and protected for the future. This includes working with policy-makers to identify ways and means to assist the new private owners with professional advice that will enable them to take advantage of expanding markets while maintaining forest quality.

If managed properly, wood and wood products and forests in general can contribute to climate change mitigation through their ability to store carbon.
THE GOAL OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT is to increase the capacity of rural families to improve their economic status and livelihoods through their own efforts and resources. This requires that agriculture production is competitive, that access to land is secured, that economic activities in rural areas are diversified, and that job opportunities exist outside agriculture.

Since the 1990s, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia have had two waves of land reform. First was the redistribution or restitution of state lands to private owners, which left people with fragmented pieces of land that did not allow for efficient farming. Second was followed by the recognition that consolidation of fragmented farms needs to be addressed.

Establishing good governance of land tenure is crucial for addressing rural poverty on a global level. Where the poor and vulnerable have limited and insecure rights to land and other natural resources, it is difficult to overcome hunger and poverty. Conversely, equitable and secure rights can support social and economic development.

LAND TENURE

Transition to market economies – two waves of land reform
With the breakdown of the socialist bloc in the early 1990s, land reform was one of the first steps taken by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia on their paths of transition from centrally planned to market economies.

Redistributing the region’s agricultural landscape
Under the first wave of land reform, what had been state land, cooperative or socially owned enterprises was privatized. If the government could identify the original owner, the land was restituted. If not, as in the case of ex-Soviet Union countries, the land was broken up and redistributed. Subsequently, when requested, FAO supported governments in establishing land registration and cadastral systems and is continuing its involvement in the development of land administration systems in the region.

Food security and land. Restitution and redistribution improved food security, as people could survive from their land during the economic crises that followed the break-up of the centrally planned economies. However, in many cases, it also created fragmented farms, with families often owning small, isolated and disconnected pieces of land, making agricultural production inefficient and non-competitive.

Reconsolidating the restituted lands
Under the second wave of land reform, government initiatives were designed to realign and consolidate fragmented farms in order to improve their efficiency. A similar process was undertaken successfully in the 1950s in Western Europe: family farms that had been
reduced to smaller and smaller plots over the centuries – due to the heritage system – were consolidated through a compulsory process. Today, the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia works with governments, supporting land consolidation by developing strategies and implementing pilot consolidation schemes.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Enabling rural people to compete in a global economy

As globalization opens economies to the outside, agricultural production must become competitive. That makes land consolidation a critical prerequisite for rural development because increasing the size of holdings increases farming efficiency. However, when lands are consolidated and farm sizes increased, it leaves fewer people owning or making their livings from farmland. Thus, rural development also means creating conditions that will keep people from leaving the rural areas, such as diversifying rural economies so that there are income opportunities for all.

Enabling governments to inform policy-making

In order to streamline agriculture and rural development policies, FAO works at regional, national and local levels, offering training to countries in how to write and manage rural development projects. FAO also advises governments on adapting agriculture and rural development policies for EU approximation. In this regard, FAO cooperates closely with the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group of South Eastern Europe, (SWG). The SWG, established in 2005, consists of representatives from governmental institutions responsible for rural development. FAO collaborates with SWG and other similar entities, in establishing national rural development networks (RDNs) that include NGOs, extension services and ministry representatives. RDNs promote government and EU funding instruments at local level and provide local feedback on their effectiveness and impact. The establishment of the RDNs is one of the many prerequisites for EU accession.

Preparing Guidelines on Governance of Tenure

FAO and its partners are preparing Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests to improve the governance of tenure of land and other natural resources. These Voluntary Guidelines, developed with input from all levels of stakeholders – ranging from farmers associations to governments to the private sector from all regions of the world – are intended to assist countries, civil society and the private sector in improving the governance of tenure, empowering the poor and vulnerable, enhancing the environment, supporting national and local economic development, reforming public administration and, in turn, contributing to alleviating hunger and poverty.

Establishing good governance of land tenure is crucial for addressing rural poverty on a global level.
NOWHERE IS THE IMPACT of climate change more evident than in crop production, where it has meant reduced yields, water shortages, increased weed and pest proliferation and loss of plant biodiversity. This not only impacts food availability, it also impacts livelihoods because crop production is a major source of income for the rural poor.

The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia supports governments in harmonizing appropriate crop production policies and practices aimed at the sustainable increase of productivity. It also provides support to enable their compliance with international conventions, and training in safe use of agricultural chemicals and conservation of genetic resources.

FAO IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Plant Production and Protection

Under their traditional centrally planned economies, the farmers of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia had a highly developed agricultural sector. However, as they have moved into market economies, they have had to change their orientation and learn to grow crops that meet consumer and market standards – standards that were less important when their production focused on quantity rather than quality and the goal was to meet five-year plans. In addition, the financial situations of the countries have not allowed them to set up and renovate the institutions needed to support production and research.

FAO in Europe and Central Asia provides the fora and facilitates regular meetings, workshops and seminars where agricultural specialists can gather to exchange information on topics important to the development of the agriculture sectors of countries in the region. These specialists can range from government and ministry officials to scientists and researchers, and from small-scale farmers to large-scale producers.

POLICY AND PRODUCTION

Establishing the strategy that will guide sector development

The policy and production support that FAO provides to countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia starts with an analysis of current situations and proceeds to developing a strategy for agricultural development which looks at issues such as subsidies and access to inputs, or determining when and where to focus on seed production, food crops or fodder crops. The idea is to ensure that all stakeholders have access to the information they need so they can move forward together in developing their agricultural sectors. FAO attaches special importance to advocating policies on the promotion of agriculture in countries which have strong markets for non-agriculture products and do not give agriculture primary attention.
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS
Building capacity to participate in standard-setting debates
Since the 1990s, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia have implemented a host of international conventions and now participate in their standard-setting activities. For example, the International Plant Protect Convention (IPPC) allows countries to analyse risks to their national plant resources and to use science-based measures to safeguard their cultivated and wild plants. IPPC member countries also can participate in the IPPC’s governing body, the Commission for Phytosanitary Measures, which sets standards for the safe movement of plants and plant products to prevent introduction and spread of plant pests and diseases.

When a country implements the IPPC, it must introduce all measures the IPPC prescribes, which range from safe transport of seeds to improved surveillance at border crossings. FAO has added Russian as an official language, and it now provides simultaneous translation at meetings and translation of printed documents to IPPC participants who have Russian language background, enabling them to prepare for meetings and then follow proceedings of IPPC activities.

CHEMICAL MANAGEMENT
Ensuring safe and judicious use of agricultural chemicals
FAO in Europe and Central Asia works to raise awareness of the adverse impact of hazardous chemicals and pesticides on public health and provides technical support to member countries in chemical management. At policy level, FAO provides countries the technical guidance and support needed to make informed decisions about what pesticides will be permitted and how they should be managed. Food safety is the overriding goal of this support, because improper use can affect consumer health as well as the health of the people who work directly with the chemicals or who work in the fields where chemicals have been applied. FAO also promotes systems such as integrated pest management that reduce farmers’ reliance on external inputs such as pesticides. Among other learning tools, FAO has developed an e-learning course on pesticide management to support regulators.

PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES
Saving and improving seeds for the future
Just four crops – rice, wheat, maize and potato – provide 60 percent of dietary energy humans receive from crops and just 12 crops provide 80 percent. It is estimated that three-quarters of the genetic diversity found in agricultural crops has been lost in the last century. Yet with the world’s population increasing, amidst the backdrop of changing climates and global conflicts, the pressure is on to find ways to feed the population and to increase agricultural production without further depleting the Earth’s natural resources. That is why it is so crucial to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of seeds, whether by collecting and storing them in seed banks or conserving them in fields. FAO in Europe works with governments to improve national seed production by, for example, setting up quality control and facilitating marketing. FAO also hosts the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture which recognizes the contributions of farmers to the world’s crop diversity and also offers a system of free sharing of seeds among the countries that are part of the Treaty.
Agricultural research and extension can provide solutions to both emerging and chronic problems in agriculture, especially when supportive governmental policies and functional partnerships are in place. Yet, the transition economies of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia face considerable constraints when it comes to their national agriculture research and extension systems (NARES). Limited public funding sources; on-going reforms and restructuring processes; lack of private sector collaboration; weak technology transfer; and use of outdated approaches to service provision and extension have left many countries unable to address fully the broad range of emerging topics of interest for farmers and small-scale producers. At the same time, private advisory services, if in place, target mainly large-scale commercial farmers and producers.

Fast-paced global developments in biotechnology and biosafety, issues surrounding climate change, the growing relevance of agrifood chains, and the advance in information and communication technologies (ICTs) all indicate both need and opportunities for growth and renewal of NARES. FAO supports this potential by working to stimulate increased investment in research in the region. It also assists national agriculture research institutions and agricultural and rural extension services through providing policy advice as well as technical support through workshops, studies and projects that focus, for instance, on training researchers and extensionists in applying ICTs, introduce communication and mediation approaches, and support research communities and networks.

AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION
Generating social capital in agriculture
Agricultural innovation today is fast paced, and taking place in a globalized setting in which the main drivers are dynamic markets and
The innovation itself focuses on bringing new products, processes and forms of organization into social and economic use. This requires the participation not only of researchers but also the interaction of actors involved in agriculture. This is very relevant to some countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia that still operate under a centralized linear model which looks to agricultural researchers to generate and pass knowledge on to farmers rather than recognizing that the farmers themselves have a lot to add to the knowledge system.

**Stakeholder networking.** Many countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia have only recently opened research to the private sector. FAO facilitates establishing networks within countries to connect government ministries, research institutions, scientists and farmers to the private sector, while also bringing in non-traditional stakeholders – such as private sector suppliers of farmer inputs, agriprocessors and NGOs with an interest in the agricultural sector. FAO facilitates networking between and among countries in the region, so that all move forward together in their efforts to improve livelihoods of the rural population in a sustainable manner. FAO’s experience in strengthening research and extension systems and supporting the development and adoption of new technologies through participatory approaches allows it to contribute significantly to merging the existing gaps in the region’s national agricultural knowledge, research and extension systems.

**BIOTECHNOLOGY AND BIOSAFETY**

**Ensuring new technologies have a safe place in the agricultural sector**

Agricultural biotechnology is a broad field of agricultural science and includes a number of topics, such as tissue culturing, gene transfer, immunological techniques, molecular genetics, recombinant DNA methods and, currently, genomics, proteomics and metabolomics. When properly focused, biotechnologies, often combined with traditional knowledge, can offer solutions for a number of new and old challenges, thus, significantly contributing to sustainable development while improving food safety and nutrition.

**Broad application.** Amid concern that the various applications of agricultural biotechnologies have not been widely used in many countries with economies in transition, and have not sufficiently benefited consumers or smallholder farmers and producers, FAO supports conferences and strategy development, and provides tools to raise awareness of the potential benefits of biotechnologies in Europe and Central Asia. FAO also helps farmers define their needs and present them to the agricultural research sector, working to develop the capacities of agricultural advisory services in biotechnology-related matters.

**Safety concerns.** With the portfolio of modern biotechnology applications increasing rapidly, it becomes crucial to ensure that the new technologies are used judiciously, that the race toward progress does not overlook potential risks to human and animal health or the environment, and that activities comply with internationally agreed approaches to biotechnology. In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, FAO contributes to developing national capacities to perform science-based risk analysis and to set up and implement regulatory frameworks based on international treaties and standards, such as the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol under the Convention of Biological Diversity, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and Codex Alimentarius. In addition to biosafety policies and regulations, FAO provides support in training the staff of regulatory bodies and in upgrading laboratory facilities and capabilities of the technicians.
AS THE WORLD copes with finding ways to increase agricultural production to meet the demands of an expanding population, it becomes even more important to understand the exact current agricultural situation – in areas such as individual crops yields, national, regional and global outputs, and national, regional and global demand. The founders of FAO recognized this need for baseline data. In fact, the FAO constitution, enacted in 1945, called for the collecting, analysing, interpreting and disseminating of agricultural statistics in FAO’s constitution enacted in 1945. Today, FAO is the world leader in this field, employing modern communication and analytical methodologies to support its roles of advising member countries in data collection methodologies, and of providing countries with the essential regional and global statistics needed to design effective and efficient policies. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia supports countries in the region in acquiring the basic skills needed to conduct and analyse agricultural surveys and censuses, and then ensures that their data is included in regional and global databases.

Improving agricultural statistics helps planners and policy-makers design realistic agricultural development programmes and effective policies to reduce and, ultimately, eliminate food insecurity. The availability and accessibility of these data are especially important in the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Previously, agricultural data related to many of these countries were included in the agricultural censuses of the former Soviet Union. Now that they are independent countries, it is critical to ensure that they are assisted in conducting their own national agricultural censuses according to the international standards formulated and adopted by FAO.

In addition, regular surveys are needed to obtain reliable crop and livestock data, as well as data on agricultural imports and exports, on agricultural commodity and food prices, and on the fisheries and forestry sectors. FAO in Europe and Central Asia provides technical assistance for countries to conduct agricultural censuses, and to streamline the collection and dissemination of agricultural statistics at the national level. It also ensures that member countries provide their agricultural statistics to FAO annually, for consolidation and global dissemination through FAOSTAT, the FAO corporate database which is the world’s largest database of agricultural and food statistics and metadata.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Gathering country-level data to guide policy-makers

The data on world food and agriculture gathered by the FAO statistics division are used in preparing the Food Balance Sheets of the countries of the world. These Food Balance Sheets provide an assessment of each country’s food supply and availability. FAO in Europe and Central Asia assists member countries in developing their food and agricultural statistical systems to ensure that their data gathering is based on sound techniques. This includes determining region-specific requirements and ensuring that FAO assistance to EU accession countries is...
complementary to the requirements of the EU – particularly to requirements and methodologies of the EU statistical institute, EUROSTAT. Support to the countries of the region is mainly in the form of assisting them in preparing and undertaking agricultural censuses, and providing guidelines and capacity development to improve the quality of their data and of their national agricultural statistical systems.

Preparing a country to undertake an agricultural census has many steps, starting with ensuring that the methodology is sound and then designing a questionnaire that will provide data on a core set of essential agricultural items, as recommended by the FAO census methodology. However, it also requires training people in administering the questionnaires, in how to ask the questions, how to coordinate the collation of the various national districts’ data and, finally, how to publish and disseminate the census results.

GLOBAL DATA SYSTEMS

Feeding information from countries into the FAOSTAT databases

FAO in Europe and Central Asia assists FAO headquarters in collecting food and agricultural data from the countries in the region. These data, in turn validated, consolidated and disseminated through FAOSTAT, include statistics on crops, livestock, agricultural and food imports and exports, food aid shipments, agricultural prices, employment in the agriculture sector, and use of machinery, fertilizers and pesticides.

Improving agricultural statistics helps planners and policy-makers design realistic agricultural development programmes and effective policies to reduce and, ultimately, eliminate food insecurity.
FAO in Europe and Central Asia

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Serving both developed and developing countries, FAO acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy. FAO is also a source of knowledge and information. It helps developing countries and countries in transition modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices and ensure good nutrition for all. Since its founding in 1945, FAO has focused special attention on developing country rural areas, home to 70 percent of the world’s poor and hungry people.

In 2006, FAO embarked on a major strengthening of its decentralization process, aimed at bringing FAO expertise closer to its member nations and improve effectiveness of FAO’s work at country, subregional and regional levels. FAO works through five decentralized regional offices – Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Near East, and Europe and Central Asia.

The Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU), based in Budapest, covers a range of disciplines that support FAO’s mandate to defeat hunger, raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity in a sustainable manner that accounts for the need to conserve and protect natural resources, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy.

Member countries: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, FYR of Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan

Member organization: European Union

Associate member: Faroe Islands

REU technical experts provide support to member countries in areas of:
- Animal health and production
- Plant production and protection
- Statistics
- Forestry
- Fisheries and aquaculture
- Food safety and consumer protection
- Agribusiness and enterprise development
- Land tenure and rural development
- Agricultural Research, extension and innovation
The area covered by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) stretches halfway around the globe. A heterogeneous region, it includes some of the richest and poorest countries in the world. With 53 member countries and one member organization (the European Union), the region has more than doubled its membership since 1990 when it had 23 members.

The increase reflects the consequence of the political upheavals and ethnic conflicts that occurred after the break-up of the Soviet Union, in 1991–1993. These events had enormous social and economic consequences that resulted in an unprecedented increase in poverty in the region – from 16 million living in poverty in 1986 to 101 million in 2000. Today the number has reduced greatly, to 65 million, as the newly independent countries have set up supportive government mechanisms, especially in their agriculture sectors. In addition to the 27 countries that are members of the European Union (EU), FAO in Europe serves countries preparing for EU accession, countries still in transition from planned to market economies, and countries marked by civil conflicts and extreme climatic conditions.
The area covered by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) stretches halfway around the globe.

Transition economies
The transition economies in the region are extremely diverse, with rural poverty a widespread and common problem. Agriculture remains an important sector that employs a high percentage of the labour force and contributes significantly to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In a total population of more than 260 million, 65 million are classified as poor and 25 million, almost 10 percent, as undernourished. Six countries were classified as low-income food deficit countries (LIFDCs) and three as low income countries by the World Bank in 2011.

PROGRESS AND SETBACKS
Factors behind progress and setbacks in hunger reduction vary across the region. Economic transition and political instability in the early 1990s disrupted economic and political systems, dismantled social policies and social safety nets, and cut back employment opportunities. In addition, conflict and war in some countries had debilitating economic and social effects with ensuing problems of refugees and displaced persons. Today, increasing poverty, especially in rural areas, has a major impact on the region, while natural disasters – in particular prolonged droughts – have a role in increasing food insecurity. FAO works to reverse these trends through development efforts in rural areas.

Even though there is a great deal of poverty in many rural areas of Central and Eastern European countries, and there are pockets of extreme poverty, they are not necessarily food insecure. The Soviet Union left a legacy of well educated citizens, many of whom have emigrated from the region and now provide their families with remittances.

REGIONAL SNAPSHOT
The diversity among FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia member countries runs the gamut from diverse economic and political situations to diverse geographic situations and constraints. The developed countries in the region, most of which are members of the EU, rely on FAO’s vast databases and standard-setting bodies for information on global food and resource regulations, best practices and standards.

History of FAO in Europe and Central Asia

The FAO Regional Office for Europe originally covered Western Europe and a handful of East European countries, namely Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia. Established in Geneva in 1961 and relocated to Rome in 1970, it mainly facilitated research networks and exchange of information among its member countries. However, the mandate of the office changed profoundly with the fall of the Iron Curtain which began in 1989. Over the subsequent two decades, as the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union gradually joined FAO, its responsibility expanded to meet their needs by providing policy and technical advice to support their transitions from planned to market economies and enabling them to meet standards set by the EU for both accession and trade. FAO increased its presence with the establishment of the Subregional Office for Central and Eastern Europe (SEU) in Budapest in 1996.
ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The global economic and financial crises, climate change and volatile food prices have had serious impacts on economic development in many countries in the European and Central Asian region, which is highly differentiated by income levels, policy agenda and assistance requirements. In addition, as many Central European countries have joined the EU, FAO’s work has shifted further east.

Wheat is the main staple crop in the region, a commodity which the smaller and poorer countries import. Historically high food prices in 2007–2008 and 2010–2011, exacerbated by export barriers in the region, caused an increase in poverty in some of the poorer importing countries and have shaped FAO efforts in support of food security in the region. FAO provides early warnings of crop shortages and rising prices, and emergency support to the most food insecure, ensuring that the needs of smallholders, who are often overlooked, remain at the forefront of support efforts.

Countries in Central Asia are in transition from planned to market economies and thus in the process of reforming their institutions. FAO provides analyses and advice in policy reform concerning agriculture, land tenure, natural resource management, rural poverty alleviation and food security, while also providing technical assistance in institution and capacity building and training, and in establishing regional networking.
FAO PROVIDES SERVICES TO THE REGION

Policy advice. FAO can delve into the vast store of knowledge it has gathered, and call upon its range of information systems and analyses in order to hone policy advice for member countries. Because of its global outreach, FAO provides comparisons of developed and less-developed countries and can call upon its store of information in areas such as crop prospects, animal health and global food standards – all of which can be factored into the policy advice it offers to member countries of the region.

FAO Investment Centre. As part of the FAO Technical Cooperation Department, the Investment Centre works with FAO technical departments and field offices to formulate viable agricultural and rural development investment projects and programmes. The Investment Centre works in partnership with the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), among others, to mobilize the financing needed for agricultural and rural development. Support is provided in the form of analyses and reviews of current situations, assistance to strategy development and action planning, detailed project planning and monitoring of project implementation. The work of the Investment Centre is particularly important, as low investment in agriculture has been identified as one of the major causes of limits to development and food insecurity.

Field programme. FAO field activities in the region support countries in their transition to market economies and contribute to revitalizing rural sectors by involving a cross section of stakeholders. The big-picture goal is to launch practical, on-the-ground agriculture, forestry and fisheries projects that, in turn, help improve rural livelihoods, prevent migration from rural to urban areas and provide a future for rural youth and women. The portfolio of activities constantly evolves, but each year FAO supports between 40 and 60 projects in the region, covering about 20 beneficiary countries.

Technical expertise. FAO’s staff of technical officers supports its member countries through establishing fora for sharing information, including workshops, training sessions, publications and Web-based learning. In general, FAO offers ongoing support to the region through:
- providing data, analysis and technical support on world food insecurity, agriculture, forestry and fisheries,
- monitoring world and regional food production and trade,
- controlling plant and animal diseases,
- assisting in the establishment and application of food standards,
- providing a neutral forum for discussion,
- offering training and capacity building in meeting standards, e.g. related to the World Trade Organization or the EU,
- studying and analyzing national agricultural policies and rural development issues.
THERE IS NO QUESTION that fisheries provide crucial resources for both food and income. The contribution of fish to global diets has reached a record average of 17 kg per person per year, now supplying more than 3 billion people with at least 15 percent of their average protein intake. This increase is mainly due to aquaculture, which is now growing at almost 7 percent a year globally and will soon overtake capture fisheries as a source of food fish. Together, fisheries and aquaculture support the livelihoods of an estimated 540 million people, and fish products account for more than US$100 billion in annual food trade. Fisheries also have potential to help meet the increased need for animal protein that will be required by the world’s increasing population. Yet, about 32 percent of world fish stocks are estimated to be overexploited, depleted or recovering. In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, inland fisheries and aquaculture predominate the sector. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia provides support ranging from guidance on careful and responsible fisheries management to establishing scientific cooperation among the countries of the region that share lakes, rivers and watersheds. FAO also works to ensure that the needs of smallholders are not overlooked, especially by governments prone to making investments in large-scale aquaculture or inland fisheries infrastructure.

**FAO IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA**

Fisheries and aquaculture

**DRAMATIC DECLINE IN REGIONAL FISHERIES PRODUCTION**

Production in inland capture fisheries and aquaculture declined dramatically with the transformation from planned to market economies that began in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the early 1990s. In Central Asia, production in some countries dropped between 70 and 90 percent, with fish and fisheries products largely disappearing from the population’s diet. Causes are similar to those that hit other sectors due to the changing economic situations, such as reduction of investment in research, modern production facilities and infrastructure, and depleted resources from decades of unsustainable fisheries management.

**Policy support.** As a result of FAO support to the countries of the region in setting appropriate policy and institutional frameworks to develop modern fisheries sectors and establish sustainable fisheries management plans, there has been a significant increase in the capacities of national fisheries administrations.

The FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, adopted by many countries in the region, includes guides and plans of action for undertaking an ecosystem approach to fisheries and for combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the region. FAO has translated the Code and six of its technical guidelines into Russian and supported their dissemination. In addition, FAO works with governments to help them develop the regulatory and certification procedures needed to participate in trade of fish and fisheries products.

**Practical support.** FAO responds to requests from the countries in the region for tangible help – meaning practical technical support in building or building back their fisheries and aquaculture sectors. This practical support, usually in the form of field activities that introduce good practices and bring lessons learned at policy level to the field, aims at introducing modern production systems and technologies across the value chain, including aquaculture production and reproduction, fish
feed production and pond construction. In addition to capacity-building workshops, FAO produces manuals in response to member requests, such as guides on carp and trout propagation.

FAO also has produced a basic training manual on water re-circulating systems, as opposed to flow-through, aquaculture systems. These systems clean and re-use water and thus do not pollute rivers and streams and, at the same time, reduce the risk of diseases and reduce the need for antibiotics in the system. By sharing basic information on the system, FAO supports decision-makers in determining in advance if they have the capacity to develop and operate such a system.

**Regional collaboration.** The challenges to achieving sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture are global and need to be addressed by coordinated action. In addition to the dominance of the Black, Caspian, Adriatic and Mediterranean Seas, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia are connected by huge networks of watersheds and rivers that run through many of the countries. FAO’s numerous regional- and national-level capacity-building activities have brought countries together to find joint approaches for overcoming their similar problems.

This has resulted in increased collaboration and partnerships within the region and between public and private sectors at national level. In the past, with the centralized governance systems, dams, hydroelectric power stations and large irrigation systems were built with no consideration for impact on other countries, with results such as blocking fish from accessing their spawning grounds.

FAO has established and supports regional fisheries bodies to facilitate the ability of these countries to work together, insuring that developments in one country do not have negative impacts on other countries.

- Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFISH), unanimously approved by the FAO governing Council in 2009, came into force in 2010, with a programme to promote development, conservation, resource management and aquaculture development in the region.
- European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) assists in the collection of information, facilitates cooperation among governmental organizations, and advises on sustainable development of inland fisheries and aquaculture.
- General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) covers the Mediterranean and Black Seas and connecting waters, promotes the development, conservation and management of marine resources and encourages cooperative training and research projects.

FAO is currently working to facilitate fisheries cooperation specifically focused on the Black Sea and the fisheries sectors of the six countries that border it. FAO is in a position to bring the countries together for discussions on developing fisheries science cooperation and management.
THE DEVELOPMENT of competitive agribusiness and agro-industries is crucial for opening avenues to rural development as well as for developing markets for farm products. Agro-industry has the potential to provide employment in off-farm activities such as packaging, processing, transporting and marketing of food and agricultural produce. In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the opportunity for agricultural producers – especially smallholder farmers – to participate in markets is limited, not only by the farmers’ lack of entrepreneurial skills but also by inadequate infrastructure and limited competitiveness. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia contributes to the development of agribusiness and agro-industries at national, subregional and regional levels, providing support to improve farmer-market linkages and develop value chains which, in turn, offers promise of improved employment and livelihoods. These activities not only improve government and institutional capacity, they empower farmers and rural entrepreneurs in the region to improve their positions in the markets and value chains.

Agribusiness and enterprise development

AGRIBUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT
It has been more than 20 years since the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia began the process of moving from planned to market economies. Since the fall of the iron curtain the countries have pursued different courses. Some European countries have become EU members and others are preparing for accession, while in most of Central Asian countries, governments still have important roles in managing their rural sectors.

In addition, the context has changed – the world has globalized. Many farmers now participate in longer value chains. No longer driven just to provide food to meet national demand, they now provide products for global markets. At the same time, those markets are evolving, due to changes in technology and new trade rules, structural developments, expansion of the retail sector and the proliferation of demanding market and consumer standards.

BUILDING CAPACITY AND SHARING BEST PRACTICES
Globalization of agrifood value chains requires informing those involved along the chain, and other stakeholders, of developments in international markets and providing them with the capacity to exploit market opportunities. To this end, FAO in Europe, in collaboration with international partners, organizes information exchanges and capacity-building opportunities that address issues pertinent to agribusiness and rural enterprises development. Given the region’s natural, social and economic heterogeneity, these meetings also serve to support the collection, dissemination and exchange of best practices for supporting agribusiness and enterprise development.
**Agribusiness** refers to all activities related to adding value to farm products such as packaging, processing and distribution. Agribusiness also requires setting up retail links that open pathways to the consumer, including product development, marketing and advertising.

**Enterprise development** refers to the entrepreneurial aspect of agribusiness, meaning the farmers develop a new product and then commercialize it themselves, usually destined for niche markets or tourist outlets. For example, in Montenegro farmers package and promote honey from their farms, and make flour from a traditional wheat variety that has a unique texture. These products are not available in supermarkets. Farmers sell directly to tourists from their farms or to local tourist shops.

**DIVERSIFICATION AND COMMERCIALIZATION**

**Strengthening rural livelihoods**

Diversifying crops in the field and introducing new enterprises to support the market chain contribute to income generation which, in turn, can reduce the vulnerability and increase the resilience of smallholder farmers. FAO in Europe sets up workshops and exchanges that allow the countries of the region to share information about their activities in integrating diversified production into value chains – information they can use to formulate sound policies and strategies for diversifying livelihoods and developing market linkages.

**VALUE CHAIN SUPPORT**

**Linking producers to markets, improving market infrastructure and access to services**

As the agro-food value chains in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia expand, they require more planning and coordination, and in particular, improved linkages among farmers, agribusinesses and retailers, to improve their competitive positions in the markets. FAO works with governments to strengthen national capacity for identifying needs and priorities, and for determining which measures to use for improving food chain management and performance.

**BUSINESS PROMOTION**

**Building a pro-business environment to drive competitiveness**

Many of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia still have critical gaps between policies, institutions and farm-household systems. FAO in Europe is working with national institutions and practitioners to build the kind of effective relationships that will ensure policy-makers are behind moves to improve the business environment, such as establishing local linkages and the kinds of institutions needed for the development of competitive market-oriented agriculture.

Agro-industry has potential to provide employment in off-farm activities such as packaging, processing, transporting and marketing of food and agricultural produce.
During the days of centrally planned economies in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, governments gave each farm a plan for production, provided all supplies, and kept the costs for inputs such as feed, petrol and building products to a minimum. Many countries in the region had a tradition of unregulated backyard slaughter. The transition from centrally planned to market economies, which began in the 1990s, meant privatization and restructuring, with animals transferred from large collective farms to private households and an accompanying decline in livestock investment, inventories and production. Today, due to improved economic conditions in many countries, the demand for livestock products has increased, bringing with it market opportunities for local producers. However, to take advantage of these opportunities, producers must bring their operations to a level that meets food quality and safety requirements, which is especially difficult in an area where most local producers are smallholders.

Globalized economies. In the past decade, the livestock sector in Europe and Central Asia has faced the impacts of global economic crises and spiking prices for commodities and inputs, as well as growth in demand for animal products. It has responded to the increased demand through more intensive livestock production, which often has come at the expense of the environment. At the same time, climate change has put pressure on the sector, with impacts ranging from water shortages to increased spread of animals diseases. FAO assistance has focused on three major areas: providing policy advice and capacity building for sustainable livestock sector development; supporting better management of animal genetic resources; and improving the capacity of veterinary services for surveillance and control of major transboundary animal diseases and zoonoses.
POLICY AND PRODUCTION

Supporting livestock sector modernization and revitalization

FAO in Europe and Central Asia provides livestock policy advice and technical assistance aimed at supporting smallholders as well as large producers. It focuses on increased and more responsible livestock production, and improving food quality and safety to meet market and trade standards. Activities range from establishing young farmers’ clubs that encourage young people to remain in rural areas to supporting establishment of cooperatives that enable smallholders to pool resources.

Throughout the year, FAO organizes activities to demonstrate best practices to farmers, as well as livestock experts from ministries of agriculture and to introduce technology for both large- and small-scale production. FAO helps open communication networks among its member countries for sharing ideas on production and marketing. It also co-hosts workshops with leading scientific institutions, NGOs, universities and research institutes to share ideas in areas such as improving feed management and husbandry or increasing traceability along the food chain which is required for food trade. FAO fosters public private partnership in the meat sector through, for example, upgrading and developing hygienic and safe meat chains and capacity-building for state and private meat processors.

ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES

Stemming loss through management and conservation

In Europe, half of all domestic animal breeds that existed at the turn of the century have become extinct and 43 percent of the remaining breeds are endangered. The first comprehensive assessment of livestock biodiversity, The State of the World’s Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, revealed clearly that the diversity of animal genetic resources is decreasing. In absolute terms, Europe and the Caucasus have by far the highest number of at-risk breeds (28 percent of mammalian breeds and 49 percent of avian breeds), in part because they have highly specialized livestock industries, in which production is dominated by a small number of breeds.

Today, with changing climates and increased global trade, it has become even more urgent to conserve animal genetic diversity. Maintaining diversity means that farmers and breeders have the options they need for selecting stocks or developing new breeds that can cope with the new climates, have resistance to new or re-emerging animal pests and diseases or have other valuable traits. FAO supports countries in developing and implementing national action plans for conserving their animal genetic resources and has organized a number of capacity-building workshops on characterization, inventory and monitoring, in vivo and in vitro conservation, and valorization of local breeds for maintaining agro-biodiversity.

ANIMAL HEALTH

Strengthening surveillance and control of transboundary animal diseases

Europe and Central Asia have a history of transboundary animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), African swine fever (ASF), highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and brucellosis. In addition, several events have contributed to disease emergence and spread such as:

- privatization of veterinary services which often has led to inadequate surveillance and border control, at the same time that there is increasing global and cross-border trade;
- changing climatic conditions which have led to emergence and spread of disease vectors; and
- increased consumer demand for animal products which has led to more intensive livestock production systems that are conducive to disease spread.

FAO provides assistance to strengthen national veterinary services for surveillance, detection, diagnosis, control and timely reporting of disease. Often these are new diseases, such as H1N1, which are unknown to the national services. FAO fosters regional and crossborder cooperation among veterinary services of Europe under the Global Framework for Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Disease (GF-TADs) for Europe. FAO also works with local authorities to clarify the drivers of diseases, identifying unsustainable and risky practices and the role of wildlife and ecosystems in disease emergence and spread, such as HPAI and ASF in Eastern European countries. FAO animal health experts in Europe and Central Asia are in daily contact with FAO’s Global Early Warning and Response System (GLEWS) at its Rome headquarters, providing timely surveillance information on animal and zoonotic disease threats.
IN RECENT YEARS, food safety concerns have increased worldwide. Emerging and re-emerging food-borne pathogens, antimicrobial resistance, transboundary food threats, technological changes in food production, preservation, packaging and distribution, and increased consumer awareness have raised awareness that food safety is more than a public health issue – it also is an economic, political, scientific and technical issue. The countries with economies in transition have shown growing interest in World Trade Organization (WTO) membership, which is linked with new opportunities to enhance economic development by increasing food and agricultural exports. However, this also implies the need to apply internationally agreed risk assessment-based food standards, according to the WTO Agreements on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). The EU accession of countries in the region is an additional incentive to improve the food safety control systems. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia supports countries’ efforts to strengthen and modernize their food safety control systems by promoting modern approaches to food safety, such as integrated food chains, improved inter-sectoral cooperation, risk-based inspection and traceability. FAO provides policy support and technical assistance to countries working to establish appropriate legal and administrative food safety frameworks, and harmonize national food standards with international requirements which, in turn, increases their abilities to participate in regional and global food trade.

FAO IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Food Safety and Nutrition

FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION
Valuing the implications of food safety for food and nutrition security
Globalization has brought with it an increased transcontinental movement of food which enhances the possibilities for the spread of food-borne diseases and contamination. This has increased focus on the need to monitor product safety throughout the food chain – from farm production through processing, packaging and transporting food to local, regional or global markets. Governments and agrifood industries must share responsibility for ensuring that all foods are safe and suitable for consumption. In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, FAO has responded by assisting countries in the region through training, workshops, technical meetings and advocacy events that raise the understanding of the modern paradigms in ensuring food safety; increase institutional and individual capacities for their application; and encourage the public and private sectors to engage in building a stronger food control system.

FROM FARM TO FORK
Monitoring an expanded global food supply chain
Food safety risks in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia can range from unsafe picking or canning in the households to food-borne diseases that can move rapidly through intensive farming systems. Whether due to microbial contamination or consumer exposure to foods with unsafe levels of chemical residues, veterinary drugs or environmental contaminants, countries need to have the scientific and inspection capacity to make sure their food safety regulations are followed and standards are met. FAO works with governments, policy-makers, scientists and academia to ensure food regulations are science-based and continuously strengthened to meet the changing realities of the food supply landscape. This includes support in data collection to assist countries in assessing their current food safety situations, as well as guidance in setting up science-based risk assessments that can pinpoint potential risks.
and find optimal ways to avoid or mitigate them. It also includes supporting food producers – from small-scale to large agro-industries – to raise their awareness of, and ability to implement, food safety management systems and comply with food safety and production standards.

**IMPROVING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY**

*Contribution to the promotion of sustainable diets*

Sustainable rural development, a key contributor to food security, is essential for improving nutrition and quality of life. In Europe and Central Asia, the increasing demand for traditional agricultural and food products comes from local consumers but increasing tourism in the region also has raised demand for local specialties. This consumer preference for authentic and quality food linked to a particular region or country creates the potential for development of niche markets that, in turn, can support the rural economy, increase farmers’ income and create opportunities to maintain the population in less-favored or remote areas. FAO in Europe and Central Asia provides support and guidance for the development and implementation of new origin-linked labeling schemes that include geographical indications, and also promotes the production and preservation of traditional agricultural and food products which serves to diversify diets and support rural development.

**CODEX ALIMENTARIUS**

*Promoting global standards to support health and trade*

Codex Alimentarius was established by FAO and the World Health Organization in 1963 with the mandate of setting food standards applicable throughout the world – standards based on science that guide global food production and ensure that it is safe and traded fairly. Most countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia have become members of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, enabling them to participate in the development of Codex standards. FAO supports the countries in establishing the policies necessary to place food safety on the political agenda and also in raising the levels of scientific expertise they need to make technical contributions to the work of Codex and participate in the international standards-setting process.

FAO provides policy support and technical assistance to countries wishing to establish appropriate legal and administrative food safety frameworks, and harmonize national food standards with international requirements which, in turn, increases their abilities to participate in regional and global food trade.
Rising oil prices and recognition of the climatic impacts of greenhouse gas emissions have led to a refocus on wood as a renewable resource, as opposed to finite fossil fuels. If managed properly, wood and wood products and forests in general can contribute to climate change mitigation through their ability to store carbon. In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, use of forest resources has played an important role in economic recovery during the transition to market economies and has the potential to do even more.

Western Europe's production of roundwood and forest products is increasingly competing with imports from the countries to the east, and its net imports are expected to double. In addition, focus on the social and environmental benefits of forests and the services they provide have challenged the way Western Europe uses its forest land. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia supports its members in protecting this critical resource but also in ensuring that forests are managed in a way that enables them to fulfil their economic and environmental potential. In Central Asia, which is prone to desertification, forests fulfil environmental functions, such as fixing the soil.

**PARTNERSHIPS**

*Working together to solve current and avoid future forestry problems*

The level of forest management varies across the countries of Europe and Central Asia, depending on their ecological, social and economic conditions as well as the specific policy frameworks they have in place. FAO's work in the region focuses on building partnerships. This includes bringing together individuals and organizations working for the sustainable management of forests, and facilitating their ability to find solutions for the most challenging issues facing forests and forestry today: climate change, energy and water. FAO sponsors workshops, seminars, and on-site visits and exchanges that include countries from across the region.
UNECE. FAO and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) have formed the FAO/UNECE Forestry and Timber Section, which works with other international organizations and governments to strengthen the forestry sector and its contribution to sustainable development throughout the region. It monitors the state of the forests, collecting, analyzing and disseminating information.

Common forest strategy. Many countries in the region had little tradition in forest management. Thus, FAO has worked with governments to develop a common strategy on forest-related activities. The strategy includes fostering state and private forest management and marketing, strengthening the policy and institutional framework of the forestry sector, and improving forest information management and communication.

PRIVATIZATION AND RESTITUTION
Putting the forest pieces together
While the rest of Europe steadily progresses towards sustainable forest management, Eastern European countries still face many challenges, often related to the restitution of forests from the state to their previous owners. The process of privatizing forests and restituting forest land resulted in a breakup of forests into literally millions of small 1–3 ha parcels.
In many cases, these parcels are now owned by people who have moved to cities, unaware of the opportunities the forests offer. Many owners cannot afford professional advice, and many sold all their timber to the first buyer, abandoned active management and, thus, left behind a tremendous amount of underutilized resources. This has led to other problems such as the threat of fire, which increases without proper on-site management.

On the positive side, many countries in Eastern Europe restructuring their economic and social systems from centrally planned to market-based systems have made huge progress in developing a private forestry sector and adapting their institutions. As national governments have returned forests to former owners or their heirs, changes have been made in policy and legislation for greater private sector involvement in the forestry sector as forest institutions, notably state forest services, are adapting to the market economy. As a result, the forestry sector in Eastern Europe is benefiting from a general recovery, its production of forest products is growing, its trade of forest products with Western Europe is increasing significantly and many new forest owners are seeking new skills and resources to manage their forests in a sustainable way.

FAO in Europe is working to help countries in the region take advantage of the economic opportunities the forests have to offer by ensuring that they are managed properly and protected for the future. This includes working with policy-makers to identify ways and means to assist the new private owners with professional advice that will enable them to take advantage of expanding markets while maintaining forest quality.

If managed properly, wood and wood products and forests in general can contribute to climate change mitigation through their ability to store carbon.
THE GOAL OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT is to increase the capacity of rural families to improve their economic status and livelihoods through their own efforts and resources. This requires that agriculture production is competitive, that access to land is secured, that economic activities in rural areas are diversified, and that job opportunities exist outside agriculture.

Since the 1990s, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia have had two waves of land reform. First was the redistribution or restitution of state lands to private owners, which left people with fragmented pieces of land that did not allow for efficient farming. Second was followed by the recognition that consolidation of fragmented farms needs to be addressed.

Establishing good governance of land tenure is crucial for addressing rural poverty on a global level. Where the poor and vulnerable have limited and insecure rights to land and other natural resources, it is difficult to overcome hunger and poverty. Conversely, equitable and secure rights can support social and economic development.

FAO IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Land tenure and rural development

LAND TENURE

Transition to market economies – two waves of land reform

With the breakdown of the socialist bloc in the early 1990s, land reform was one of the first steps taken by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia on their paths of transition from centrally planned to market economies.

Redistributing the region’s agricultural landscape

Under the first wave of land reform, what had been state land, cooperative or socially owned enterprises was privatized. If the government could identify the original owner, the land was restituted. If not, as in the case of ex-Soviet Union countries, the land was broken up and redistributed. Subsequently, when requested, FAO supported governments in establishing land registration and cadastral systems and is continuing its involvement in the development of land administration systems in the region.

Food security and land. Restitution and redistribution improved food security, as people could survive from their land during the economic crises that followed the break-up of the centrally planned economies. However, in many cases, it also created fragmented farms, with families often owning small, isolated and disconnected pieces of land, making agricultural production inefficient and non-competitive.

Reconsolidating the restituted lands

Under the second wave of land reform, government initiatives were designed to realign and consolidate fragmented farms in order to improve their efficiency. A similar process was undertaken successfully in the 1950s in Western Europe: family farms that had been
reduced to smaller and smaller plots over the centuries – due to the heritage system – were consolidated through a compulsory process. Today, the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia works with governments, supporting land consolidation by developing strategies and implementing pilot consolidation schemes.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Enabling rural people to compete in a global economy

As globalization opens economies to the outside, agricultural production must become competitive. That makes land consolidation a critical prerequisite for rural development because increasing the size of holdings increases farming efficiency. However, when lands are consolidated and farm sizes increased, it leaves fewer people owning or making their livings from farmland. Thus, rural development also means creating conditions that will keep people from leaving the rural areas, such as diversifying rural economies so that there are income opportunities for all.

Enabling governments to inform policy-making

In order to streamline agriculture and rural development policies, FAO works at regional, national and local levels, offering training to countries in how to write and manage rural development projects. FAO also advises governments on adapting agriculture and rural development policies for EU approximation. In this regard, FAO cooperates closely with the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group of South Eastern Europe, (SWG). The SWG, established in 2005, consists of representatives from governmental institutions responsible for rural development. FAO collaborates with SWG and other similar entities, in establishing national rural development networks (RDNs) that include NGOs, extension services and ministry representatives. RDNs promote government and EU funding instruments at local level and provide local feedback on their effectiveness and impact. The establishment of the RDNs is one of the many prerequisites for EU accession.

Preparing Guidelines on Governance of Tenure

FAO and its partners are preparing Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests to improve the governance of tenure of land and other natural resources. These Voluntary Guidelines, developed with input from all levels of stakeholders – ranging from farmers associations to governments to the private sector from all regions of the world – are intended to assist countries, civil society and the private sector in improving the governance of tenure, empowering the poor and vulnerable, enhancing the environment, supporting national and local economic development, reforming public administration and, in turn, contributing to alleviating hunger and poverty.

Establishing good governance of land tenure is crucial for addressing rural poverty on a global level.
NOWHERE IS THE IMPACT of climate change more evident than in crop production, where it has meant reduced yields, water shortages, increased weed and pest proliferation and loss of plant biodiversity. This not only impacts food availability, it also impacts livelihoods because crop production is a major source of income for the rural poor.

The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia supports governments in harmonizing appropriate crop production policies and practices aimed at the sustainable increase of productivity. It also provides support to enable their compliance with international conventions, and training in safe use of agricultural chemicals and conservation of genetic resources.

Under their traditional centrally planned economies, the farmers of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia had a highly developed agricultural sector. However, as they have moved into market economies, they have had to change their orientation and learn to grow crops that meet consumer and market standards – standards that were less important when their production focused on quantity rather than quality and the goal was to meet five-year plans. In addition, the financial situations of the countries have not allowed them to set up and renovate the institutions needed to support production and research.

FAO in Europe and Central Asia provides the fora and facilitates regular meetings, workshops and seminars where agricultural specialists can gather to exchange information on topics important to the development of the agriculture sectors of countries in the region. These specialists can range from government and ministry officials to scientists and researchers, and from small-scale farmers to large-scale producers.

**POLICY AND PRODUCTION**

_Establishing the strategy that will guide sector development_

The policy and production support that FAO provides to countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia starts with an analysis of current situations and proceeds to developing a strategy for agricultural development which looks at issues such as subsidies and access to inputs, or determining when and where to focus on seed production, food crops or fodder crops. The idea is to ensure that all stakeholders have access to the information they need so they can move forward together in developing their agricultural sectors. FAO attaches special importance to advocating policies on the promotion of agriculture in countries which have strong markets for non-agriculture products and do not give agriculture primary attention.
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Building capacity to participate in standard-setting debates

Since the 1990s, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia have implemented a host of international conventions and now participate in their standard-setting activities. For example, the International Plant Protect Convention (IPPC) allows countries to analyse risks to their national plant resources and to use science-based measures to safeguard their cultivated and wild plants. IPPC member countries also can participate in the IPPC’s governing body, the Commission for Phytosanitary Measures, which sets standards for the safe movement of plants and plant products to prevent introduction and spread of plant pests and diseases.

When a country implements the IPPC, it must introduce all measures the IPPC prescribes, which range from safe transport of seeds to improved surveillance at border crossings. FAO has added Russian as an official language, and it now provides simultaneous translation at meetings and translation of printed documents to IPPC participants who have Russian language background, enabling them to prepare for meetings and then follow proceedings of IPPC activities.

CHEMICAL MANAGEMENT

Ensuring safe and judicious use of agricultural chemicals

FAO in Europe and Central Asia works to raise awareness of the adverse impact of hazardous chemicals and pesticides on public health and provides technical support to member countries in chemical management. At policy level, FAO provides countries the technical guidance and support needed to make informed decisions about what pesticides will be permitted and how they should be managed. Food safety is the overriding goal of this support, because improper use can affect consumer health as well as the health of the people who work directly with the chemicals or who work in the fields where chemicals have been applied. FAO also promotes systems such as integrated pest management that reduce farmers’ reliance on external inputs such as pesticides. Among other learning tools, FAO has developed an e-learning course on pesticide management to support regulators.

PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

Saving and improving seeds for the future

Just four crops – rice, wheat, maize and potato – provide 60 percent of dietary energy humans receive from crops and just 12 crops provide 80 percent. It is estimated that three-quarters of the genetic diversity found in agricultural crops has been lost in the last century. Yet with the world’s population increasing, amidst the backdrop of changing climates and global conflicts, the pressure is on to find ways to feed the population and to increase agricultural production without further depleting the Earth’s natural resources. That is why it is so crucial to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of seeds, whether by collecting and storing them in seed banks or conserving them in fields. FAO in Europe works with governments to improve national seed production by, for example, setting up quality control and facilitating marketing. FAO also hosts the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture which recognizes the contributions of farmers to the world’s crop diversity and also offers a system of free sharing of seeds among the countries that are part of the Treaty.

FAO in Europe and Central Asia provides the fora and facilitates regular meetings, workshops and seminars where agricultural specialists can gather to exchange information on topics important to the development of the agriculture sectors of countries in the region.
Agricultural research and extension can provide solutions to both emerging and chronic problems in agriculture, especially when supportive governmental policies and functional partnerships are in place. Yet, the transition economies of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia face considerable constraints when it comes to their national agriculture research and extension systems (NARES). Limited public funding sources; on-going reforms and restructuring processes; lack of private sector collaboration; weak technology transfer; and use of outdated approaches to service provision and extension have left many countries unable to address fully the broad range of emerging topics of interest for farmers and small-scale producers. At the same time, private advisory services, if in place, target mainly large-scale commercial farmers and producers.

Fast-paced global developments in biotechnology and biosafety, issues surrounding climate change, the growing relevance of agrifood chains, and the advance in information and communication technologies (ICTs) all indicate both need and opportunities for growth and renewal of NARES. FAO supports this potential by working to stimulate increased investment in research in the region. It also assists national agriculture research institutions and agricultural and rural extension services through providing policy advice as well as technical support through workshops, studies and projects that focus, for instance, on training researchers and extensionists in applying ICTs, introduce communication and mediation approaches, and support research communities and networks.

AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION
Generating social capital in agriculture
Agricultural innovation today is fast paced, and taking place in a globalized setting in which the main drivers are dynamic markets and...
The innovation itself focuses on bringing new products, processes and forms of organization into social and economic use. This requires the participation not only of researchers but also the interaction of actors involved in agriculture. This is very relevant to some countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia that still operate under a centralized linear model which looks to agricultural researchers to generate and pass knowledge on to farmers rather than recognizing that the farmers themselves have a lot to add to the knowledge system.

**Stakeholder networking.** Many countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia have only recently opened research to the private sector. FAO facilitates establishing networks within countries to connect government ministries, research institutions, scientists and farmers to the private sector, while also bringing in non-traditional stakeholders – such as private sector suppliers of farmer inputs, agriprocessors and NGOs with an interest in the agricultural sector. FAO facilitates networking between and among countries in the region, so that all move forward together in their efforts to improve livelihoods of the rural population in a sustainable manner. FAO’s experience in strengthening research and extension systems and supporting the development and adoption of new technologies through participatory approaches allows it to contribute significantly to merging the existing gaps in the region’s national agricultural knowledge, research and extension systems.

**BIOTECHNOLOGY AND BIOSAFETY**

*Ensuring new technologies have a safe place in the agricultural sector*

Agricultural biotechnology is a broad field of agricultural science and includes a number of topics, such as tissue culturing, gene transfer, immunological techniques, molecular genetics, recombinant DNA methods and, currently, genomics, proteomics and metabolomics. When properly focused, biotechnologies, often combined with traditional knowledge, can offer solutions for a number of new and old challenges, thus, significantly contributing to sustainable development while improving food safety and nutrition.

**Broad application.** Amid concern that the various applications of agricultural biotechnologies have not been widely used in many countries with economies in transition, and have not sufficiently benefited consumers or smallholder farmers and producers, FAO supports conferences and strategy development, and provides tools to raise awareness of the potential benefits of biotechnologies in Europe and Central Asia. FAO also helps farmers define their needs and present them to the agricultural research sector, working to develop the capacities of agricultural advisory services in biotechnology-related matters.

**Safety concerns.** With the portfolio of modern biotechnology applications increasing rapidly, it becomes crucial to ensure that the new technologies are used judiciously, that the race toward progress does not overlook potential risks to human and animal health or the environment, and that activities comply with internationally agreed approaches to biotechnology. In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, FAO contributes to developing national capacities to perform science-based risk analysis and to set up and implement regulatory frameworks based on international treaties and standards, such as the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol under the Convention of Biological Diversity, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and Codex Alimentarius. In addition to biosafety policies and regulations, FAO provides support in training the staff of regulatory bodies and in upgrading laboratory facilities and capabilities of the technicians.
Improving agricultural statistics helps planners and policy-makers design realistic agricultural development programmes and effective policies to reduce and, ultimately, eliminate food insecurity. The availability and accessibility of these data are especially important in the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Previously, agricultural data related to many of these countries were included in the agricultural censuses of the former Soviet Union. Now that they are independent countries, it is critical to ensure that they are assisted in conducting their own national agricultural censuses according to the international standards formulated and adopted by FAO.

In addition, regular surveys are needed to obtain reliable crop and livestock data, as well as data on agricultural imports and exports, on agricultural commodity and food prices, and on the fisheries and forestry sectors. FAO in Europe and Central Asia provides technical assistance for countries to conduct agricultural censuses, and to streamline the collection and dissemination of agricultural statistics at the national level. It also ensures that member countries provide their agricultural statistics to FAO annually, for consolidation and global dissemination through FAOSTAT, the FAO corporate database which is the world’s largest database of agricultural and food statistics and metadata.

**NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS**

Gathering country-level data to guide policy-makers

The data on world food and agriculture gathered by the FAO statistics division are used in preparing the Food Balance Sheets of the countries of the world. These Food Balance Sheets provide an assessment of each country’s food supply and availability. FAO in Europe and Central Asia assists member countries in developing their food and agricultural statistical systems to ensure that their data gathering is based on sound techniques. This includes determining region-specific requirements and ensuring that FAO assistance to EU accession countries is
complementary to the requirements of the EU – particularly to requirements and methodologies of the EU statistical institute, EUROSTAT. Support to the countries of the region is mainly in the form of assisting them in preparing and undertaking agricultural censuses, and providing guidelines and capacity development to improve the quality of their data and of their national agricultural statistical systems.

Preparing a country to undertake an agricultural census has many steps, starting with ensuring that the methodology is sound and then designing a questionnaire that will provide data on a core set of essential agricultural items, as recommended by the FAO census methodology. However, it also requires training people in administering the questionnaires, in how to ask the questions, how to coordinate the collation of the various national districts’ data and, finally, how to publish and disseminate the census results.

GLOBAL DATA SYSTEMS

**Feeding information from countries into the FAOSTAT databases**

FAO in Europe and Central Asia assists FAO headquarters in collecting food and agricultural data from the countries in the region. These data, in turn validated, consolidated and disseminated through FAOSTAT, include statistics on crops, livestock, agricultural and food imports and exports, food aid shipments, agricultural prices, employment in the agriculture sector, and use of machinery, fertilizers and pesticides.

Improving agricultural statistics helps planners and policy-makers design realistic agricultural development programmes and effective policies to reduce and, ultimately, eliminate food insecurity.