Land Use Mapping and Land Degradation Assessment Tools
Regional Training Workshop

4 - 15 June, 2012
Izmir, Turkey

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Subregional Office for Central Asia (FAO SEC) held the "Land Use System Mapping and Land Degradation Assessment Tools" Regional Training Workshop at the International Agricultural Research and Training Centre 'UTAEM' in Izmir, Turkey, between 4 and 15 June 2012 in order to strengthen the institutional capacity on land use system mapping and land degradation assessment tools.

Land degradation is one of the greatest challenges facing all the five Central Asian Countries, Azerbaijan and Turkey. Vegetation degradation in pasture land, water and wind erosion and salinization of agricultural land are significant forms of degradation affecting the sub-region. In irrigated lands of Central Asia, recent estimates show that over 50% of the irrigated soils are salinized and/or waterlogged.

As land degradation is a serious threat to food security, the strengthening of institutional technical capacity for sustainable land management and planning has been considered as priority area of the work programme of the Organization in the sub-region. Since 2008, FAO has been strengthening capacities of national institutes in Central Asia to adopt a comprehensive and integrated approach to sustainable land management which mitigates extensive land degradation.

The workshop was opened by Dilek Kahraman, the Director of the Institute, Ines Beernaerts, Land and Water Officer, FAOSEC and Riccardo Biancalani, the Land Assessment in Dry Areas (LADA) Specialist from Headquarters.

During the opening of the workshop, Ms Beernaerts highlighted current challenges of SLM in Central Asia, past FAO capacity building initiatives on SLM in Central Asia and FAO's framework on SLM for future activities in the subregion. Then, she introduced the workshop and chaired the country presentation on key land degradation issues and main activities taken to combat land degradation.

The workshop was attended by a total of 15 specialists from 10 institutions of five member countries (Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan) with a high level of participation from women (66%).

The training was coached by Mr Biancalani, with support of two members of the China LADA team.

On the last day, participants engaged in the participatory design of a preliminary logical framework for a potential project aimed at establishing an information system on SLM for equitable, efficient and sustainable land use planning at national / subregional levels.

Each participant has been provided with a comprehensive file which include key background documents (*The State of the World's Land and Water Resources for Food and Agriculture, SOLAW*) and training materials (Land Use System (LUS), mapping, and LADA in English and Russian/Turkish.

The evaluation of the workshop indicated a high level of satisfaction of the participants. The main request is related to additional training on the use of Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping tools which should be further acquired when countries implement their LUS mapping activities. The training was successful in improving capacity of the participants in the use of the LADA methods and tools and convincing them on their usefulness and relevance for land degradation assessment and monitoring in their country.

The implementation of subregional initiatives on SLM for an equitable, efficient and sustainable land use planning and widespread dissemination of best practices in Central Asia should be supported. FAO committed to continue providing technical assistance on SLM upon request from member countries, supporting national efforts to combat land degradation and report to The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).