



The first meeting of the CIS Agricultural and Trade Policy Expert Network FAO, Rome, 15-16 December 2014

Meeting report

Background

The CIS Agricultural Trade Policy Expert Network, which held its inaugural meeting at FAO headquarters in Rome on 15-16th of December, brought together experts from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and researchers from outside the region (Annex 1). The Network provides a neutral and independent platform to exchange ideas and collaborate on international agricultural trade issues in the region.

The new Network, formed with FAO's assistance, aims to fill the knowledge gap on procedures governing international trade. It brings together experts who conduct research, lead training programmes, and advise government and industry on agricultural trade policy, including regional and multilateral trade agreements. The network also intends to collaborate closely on projects related to agricultural trade in the CIS region, from producing new research to drafting policy recommendations.

At the expert network's first meeting, economists and legal experts from Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Russia discussed their activities and drafted a collective work plan for 2015-2016. Discussions focused on identifying the existing difficulties in development and dissemination of relevant analytical materials on such key topics as WTO accession commitments and their implications for agriculture, as well as possible solutions and ideas for collaboration at the regional level. In addition, during the event was established the Coordinating Committee of the Expert Network.

Meeting outcomes

Challenges associated with developing and disseminating analytical information on agricultural trade

The participants discussed the following obstacles to producing better research and policy advice:

1. Lack of transparent dialogue between governments, academia and the private sector on the pressing trade issues;
2. Lack of coordination between government institutions and organizations at the national level;
3. Insufficient information on the implications of changes in trade policy conveyed to private sector actors, farmers included;
4. Lack of information about the exact rules of trade agreements, for example the Customs Union between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, and the CIS Free Trade Agreement, and their compatibility with the WTO rules;
5. Acute shortage of experts on agricultural and trade policies, specialized research centers and technical literature, for example on WTO rules for agriculture;
6. Lack of reliable statistical data for economic analysis;
7. Insufficient financial resources for research.

Possible solutions to the identified problems

The following possible solutions to identified issues in improving analytical information on agricultural trade in the CIS countries were suggested:

- Identifying and establishing mechanisms for interaction between the various stakeholders involved in agricultural trade (including experts, government officials, farmers, processors, exporters, etc.) , at the national and regional level;
- Dissemination of the existing publications of the members of the Expert Network, along with relevant news articles, information about events and other related materials through the FAO website dedicated to the Expert Network;
- Preparation and distribution of a joint recurrent publications of the Expert Network on changes in agricultural and trade policies in the region;
- Organization of conferences, seminars and round tables. Special attention should be paid to the identification of target audience (targeting events to experts, farmers of others);
- Conducting briefings sessions for the media dedicated to trade issues;
- Establishment of an online library with reports and research papers highlighting the experiences of different countries in joining the WTO and its implications for state support of agriculture;
- Assistance in development of course curriculums;
- Keeping an updated list of experts on the Network webpage, with their contacts, links to their publications and events; Expansion of the Expert Network by attracting new members.

The following thematic areas for possible joint research within the Expert Network were discussed:

1. Options for adapting government support to agriculture to the WTO rules by reviewing the current measures in place in the CIS countries and their adherence to the different domestic support “boxes” outlined in the WTO Agreement on Agriculture;
2. Doha round negotiations;
3. Interaction of the different trade agreements established in the post-soviet space;
4. Procedures for verifying the origin of goods entering the CIS countries to determine eligibility for preferential market access;
5. Review and harmonization of methodologies for calculating food security indicators in the CIS countries, based on the FAO’s approach.

Capacity development within the Experts Network

During the working session dedicated capacity development, long term priorities and tasks of the Network were identified:

Strengthening the role of various organizations in addressing issues related to agricultural trade

- Analysis and review of internal and external regulations and practices of organizations to enhance their relevance and participation in agricultural trade policy debate;
- Work towards addressing arising trade concerns at technical, rather than political, level and facilitate discussions of emerging trade issues among trade experts in the region;

- Conducting conferences and seminars on trade issues to discuss pressing issues

Strengthening teaching institutions

- Development of innovative teaching methods, as well as ways of identifying target audience to achieve best results;
- Improving knowledge associated with gathering statistical data;
- Improving analytical skills of researchers for the effective data processing and economic analysis, which would serve as the basis for providing recommendations to governments and the private sector;
- Development of interdisciplinary dialogue and research that would include legal, economic and agricultural development aspects;
- Capacity development of recourse mobilization (preparation of research grants, projects etc.);
- Incorporating courses on agricultural trade under the WTO rules within university curriculums.

Strengthening partnerships, multilateral cooperation and communication with the general public

- Fostering cooperation among the CIS countries for more effective participation in the WTO, in particular with the view to develop joint positions in negotiations;
- Improving the quality of economic analysis related to trade and publishing and debating the results through greater media involvement.

Organizational structure and next steps

The Secretariat

Secretariat functions will be carried out by FAO, jointly by the Trade and Markets Division (contacts: Ekaterina Krivonos – Ekaterina.Krivonos@fao.org and Alfinura Sharafeyeva – Alfinura.Sharafeyeva@fao.org) and the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (contacts: Iryna Kobuta – Iryna.Kobuta@fao.org and Aron Thuroczy – Aron.Thuroczy@fao.org). The Secretariat plays a coordinating role and provides organizational support to the main activities of the Network. The Secretariat will also provide technical assistance for the implementation of the work program and assist with resource mobilization.

Coordination Comity

On the final day of the meeting the participants established a work plan of the Expert Network for 2015 (Annex 2) and set up the Coordinating Committee with four working groups corresponding to the main areas of activities:

I. Organization of conferences and other events

Coordinator: Viacheslav Evseev

Additional participants: Ihtiyor Bobojonov, Ekaterina Krivonos, Aron Thuroczy, Alfinura Sharafeyeva

The first conference of the Network, “Integration processes in the CIS region and their implications for agricultural trade” will take place in Kaliningrad, Russian Federation, on 27 March 2015 (Annex 2).

II. Research

Coordinators: Roman Mogilevskii and Natalia Shagaida

Additional participants: Linde Götz, Dariya Illina, Natallia Kireyenka, Iryna Kobuta, Georgeta Mincu, Tamara Ostashko, Elena Zhiriaeva

The group decided that the first joint product of the Network should be an annual publication with an overview and analysis of the changes in the agricultural and trade policies in the CIS countries.

The content of the publication shall be as follows: 1) Introduction, 2) Country chapters, 3) Thematic analysis (depending on availability of information) 4) Conclusion. The country chapters will include an overview of the countries' trade regimes for agricultural and food commodities (based on the classification used in the WTO's Trade Policy Review, recent trade policy changes, with an assessment of effectiveness of these changes. Ideally all countries of the region (CIS and Georgia) should be included.

Another idea was to publish an overview of specific trade barriers imposed each year with an analysis of the implemented measures in each country case.

III. Communication with the private sector and civil society

Coordinators: Vladimir Matenchuk and Renata Yanbykh

Additional participants: Ivan Djuric and Volodymyr Pugachov.

The experts agreed that the communication strategy should focus on two main areas:

1. Informing national stakeholders about the Expert Network. The key public and private sector actors should be informed about the establishment of the Experts Network, its goals and relevance for the national stakeholders. This can be achieved through various channels of communication and dissemination, such as:
 - Presentation of the Expert Network at meetings of different associations and organizations (producers, farmers, traders, etc.) with whom the members of the Network collaborate.
 - Distribution of flyers and leaflets with information about Network during various events and conferences.
 - Often national stakeholders approach FAO to request technical assistance or participation in their events. Some of these requests could be channeled to the Expert Network.

Communication needs to go both ways in order to obtain relevant information regarding what services the Expert Network can offer in order to contribute to addressing the specific trade-related challenges in different sectors.

2. Providing information on the results of the Expert Network's activities. This can be done by publishing an online monthly or quarterly bulletin. A mailing list should be prepared with contacts of persons who will receive the publication, and the bulletin shall be published on the Expert Network webpage.

Communication

For information sharing between the members of the Network and dissemination of materials, the following website has been established: www.fao.org/economic/est/international-trade/cistrade/en. It will be used for regular updates on Network activities, sharing of publications and other relevant documents, as well as news on agricultural trade in the region and world. Moreover, the website will include an online forum that will be used for discussions on all topics relevant to the mission of the Expert Network.

Conclusions

During the first meeting of the Expert Network, experts from the CIS countries were able to identify existing difficulties associated with the lack of information and analytical capacities related to agricultural trade and trade policies, and to identify actions needed to overcome these obstacles. Following the discussions held, the Coordinating Committee of the Expert Network was established, and the work plan of the group for 2015 was adopted.

Annex 1: Participant list

<p>BELARUS Natalia Kireyenka Head of Department, Department of the Institute of System Studies in Agribusiness of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus uramart@mail.by</p>	<p>KYRGYZSTAN Roman Mogilevskii Senior Research Fellow and Head of Research Institute, Research Institute of Public Policy and Administration University of Central Asia roman.mogilevskii@ucentralasia.org</p>
<p>MOLDOVA Georgeta Mincu Trade and Development Consultant, Centre for Development and Management (CDM), Moldova gmincu@yahoo.com</p>	
<p>RUSSIA Viacheslav Evseev Director, Center of the Customs Tariff and non-Tariff Regulation (Russia) v.evseev@regfortrade.ru</p>	<p>Elena Zhiriaeva Associate Professor, North-West Institute of Management of the Russian Academy of State Household Zhiryeva@szags.ru</p>
<p>Natalia Shagaida Director, Center of Agrifood Policy, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration nshagaida@mail.ru</p>	<p>Renata Yanbykh Head of Department, Department of Sustainable Rural Development and Agricultural Cooperation of the Russian Institute of Agrarian Problems and Informatics named after A.A. Nikonov (Russia) yanbykh@mail.ru</p>
<p>UKRAINE Vladimir Matenchuk Lawyer, The international Law Firm “Guide Luaeret Nouel” (Ukraine) volodymyr.matenchuk@gide.com</p>	<p>Volodymyr Pugachov Research fellow, Ukrainian Institute of Agrarian Economics bart05@ukr.net</p>
<p>Tamara Ostashko Research Fellow, Senior Institute of Economics and Forecasting, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine tostashko@ukr.net</p>	
<p>UZBEKISTAN Dariya Illina Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan daryailina@mail.ru</p>	
<p>LEIBNIZ INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN TRANSITION ECONOMIES (IAMO)</p>	
<p>Linde Götz Deputy Head of Department, Department for Agricultural Markets, Marketing and World Agricultural Trade goetz@iamo.de</p>	<p>Ivan Djuric Research Associate, Department for Agricultural Markets, Marketing and World Agricultural Trade Djuric@iamo.de</p>
<p>Ihtiyor Bobojonov Research Associate, Department for Agricultural Markets, Marketing and World Agricultural Trade bobojonov@iamo.de</p>	

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO)

David Hallam Director, Trade and Markets Division David.Hallam@fao.org	Eugenia Serova Director, Rural Infrastructure and Agro- Industries Division Eugenia.Serova@fao.org
Jamie Morrison Senior Economist, Trade and Markets Division Jamie.Morrison@fao.org	Ekaterina Krivonos Economist, Trade and Markets Division Ekaterina.Krivonos@fao.org
Mischa Tripoli Economist, Trade and Markets Division Mischa.Tripoli@fao.org	Alfinura Sharafeyeva Consultant, Trade and Markets Division Alfinura.Sharafeyeva@fao.org
Iryna Kobuta Economist, Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia Iryna.Kobuta@fao.org	Aron Thuroczy Programme Officer for the Regional Initiative on Agri-food Trade and Regional Integration, Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia Aron.Thuroczy@fao.org
Tudor Robu Assistant FAO Representative to Moldova Tudor.Robu@fao.org	Cecilia De Rosa Capacity Development Officer Office for Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development Cecilia.DeRosa@fao.org

Annex 2: Work plan of the CIS Agricultural and Trade Policy Expert Network for 2015*

Event	Responsible for the event	Participants	Partners	Date, place
Conference: Integration processes in the CIS region and their impact on agricultural trade (Annex 2)	Secretariat and Coordination Committee	Research institutes and private sector	Kaliningrad State Technical University	27/03/2015 Kaliningrad, Russia
FAO-UNITAR e-learning course «Market access and trade disputes»	Secretariat and Coordination Committee	Ministries, research institutions, private sector, NGOs	United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)	May, 2015
Annual Meeting of the Coordination Comity	Secretariat	Coordination Comity	TBD	December, 2015 (TBD)
Joint research publications	Coordination Committee	Researchers, experts on agricultural trade issues	TBD	During the year/TBD
Online discussions	Secretariat	All interested	TBD	Discussion board
Popularization of experts research papers, list of experts, publication of the news	Secretariat	Network experts	TBD	Webpage of the network

* A similar plan will be developed for 2016

Annex 3: Preliminary program of the First Conference of the Experts Network

The Conference “Integration processes in the CIS region and their impact on agricultural trade” will be held on 27th March 2015 in Kaliningrad, Russia, in the framework of the International Forum on WTO rules organized by Kaliningrad State Technical University.

- 9:00 **Opening and welcome address**
- Government of Kaliningrad Oblast
 - FAO
- 9:30 **Special session: Food prices, trade and food security**
- Food price and crude oil: Implications for the CIS region
 - Trade agreements and food security
- 10:30 **Coffee break**
- 11:00 **Session 1: Trade agreements in the CIS region and their economic impacts**
- Eurasian Economic Union: Provisions governing regional trade and agricultural policy
 - Kyrgyzstan and the effects of membership in the Customs Union
 - DC FTAs between the EU and Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia: Comparative analysis
- 13:00 **Lunch**
- 14:00 **Session 2: Implementation of WTO accession commitments and addressing trade challenges**
- CIS countries: Issues and challenges for agriculture in WTO accession
 - SPS and TBT issues in the Eurasian Economic Union and adherence to international standards
 - Raising trade concerns and trade dispute procedures in the WTO
- 15:30 **Coffee break**
- 16:00 **Session 3: Transformation of supply chains as a result of trade policy reforms (IAMO organized session)**
- Structural changes in supply chains and their implications to small producers in Central Asia
 - Supply chains and trade
- 17:30 **Final remarks and closing**
- 18:00 **Cocktail**