



# CIS AGRICULTURAL TRADE POLICY EXPERT NETWORK



## Background

The FAO Regional Initiative on Agri-Food Trade and Regional Integration focuses on strengthening national and regional capacities in Europe and Central Asia to deal effectively with the challenges posed by greater trade integration. It does this by developing better evidence on trade implications, improving the capacity of the countries to use this evidence, facilitating neutral forums and dialogues on trade agreements, and supporting design and implementation of appropriate trade policy at country level. Through this Initiative FAO is supporting the creation of a CIS Agricultural Trade Policy Expert Network which will serve as neutral and independent platform to promote exchange of knowledge and experiences on agricultural trade issues in the region. The network is intended to bring together experts in governments, private sector and academia in the CIS countries in order to promote dialogue on agricultural trade policy issues and to support broader capacity development in this area.

## Objectives

- Provide a neutral and independent platform for knowledge and experience exchange on agricultural trade issues affecting CIS countries.
- Enhance the quality and relevance of agricultural trade research and strengthen collaboration among experts for analysis, capacity development and other initiatives in the CIS region.
- Strengthen the capacities to provide technical advice and policy recommendations to governments and the private sector and improve communication and information sharing on trade policy issues with the wider community.

## Expected outcomes

- A consolidated expert community actively involved in addressing the challenges associated with promotion of agricultural trade in the CIS countries.
- Improved quality of agricultural trade policy research and advisory services to governments on trade agreements and agricultural trade policy.
- Private sector and civil society more informed about the implications of trade policy changes on agriculture and engaged more effectively in dialogue with governments on agricultural trade issues.

## Activities

Workshops, seminars, conferences, online training courses, publications, technical assistance, exchanges and study tours among researchers and experts as well as support to public-private dialogue on directions of agricultural trade policy.

## Participants

While focusing mostly on academia and independent experts, the network will also include representatives from government, private sector and civil society as receivers of training and advisory services and participants in the ongoing trade policy dialogue.

## FAO activities in support of the CIS Agricultural Trade Policy Expert Network

### *Regional and national training workshops on WTO accession issues in agriculture*

These training workshops facilitated a greater understanding of the multilateral trading rules for agriculture and the trade commitments assumed by the CIS countries in the context of the WTO accession. For example, in Russia, during the workshops organized jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture, over 200 representatives of regional

authorities discussed the key areas of concern in relation to the WTO commitments on agricultural subsidies and options for providing the necessary government support within the WTO rules. The events also fostered discussions on options for trade-related reforms that would allow the countries to take greater advantage of the WTO membership.

- Regional training workshop on WTO accession in Kiev, Ukraine, 12-13 November 2013.
- National training workshop on WTO accession in Kazan, Russia, 30-31 January 2013.
- National training workshop on WTO accession in Belgorod, Russia, 20-21 November 2013.
- National training workshop on agricultural market access issues in Chisinau, Moldova, 2-4 December 2014.

### *E-learning courses on World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreements for the CIS countries, March and November 2014*

Two five weeks e-learning courses in Russian were organized in cooperation with UNITAR in 2014 on "WTO accession and implications for agriculture in CIS countries". Approximately 200 participants gained a better understanding on WTO principles and rules regulating global agricultural trade, and the accession commitments in agriculture assumed by new WTO member states in the CIS region. Training activities included quizzes, assessment of case studies and discussion forums enabling participants to learn from their colleagues in a multicultural environment.

## Upcoming events

### *The first meeting of the Agricultural Trade Expert Network, Rome, Italy 15-16 December 2014*

The first meeting of the Agricultural Trade Expert Network of the CIS region will be held on 15-16 December 2014 in Rome. The network is intended to bring together experts in governments, private sector and academia who work on agricultural trade in order to promote exchange of knowledge and experiences with trade policy issues and to support broader capacity development in this area.

### *Trade and agricultural policy in Central Asia, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, April 2015*

The training workshop will facilitate a greater understanding of the different processes of trade and economic integration affecting the agricultural sector in Central Asia. Given the different degrees of the countries' involvement in global and regional trading schemes, lessons learned from negotiating and implementing global and regional trade agreements will be drawn upon. As part of the South-South component of the Regional Initiative will also serve to develop a roadmap for regional cooperation on agricultural trade issues between Central Asian countries and China.

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