

European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)

**36/2 Meeting of the Executive Committee
15 June 2016**

Agenda item 7 – Background note
**Regional Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan
for Europe and Central Asia 2016-2017**

The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU), being fully committed to implementing the corporate Policy on Gender Equality (adopted in 2012), provides support to Member Countries and national institutions in developing and implementing policies, programmes and strategies that aim to attain food security goals through sustainable and equitable rural development.

The FAO Regional Gender Equality Strategy for Europe and Central Asia and its Action Plan for the next biennium (2016-2017)¹ represents the common vision for the region and specifies what FAO intends to achieve in the region over the next two years with respect to its gender programming. The process of the strategy formulation was participatory: it started with the regional meeting of Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) Gender team with experts from the Headquarter Division for Gender (ESP) and Gender Focal Points from FAO country offices in March 2015.

The final document provides a brief overview of key gender issues in the region; defines regional priorities and needs, alongside time-bound outcomes, outputs and activities. It also defines the roles and responsibilities of FAO's regional, sub-regional and country offices in gender mainstreaming.

The agreed main priorities for FAO's work in promoting gender equality in Europe and Central Asia are defined as follows:

1. To empower rural women through income diversification and increased participation in decision-making processes – by initiating and implementing specific projects that meet strategic and practical needs of rural women, improve rural livelihoods and empower rural women economically;
2. To support the generation of gender statistics for the formulation and implementation of evidence-based agricultural policies and strategies;

Ensuring that all FAO interventions are mainstream gender concerns is key. Tangible results have already been achieved in each of the milestones set in the Strategy's Action Plan, and ongoing activities promise further results in this biennium:

¹ English: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5501e.pdf>; Russian: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5501r.pdf>

Milestone 1: Policy support and knowledge building through the Gender, Social Protection and Rural Development Network

Following the abolition of the Working Party on Women, Family and Rural Development, FAO, in search of cost-effective solutions with greater impact, has turned to the concept of a regional network of experts in Gender, Social Protection and Rural Development. This network has been created based on the recommendations received from FAO regional governing bodies, the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC), the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) and its Executive Committee, to strengthen national and regional capacities in Europe and Central Asia to address gender, social inclusion and rural development issues.² The network has been tested twice recently, through regional meetings in Baku (April 2015) and Minsk (February 2016), with the main purpose of providing experts with a neutral and independent platform for region-specific knowledge and experience exchange on gender, social protection, agriculture and rural development issues.

The regional meeting of experts on Gender, Rural Development and Social Protection for Europe and Central Asia held in Minsk in February 2016, has produced a publication highlighting gender, rural development and social protection issues (in both Russian and English). The previous meeting in Baku discussed a regional paper on social protection, which will serve as a background document for the big meeting being planned in cooperation with the FAO HQs in November this year.

The REU Gender Team is releasing a publication on Gender and Rural Development in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Key Issues, both in English and Russian,³ which outlines the main challenges that limit rural women's economic empowerment. Country Gender Assessments have been prepared by FAO REU and validated by the Ministries of Agriculture for Albania and Armenia, as well as for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey as mentioned previously. All of them are currently in the process of being published both in English and a second language (Albanian, Armenian and Russian).

The FAO Country Gender Assessment for Georgia is currently being updated and expanded. In Georgia, gender was mainstreamed by the FAO REU in the ENPARD II, and an analysis is being undertaken of the current state of national gender equality 2014-2016, with recommendations for the next gender equality strategy in order to better support rural women's economic and social empowerment. Studies on gender and forestry are to be undertaken in Kosovo, Serbia and Uzbekistan. These will analyse gender inequalities in the forestry industry; in the access to and use of Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFP); and in *de facto* enjoyment of women and men's ownership rights over private forests.

Milestone 2: Improved capacities to produce and use gender statistics

The REU Gender Team has supported the capacity development of national statistical offices of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey in the production of gender-sensitive statistics in agriculture. Four big workshops were held in Bishkek, Ankara and Istanbul from November 2015 to May 2016, with the participation of national counterparts, where National Gender Profiles for Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey prepared by the FAO REU were presented and

² **The European Commission on Agriculture.** Thirty Eighth Session (1-2 April 2014). The Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development (WPW): An Alternative Way Forward
Bucharest, Romania (available at:

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Europe/documents/Events_2014/ECA2014/ECA_38_14_5_en.pdf)

³ English: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5497e.pdf>; Russian: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5497r.pdf>

discussed. A manual for statisticians and relevant governmental staff – *the FAO Agri-gender statistics toolkit* – was also developed and presented, as well as the FAO proposed core set of gender indicators for agriculture.⁴

The Agri-gender toolkit and the national gender profiles for Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey are currently being published, and a follow up Regional workshop on gender statistics in agriculture for representatives of statistical offices and Ministries of Agriculture of the twelve post-soviet countries of the region will be held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 22-23 June 2016.

Milestone 3: Capacities built to support the development of social protection systems by producing country-based studies and by sharing best practice and building knowledge

Social protection has an impact on rural development making it widely recognized and crucial element of pro-poor policies. To contribute to the knowledge building and a dialogue on the social protection reforms in the post-soviet countries, FAO REU conducted a comparative study on social protection for rural population in post-soviet countries. The network concept was applied for this milestone as well (as above).

In order to further discuss the FAO role and entry opportunities to actively support the strengthening of social protection systems that are gender-sensitive and adapted to rural populations, a regional meeting that will involve colleagues from the FAO Headquarters, FAO country offices, the ministries of agriculture, national statistical committees, and the experts' community as mentioned in the Milestone 1, will take place in November 2016.

Milestone 4: Fostering an enabling environment for rural women and men to attain food security and poverty reduction goals in agriculture and rural development, by promoting rural entrepreneurship and exploring export opportunities for off-farm activities in Central Asia

Economic empowerment of rural women from Central Asia and Azerbaijan will be supported by FAO through craft production and income diversification. As a first step, gender sensitive value chain analyses of selected crafts for rural women's economic empowerment is being undertaken in Central Asia and Azerbaijan:

- (1) "Review and analysis of export potential and marketing opportunities for rural off-farm activities in Central Asia". The Report is focused on three Central Asian countries; namely: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and is being finalized now by the Central Asian Crafts Support Association's Resource Centre in Kyrgyzstan (CACSARC-kg);
- (2) The "Gender-Sensitive Value Chain Analysis of Silk Products in Azerbaijan" is being produced by the "Inkishaf" Research Centre (NGO);
- (3) "The Gender-Sensitive Value Chain Analysis of (1) Small Ruminants and (2) Basket Weaving Sectors in Uzbekistan" is being produced by the *Central Asian and Southern Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutions*, a regional organization for Central Asia and Caucasus operating under ICARDA-CAC umbrella. These two studies will be complemented by the concluding report providing a base for rural crafts development in Uzbekistan.

⁴ English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E12gHFzKCNk&list=PLzp5NgJ2-dK4Ei-CY1kLCQwzuA5_iXbKo; Russian: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Im-OrmTBbc&list=PLzp5NgJ2-dK7hkf0fdKrKGhNqpWjolkIR>

Altogether, this represents five studies that have been conducted using field research, with the reports drafted. Although the current focus is on Central Asia, the intention is to enhance the support by accelerating rural women's economic empowerment in Albania through income diversification and access to financial resources (including IPARD and SARED grants).

Milestone 5: FAO capacities are strengthened to support more effective implementation of the CPFs

- The FAO Regional Gender Equality Strategy for Europe and Central Asia and its Action Plan are published in English and Russian and disseminated widely to strengthen coherence and results-based approach of the FAO work in the region;
- Methodological tools such as the Guidelines on gender mainstreaming and HRBA were produced specifically for the FAO Turkey Partnership Programme (SEC – FTFPP programme) and presented in May 2016;
- Policy advice and support at country and regional level includes gender-sensitive reviews of the draft Rural Development Policy of Georgia, and gender-sensitive reviews of programmatic tools coming from national governments, the EU, UNCTs and FAO, including ENPARD, UNDAFs and Country Programme Frameworks (CPF). Gender mainstreaming is not possible without capacity development of FAO and Ministries of Agriculture to conduct basic gender analyses. REU provides gender expertise to FAO projects in a variety of areas, including organic agriculture, seed production, rural development, extension services, forestry, livestock and pastures, land and natural resources management.⁵ An expert consultation organized by FAO REU in June 2016 on e-agriculture will also consider opportunities of e-agriculture for rural women's economic and social empowerment, as well as the gender gap in the access to ICT in agriculture;
- A capacity development event for Gender Focal Points of the FAO and MoAs of the Region will be organized before the end of 2016, possibly in collaboration with the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) based in Vilnius, Lithuania;
- Capacity development of FAO staff will be further supported through the production of a Compendium of good practices in gender mainstreaming of FAO projects in the region, and also through the Gender impact assessments of FAO work in the region planned as part of the RI1.

⁵ A list of projects receiving support is available as an Annex.