



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Regional expert consultation on knowledge sharing for agricultural innovations applicable for smallholders and family farmers in Europe and Central Asia

10-13 September 2018
Gödöllő, Hungary

Concept note

Background

The State of Food and Agriculture: Innovation in family farming report (FAO, 2014a) highlights that family farms are part of the solution for ensuring long-term global food security, rural poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. However, they need to be supported through adequate policies, competent institutions and capacities to innovate¹ and thus, achieving those goals.

Therefore, promoting innovation in family farming is becoming a priority for politicians and policy makers around the world, including nations in Europe and Central Asia. Despite this fact, still very little is being done in transforming their knowledge systems from linear and centralized models towards inclusive, decentralized and pluralistic Agricultural Innovation Systems (AISs)² that would revolutionize the sector (FAO, 2012). This is not a simple task. Family farms across the region are extremely diverse in size, market and knowledge access and other characteristics, implying diversity in the policy options for agricultural innovation systems.

¹ Agricultural innovation is the process whereby individuals or organizations bring existing or new products, processes and forms of organization into social and economic use to increase effectiveness, competitiveness, resilience to shocks or environmental sustainability, thereby contributing to food and nutritional security, economic development and sustainable natural resource management. TAP Common Capacity development framework on AIS.

²The term 'agricultural innovation system' refers to the individuals, organizations and enterprises that bring new products, processes and forms of organization into use to achieve food security, economic development and sustainable natural resource management. Like any 'system', it encompasses the different stakeholders or actors as well as the linkages between them. It also includes the so-called 'enabling environment' which, as the name suggests, includes the factors making it all possible, such as political commitment and vision; policy, legal and economic frameworks; budget allocations and processes; governance and power structures; incentives and social norms (FAO, 2012).

On its 39th session, the European Commission of Agriculture (ECA)³, recognized the need for FAO to assist countries in developing capacities required by AIS actors in Europe and Central Asia, and need for a forum for countries in the region provided by FAO acting as a neutral broker for knowledge sharing on transforming the AISs in the Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region towards more efficient, inclusive, decentralized and pluralistic systems.

Furthermore, during the 41st session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC⁴), the FAO member countries in Europe and Central Asia encouraged FAO to continue its efforts on knowledge sharing on policies and good practices, in particular with focus on smallholders and family farmers and provide a neutral regional platform on which to share knowledge and support the implementation of national e-agriculture strategies for countries in Europe and Central Asia.

The expert consultation contributes to the FAO regional result 50472 on the establishment of a regional knowledge-sharing platform on innovations applicable for smallholders and family farms, and regional result 50504 enhancing capacities of regional organizations and e-agriculture networks, and supports REU Regional initiative 1: Empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods and poverty reduction.

Objectives:

The consultation will discuss

- (i) the criteria for data collection on agricultural innovations for smallholders;
- (ii) the mechanisms for data collection and validation,
- (iii) related existing platforms/mechanism and gaps;
- (iv) and the interaction and collaboration with other platforms and networks to avoid duplication.

³held on 22-23 September 2015 in Budapest, Hungary, Report <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mo701e.pdf>

⁴ FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) www.fao.org/about/meetings/erc31/en/. The ERC requested that FAO:

- i. continue to assist countries in Europe and Central Asia in transforming their agricultural sectors and leveraging the livelihoods of farmers, both women and men, through e-agriculture and to foster its responsible use through the three Regional Initiatives;
- ii. collect and analyse good practices, tools and mechanisms in e-agriculture for knowledge sharing and provide policy advice and capacity development to maximize benefits and minimize risks;
- iii. develop, in collaboration with national, regional and international partners, an inclusive capacity-development framework and strategy in e-agriculture; and
- iv. provide a neutral regional platform on which to share knowledge and support the implementation of national e-agriculture strategies for countries in Europe and Central Asia

More specifically, the expert consultation will:

- Elaborate and validate criteria for selection and data management of agricultural innovations, applicable for smallholders and family farms in Europe and Central Asia
- Identify and discuss relevant knowledge sharing platforms, identify gaps, define scope, parameters, and means of collaboration with other relevant platforms and networks in view of avoiding duplication of work
- Identify and present case studies for innovations for smallholders and family farms based on a country survey⁵
- Strengthen the regional e-agriculture network and support the innovation platform⁶
- Discuss the parameters of the regional observatory for e-agriculture innovations for stakeholders *and family farms and e-agriculture policies*
- Validate the review of the e-agriculture strategy guide for the region.

⁵ Invited country experts will be requested to participate in a survey prior the consultation

⁶ Refers to the ECA recommendation for a regional knowledge sharing platform for innovations, applicable for smallholders and family farms in Europe and Central Asia

Participants:

AKI, Godollo University, Tirana Agricultural University, AGROWEB core group (+Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Turkey), CACAARI, CACFRAS, CACSIL (FAO-SEC), TECA/TAPipedia (AGDR –FAO-HQ), GODAN, GFAR, EIP

Expected outputs:

- Clear value proposition for a new platform
- Criteria for selection and data management of agricultural innovations
- Scope, parameters of the platform, and means of collaboration with other relevant platforms and networks defined
- Initial collection of case studies and good practices (entries)
- Regional e-agriculture network with redefined scope, mandate, mode of operation, sustainability
- Regional observatory for e-agriculture innovations for stallholders and family farms and e-agriculture policies with redefined criteria for data collection and management
- e-agriculture strategy guide for the region commented and revised

Duration: 3 ½ days

Venue: Budapest/ Gödöllő

Programme:

Session 1: Introduction

- Definitions
- Objectives
- Introduction of participants

Session 2: Criteria identification

- Paper on innovation criteria for smallholders and family farms (presentation)
- Paper on data collection, validation and management (presentation)
- Discussion on the criteria, scope and sustainability of the platform

Session 3: Platforms and networks

- TECA
 - AGROWEB 'reloaded'
 - [CACILM](#)
 - [Family farming knowledge platform](#)
 - TAPIPEDIA
 - CACAARI
 - GFRAS -CACFRAS
 - SEASN – South and Eastern European Advisors network
 - E-agriculture
- The session will present the platforms, discuss the possibilities for cooperation and conclude on the way forward.

Session 4: E-agriculture network and observatory

The session will aim at strengthening the regional e-agriculture network and support the innovation platform while discussing the parameters of the **regional observatory for e-agriculture innovations for smallholders and family farms and e-agriculture policies**.

The e-agriculture experts are expected to review the e-agriculture strategy guide and propose amendments with respect to the needs in the region.

More particularly, the participants will discuss:

- 1) Regional observatory of e-agriculture by a strategic approach
 - A) How to identify a network of contributors (individuals and insitutions), and set up a clear workflow to update the information from the network (frequency, method, access, type of data)
 - B) Decide on whether to create or use the existing information management system which can use, aggregate different data sources (WB, ITU, UN, FAO) about ICTs and agriculture statistics enabling regular update of e-agriculture readiness index (e-AGRI index) .

- 2) Open data sources in agriculture of participating countries
 - A) Collection of sources by agreed knowledge organization systems (including taxonomy and thesaurus)
 - B) Developing an Open data aggregation tool which can integrate and present data and their relations in a unified view.

- 3) Proven and promising good practices of innovative technologies for smallholder family farms – observatory as decided by the Regional conference
www.agrowebcee.net/index.php?id=2877
www.agrowebcee.net/awhu/e-agriculture-strategy/
 - A) Developing or using an existing common structure,
 - B) Enabling online upload and search solution in a global resource,
 - C) Collecting and insert data from EC countries in existing resources.

- 4) e-agriculture strategy guide
 - A) Review the working paper on the e-agriculture strategy guide for Europe and Central Asia,
 - B) Select identified cases from the region to illustrate the benefits of the strategic approach,
 - C) Agree on amendments on the structure of the guide in respect to the needs in the region.