



European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)

**37/3 Meeting of the Executive Committee
20 September 2018, 10.00-12.00
Rome, FAO HQ, Room B-318**

Agenda item 5 – Background note
Review and recommendations on REU Work Programme 2018-19
Regional Initiative 1 on Empowering smallholders and family farms for
improved rural livelihood and poverty reduction

I Introduction on regional priorities and the three regional initiatives

The 31th European Regional Conference (ERC) in Russian Federation in 2018 confirmed¹ the regional priorities for the medium term period within the corporate Medium Term Plan 2018-21, as follows:

- 1) Formulating effective policies for sustainable and inclusive growth for farmers and the rural population with emphasis on smallholders and family farms;
- 2) Enhancing the reach towards new markets through alignment of trade, food safety and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) policies to meet WTO commitments and through value chain development to meet international food safety and quality requirements;
- 3) Promoting sustainable natural resources management, combating land degradation and desertification, including mitigation and adaptation to climate change;
- 4) Addressing food insecurity and reduction of all forms of malnutrition.

In order to address the agreed regional priorities in the 2018-19 biennium, the ongoing work has been reviewed, taking into account the shift in trends and developments at regional and global level. Particular focus was given to external and internal challenges. Among them are the policy processes in the region related to smallholders, trade, market integration as well as meeting commitments made under the Paris Climate Agreement², the Rome Declaration on Nutrition³ and the Framework for Action agreed at the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)⁴, and efforts of the countries in the region to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The lessons learned from the implementation of the work programme in 2016-17 shows that there is a need for further coherence and alignment of activities at regional level with the country programmes, thereby increasing synergies and impact both at national and regional level.

In this context the two ongoing Regional Initiatives (RIs) have been revised, a new Regional Initiative on sustainable natural resource management has been conceptualized, as well as support

¹ERC/18/REP <http://www.fao.org/3/mw908en/mw908en.pdf>

² http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

³ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf>

⁴ http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/files/107_ICN2-FFA/ML079_ICN2_FfA_en.pdf

in the area of food security and nutrition has been embedded in the three Regional Initiatives as crosscutting field.

- Regional Initiative 1: Empowering small holders and family farms for improved rural livelihood and poverty reduction
- Regional Initiative 2: Improving agri-food trade and market integration
- Regional Initiative 3: Sustainable natural resource management under a changing climate

The Regional Initiatives, as programmatic umbrella, guide and support the implementation of the country programme and regional work plans in a more coherent manner in order to increase country level impact and strengthen the synergies of technical support on key areas that are of concern to countries by focusing on priority areas. The Regional Initiatives' enhanced programmatic approach further ensures that cross-cutting issues such as nutrition, gender, statistics, governance and climate change are adequately addressed and better mainstreamed in the national and regional programmes. It allows to better respond to country demand for coordinated support to the interlinked development processes and the ongoing setting of SDG targets at national level.

II. Regional Initiative 1 on Empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihood and poverty reduction

Main objective

Regional Initiative 1 (RI1) will continue to support smallholders and family farmers, women and men, at both the policy and farm/community level, to increase their competitiveness and improve rural livelihoods and contribute to reducing rural poverty.

The aim of the RI1 in 2018-19 is to upscale the already ongoing country programmes and to provide a programmatic approach for more integrated projects both at national and regional level. Greater emphasis is going to be placed on cross-SO work and increasing the impact of the activities.

The lead Strategic Programme for RI1 is Strategic Programme 2 and 3, but it contributes to the achievement of Strategic Objective 1 and 4 as well, as outlined in more details in the component description.

Main components

1. *Support policy development and innovative practices for increased sustainable agricultural production*

A main challenge for the work of the regional initiative is to support the development of competitive and commercial smallholders and family farms. There is need to increase the capacities of the farmers in terms of sustainable agricultural production using pilot projects, farmer field schools (2.1.1, 2.1.2) and strengthening extension service (3.1.2). In this context FAO supports policy development (2.2.1, 2.2.2) and practices in line with the Sustainable Food and Agriculture principle⁵ such as efficient use and management of natural resources as well as

⁵ Building a common vision for sustainable food and agriculture <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3940e.pdf>

adaptation and resilience to climate change. More specifically, FAO intends to focus on the promotion of good agricultural practices in the region such as integrated pest management, organic agricultural techniques, conservation of plant genetic resources and proactive drought risk management. In addition, work is done on modern irrigation systems, sustainable forest management and fish production, including fish seed improvement and focusing on supporting smallholders (2.1.1, 2.1.2), especially to diversify smallholder incomes in face of risks from climate change and natural disasters.

2. Support improvement of rural livelihood and enhanced access to natural resources

Another main challenge of the Regional Initiative is to ensure inclusive growth through improved rural livelihoods. There is a need, both at policy and community level, to ensure that disadvantaged and vulnerable groups also benefit from economic growth (3.3.2) and to accelerate gender equality and rural women's economic empowerment (3.1.3). In this context FAO supports multi-sectoral rural development policies, integrated community development (3.1.1, 3.4.1), improved access to value chains (4.3.1), the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT)⁶ including addressing structural problems with land fragmentation and small farm sizes through land consolidation instruments (3.1.2), statistics (3.4.2), decent rural employment (3.2.1) and social protection (3.3.2).

Cross-cutting issues

Food security and nutrition policy is becoming also an integrated part of RII through school food and nutrition and nutrition sensitive social protection as well as facilitating related policy dialogues and investments. Enhanced support is provided to improve capacity on food security and nutrition policy, as cross-cutting issue, with special emphasis on school food and nutrition programmes, investments in small-scale agriculture related to food security and nutrition (1.4.1) as well as nutrition sensitive social protection (3.3.2).

Other cross-cutting issues such as gender, governance, statistics and climate change is systematically integrated, inclusiveness (e.g. gender equality, youth, vulnerability of social groups, etc.) is a key principle of RII. It aims at providing policy advice and capacity development for the definition of gender equitable and sustainable rural development and poverty reduction strategies. The Initiative ensures that disadvantaged and vulnerable groups also benefit from economic growth (3.3) and gender equality and rural women's economic empowerment are accelerated (3.1.3). Enhancement of national and local governance through participatory approaches is an important component of policy dialogues and community development planning. In the sphere of statistics, support will be provided to countries in conducting agricultural censuses and improving current agricultural surveys, which are invaluable data sources on smallholders and family farms. In addition, climate change issues are also taken into consideration through the improvement of sustainable management of natural resources.

Partnership

FAO has improved its partnerships for achieving rural poverty reduction in the region through enhanced collaboration with civil society organizations, research institutes and governments. For example, FAO cooperates with the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe on rural policy and development of short value chain in cross-border areas. Strong collaboration with the European Commission resulted in successful programmes in

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2801e/i2801e.pdf>

Armenia, Georgia, FYR Macedonia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Other main resource partners include Austria, Hungary, Norway the Russian Federation and Turkey. Dialogue with civil society organizations was improved on the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Governance of Tenure (VGGT). FAO and UNECE is cooperating on two areas: development of the ongoing regional studies on land consolidation with UNECE Working Party on Land Administration (WPLA), and implementation of the “Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests” in the context of National Food Security and the established partnership in the European region. As part of South-South Cooperation, the Turkish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock supported the exchange of experience among farmers and NGOs on introduction of land consolidation instrument and establishment of a land consolidation programme in Azerbaijan. Regional Initiative 1 – due to its integrated and multidisciplinary approach - serves as an excellent platform to create synergies and strategic partnerships with international organizations in focus, such as the lately initiated cooperation with IFAD on local community development in the Republic of Moldova.

Partnership on gender is being ensured through participation in the Regional UN Issue-Based coalition on gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment (IBC-Gender) facilitated by UN WOMEN and United Nations Population Funds (UNFPA). Partnership with UN WOMEN, the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development in Kyrgyzstan is pursued under the UN Joint Programme on Rural Women Economic Empowerment. New partnerships have been built such as with the EU Institute on Gender Equality based in Vilnius, Lithuania, and other institutions and civil society organizations based in the region.

Linkage to Agenda 2030 and SDGs

Regional Initiative 1 is re-focused to ensure increased contribution to the implementation of the SDGs. RI 1 will directly contribute to SDG 2 on zero hunger, in particular SDG target 2.3 on doubling the agricultural productivity and income of small-scale food producers by the improvement of agricultural productivity and incomes of small scale farmers through promotion of conservation agriculture in the region, generation of knowledge product on principles of organic agriculture, improvement of capacities on best practices on conservation of animal genetic resources. Enhancement of the access to natural resources, especially the access to land, and promotion of VGGT contribute to SDG 1 on ending poverty (target 1.4 on ensuring equal rights to land and other natural resources), SDG 5 on promoting gender equality (target 5.A to undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property), SDG 8 on the promotion of sustainable and inclusive economic growth (target 8.6 on reducing the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training) and SDG 10 on reducing inequality within and among countries.