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Background Note

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Update on the Implementation of the PWB 2018-19

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview on the implementation progress of the 2018-19 Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) in Europe and Central Asia, covering the first year of the biennium in particular. The report builds on FAO's Mid-Term Review Synthesis Report (MTR) 2018, which was considered by the Programme Committee in March 2019.¹

The FAO programmatic framework in the region, guided by the trends and challenges identified at the 2018 Regional Conference for Europe (ERC)² to support formulation and implementation of the country programmes, is focused on three Regional Initiatives: 1) Empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods and poverty reduction; 2) Improving agrifood trade and market integration; and 3) Sustainable natural resource management under a changing climate.

Designed to respond to the region's priorities and external processes, the Regional Initiatives provide a programmatic umbrella for FAO's regional and country programs integrating and mainstreaming cross-cutting issues of gender, governance, food security and nutrition, climate change and statistics, to enable more sustainable, equitable and inclusive development impact, a pathway for achieving transformative change under the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the Rome Declaration adopted at the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2).

The Members are invited to comment regarding the results achieved in the region during the first year of the biennium and share their views regarding the Regional Initiatives as a programmatic approach to ensure more coherent and integrated support to the implementation of the country programmes and to nationalization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Results

Following the recommendation of the Thirty-first Session of the ERC, FAO is progressing with the implementation of the biennial work programme and delivering results for the region in line with its 2018 targets defined under the Strategic Objectives. Implementation is on track, with 85 results reported in 2018 during the Mid-Term Review process. In order to support the implementation of the biennial work programme, USD 13.5 million of extra budgetary resources and USD 4.23 million of Technical Cooperation

¹ 126th Session of the Programme Committee (18–22 March 2019). For the list of documents, see <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/programme-committee/pc126/documents/en/>.

² The report of the Thirty-first Session of the Regional Conference for Europe in Voronezh, Russian Federation, held in 2018, is available at <http://www.fao.org/3/mw908en/mw908en.pdf>.



Programme (TCP) resources have been delivered in 2018. Besides providing technical assistance to the Members, the TCP resources are particularly used as a catalytic instrument to support the implementation of the country programmes by mobilizing additional resources. Resources mobilized in 2018 in the region in support of the implementation of the programme is approximately USD 27 million. Among the biggest resource partners in 2018 were the Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations agencies, Austria, the European Union, the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Finland and Japan. In 2019, based on the current project pipeline, it is expected that a similar or higher level of resources would be mobilized in support of the programme implementation in 2019 and beyond.

In line with the universality and cross-cutting nature of the SDGs, cross-cutting issues are mainstreamed across all Regional Initiative interventions. Key results achieved related to cross-cutting issues, including food security and nutrition and gender, are presented below:

- Committed to address all forms of malnutrition, the Organization reviewed the progress made towards achieving the SDG 2 food security and nutrition indicators across the region with its annual flagship publication “Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia,”³ with a focus on the cross-cutting challenges of migration, gender and youth (Strategic Objective Output 1.3.2).
- FAO strengthened capacities in nutrition governance, evidence-based nutrition policy formulation and programming, as well as nutrition-sensitive education, by facilitating the launch of the “Regional Nutrition Capacity Development and Partnership Platform in Central Asia and Caucasus” jointly with UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the World Food Programme, aimed to promote multi-stakeholder partnerships in this field (1.4.2).
- At country level, FAO strengthened the food security and nutrition and social protection policy measures by supporting piloting and uptake of the Cash+ methodology, food security and nutrition expenditures reviews in Armenia and Tajikistan, and development of the National Food Security and Nutrition Programme in Kyrgyzstan through the Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation (FIRST) programme (1.4.1).
- The Organization facilitated a high-level dialogue at the Thirty-first ERC on the key role of sustainable food and agriculture and food systems in the economy of the region (2.3.1).
- FAO remains committed to mainstreaming gender equality concerns and promoting social protection as an instrument for poverty reduction across all Regional Initiatives. Among the key results are a publication “What gender mainstreaming in agriculture means in practice: Cases from selected countries of the European Union,”⁴ a series of trainings on gender mainstreaming practices and tools, and two thematic side events at the UN Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2018 and the ERC (3.1.2). In addition, the Regional Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan (2019–2022) was elaborated to frame work in this field in the region for the coming years.⁵

Further highlights and achievements addressing cross-cutting issues under the Regional Initiatives are presented below.

³ The 2018 FAO Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia is available at <http://www.fao.org/3/CA2703EN/CA2703EN.pdf>.

⁴ This document is available at <http://www.fao.org/3/I8958EN/i8958en.pdf>.

⁵ See IC background document IC/19/5 on the Regional Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan, available at http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/reu/europe/documents/events2019/IC2019/IC_19_5_en.pdf.

Regional Initiative on Empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods and poverty reduction (RI-1)

In order to address the challenges faced by smallholders and family farms, RI-1 has two components. The first is to increase capacities of farmers in sustainable agricultural production by enhancing their access to services such as farmer field schools or extension services (SO3.1) so that they can acquire good agricultural practices in such areas as forestry, fisheries and livestock production while increasing adaptation and resilience to climate change (SO2.1, SO2.2). The second component aims to ensure inclusive growth through improved rural livelihoods, with emphasis on gender equality and economic empowerment.

Highlights of achievements in 2018 under the Regional Initiative include:

- In the framework of its support to smallholders and family farms across the region, FAO conducted country studies on the needs and constraints of smallholders and family farms in Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia and Tajikistan and, based on the country studies, prepared a Regional Synthesis Report (3.4.1).
- FAO promoted discussions with partners at the national and regional levels on policies and programmes for integrated community development and sustainable agriculture production (3.4.1).
- With FAO assistance, integrated community development was supported through the promotion of income diversification possibilities and mobilization of local resources, which includes the formulation of agriculture and rural development strategies as well as a feasibility study for the development of rural tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina (3.4.1).
- Fostering the dissemination and uptake of innovative practices and modern technologies, FAO promoted best irrigation practices in Republic of Moldova and the production of phylloxera-resistant grape varieties in Armenia (2.1.1).
- At regional level, the network on pesticides management was established, promoting sustainable agriculture.
- At regional level, the Organization continued the policy dialogue on land consolidation and land market development, including through conducting a regional study on good practise for land consolidation legislation and organizing the Tenth and Eleventh International LANDNET conferences held in North Macedonia and Estonia (3.1.2).
- Also at regional level, FAO facilitated high-level exchanges on the potential of digitalization and e-agriculture for farmers at the e-agriculture forum “2gether 4 Strong Digital Agriculture” in Bulgaria (3.1.2).
- In Kyrgyzstan, FAO – together with the United Nations Development Programme and the EU FIRST Programme – has supported the establishment of a national multi-stakeholder policy dialogue platform and preparation of action plans for the implementation of territorial approaches to rural development (2.1.2).
- In Tajikistan, FAO contributed to the International Fund For Agricultural Development’s Livestock and Pasture Development Project, which aimed to contribute to poverty reduction by increasing the nutritional status and incomes of 22 400 poor households through enhanced and sustainable livestock productivity (3.4.1).
- In the Western Balkans, FAO conducted a review of social protection programmes and their impact on rural men and women, raising awareness on the key issues through a subregional report and a consultation meeting (3.3.2).
- FAO has been supporting the preparations for the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028) to be launched in Rome 27–29 May 2019. In this context, FAO supported a high-level



conference titled “The future of family farming in Europe in the context of launching the UN Decade on Family Farming” in Romania in March 2019.

FAO has improved its partnerships for achieving rural poverty reduction in the region through enhanced collaboration with civil society organizations, research institutes and governments. Highlights include:

- FAO cooperates with the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in Southeastern Europe in technical and policy dialogues related to agriculture and rural development policies.
- Strong collaboration with the European Commission has resulted in successful programmes in Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia and Tajikistan.

Regional Initiative 1 increased its contribution to the implementation of the SDGs. Highlights on SDG-related work:

- Regional Initiative 1 directly contributes to SDG 2 on zero hunger, in particular SDG target 2.3 on doubling the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers by the improvement of agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale farmers through the promotion of conservation agriculture in the region, the generation of knowledge on principles of organic agriculture, and the improvement of capacities on best practices regarding the conservation of animal genetic resources.
- Enhancement of access to natural resources (especially access to land) and the promotion of VGGT⁶ 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 and 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.

Regional Initiative on Improving agrifood trade and market integration (RI-2)

Within Regional Initiative 2, FAO assists Member States in enhancing the agrifood trade policy environment, enabling access to diverse markets, including global, regional and domestic markets. The purpose of the Initiative is to support Member Countries in enhancing the agrifood trade policy environment for small- and medium-sized enterprises through (i) developing capacities to implement trade agreements and increase access to new markets (SO4.1); (ii) developing capacities to implement global food safety and quality standards (SO4.1); (iii) providing supportive policy environments for export diversification (SO4.2); and (iv) developing capacities and providing technical support for sustainable value chains and promoting geographical indication schemes (GIs).

Key results achieved in 2018 are as follows:

- FAO facilitated the sharing of specialized knowledge through the regional workshop “How to use WTO instruments in the interest of agri-business” and strengthened national capacities to analyse the impacts of policies related to trade, food and agriculture through the Agricultural Trade Expert Network.

⁶ Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i2801e.pdf>.

- FAO enhanced the capacities of countries for accession to the World Trade Organization, meeting international sanitary and phytosanitary standards, and engaging in trade in a more transparent, informed and efficient manner.
- Strengthening the partnership with the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), FAO facilitated a technical multi-stakeholder consultation on intra-regional trade promotion, drawing on its analytical study on BSEC countries (4.1.2).
- FAO promoted exchanges on geographical indications (GIs) and organic production for developing sustainable agrifood value chains at an ERC side event, presenting findings of six country studies and the relevant experience of Hungary, Croatia and Poland (4.2.1).
- In close cooperation with Kazakhstan as coordinator for the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe, FAO facilitated a regional workshop for 17 countries for inclusive and participatory policy dialogue on food safety and preparedness on CODEX issues (4.2.1).
- In Tajikistan, FAO developed a matching grants scheme for leveraging migrants' remittances for improved investment in agriculture and rural development (4.2.1).
- In Kyrgyzstan, FAO supported the Government in measuring support for the agriculture sector in order to facilitate analysis of the impacts of trade and agricultural policies on agricultural development and food security and to provide clarity on the role of trade policies in achieving SDG 2 (4.4.2).
- Substantial effort is continuing to minimize food loss and waste through a regional platform, fostering partnerships and supporting six countries in their development of national food loss and waste reduction strategies.
- FAO increasingly promoted awareness and capacity development to reduce the advance of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), jointly with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the World Health Organization (WHO), including by organizing a regional ATLASS training in the Russian Federation to promote its assessment tool for laboratories and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) surveillance (4.2.1).
- Through an emergency project for "African Swine Fever Emergency Preparedness in the Balkans," FAO supports the elaboration of prevention and control strategies and facilitates exchange on the challenging issues of border control, awareness and biosecurity (5.3.1).
- FAO facilitated access to international finance institutions through FAO's Investment Centre (DPS) and Trade and Markets division (EST) and technical support to investment programmes, contributing to increasing public and private investments for inclusive agrifood systems, promoting and implementing best international and regional experiences in risk management mechanisms, and supporting and developing open policy dialogues between public and private stakeholders to improve the policy and regulatory environment in selected agrifood sectors.
- FAO supported the preparation of investment projects and the development of value chain and geographical indication (GI) schemes, including supporting the development of agricultural cooperatives in Serbia, strengthening a grain association and export activities in Serbia, developing the capacity of agribusiness associations in emerging export markets in Serbia, support to the development of self-regulatory organization in agribusiness in Ukraine, and support to the development of Ukrainian agricultural cooperatives. Ongoing activities in 2019 include supporting sustainable value chains through the development of geographic indicators in Georgia, supporting sustainable value chain integration in Montenegro's fruit and vegetable sector, improving Ukrainian agribusiness' access to export markets, and supporting an inclusive dairy value chain development in Kazakhstan.



Partnerships play a key role for achieving the results of Regional Initiative 2. Highlights of partnerships under RI-2 include:

- The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), in particular, provides RI-2 the technical platform for conducting e-learning courses, in addition to the FAO e-learning platform developed jointly with the European Union.
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) financial resources are used for the implementation of joint EBRD–DPS projects on boosting export diversification and promotion, supporting value chain integration and improving linkages with traders in specific agrifood sectors.
- RI-2 supports FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe (CCEURO) to ensure inclusive and participatory food standards and policy dialogue.
- RI-2 cooperates with the SAVE FOOD Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction and is extending the partnership base at regional and national levels.

Regional Initiative 2 contributes towards achieving the SDGs, with a focus on SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) and SDG 15 (life on land). In particular, RI-2 addresses target 8.A on trade support for developing and least developed countries, 17.10 on an open and non-discriminatory trading system, and 17.11 on increasing developing and least developed countries' share of global exports. Highlights in this context include:

- studying the role of trade policies in achieving SDG target 2.B.2;
- developing capacities of governments and the private sector in WTO instruments and promoting transparent markets under SDG target 8.a.1;
- supporting the development of national strategies to reduce food losses and waste, as well as meeting SDG target 12.3 aiming at cutting in half the per-capita global food waste at the retail and consumer level and reducing food losses along production and supply chains; and
- strong contribution in promoting organic agriculture, geographical indications GIs and other quality labels under SDGs 1, 5, 12 and 17.

Regional Initiative on Sustainable natural resource management under a changing climate (RI-3)

This past year, 2018, was the first year of the full implementation of this new Regional Initiative. Under this Regional Initiative, FAO supports Member States in promoting sustainable natural resource management in agriculture, forestry and fisheries by scaling up agroecology and strengthening national capacities in statistics and policy alignment, including for the integration into national legislation of climate change adaptation and mitigation and disaster risk reduction. Highlights of results achieved in 2018 include:

- The FAO regional report “Policy analysis of nationally determined contributions in Europe and Central Asia”⁷ (prepared for COP24), the “Regional Strategy for Enhanced Engagement with the Green Climate Fund,” and the “Regional Master Plan on GEF-7” provide regional mechanisms for evidence-based decision-making and enhanced access to climate financing instruments, such as the Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility, for countries. In this context, full proposals for Armenia and Kyrgyzstan were submitted to the GCF Secretariat, while Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Serbia will submit their GCF readiness proposals this year. On the other hand, Kyrgyzstan and North Macedonia are currently implementing GCF readiness projects with FAO support (2.2.1). For the GEF-7, Azerbaijan and Georgia submitted proposals focusing on land

⁷ This document is available at <http://www.fao.org/3/CA2684EN/ca2684en.pdf>.



degradation neutrality. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan are in last stages of preparing their proposals to be submitted to the GEF Secretariat this year.

- Promoting sustainable agricultural production and ecosystems, FAO supported the adoption of the strategic framework of the Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock (GASL) by countries of the EU Eastern Partnership and Central Asia, the elaboration of the National Plant Genetic Resources Conservation Strategy in Belarus, and an integrated forest management plan in Turkey (2.2.1).
- National capacities on locust prevention and control were strengthened in Central Asia (5.3.1).
- Related to SDG implementation and monitoring, FAO supported the raising of awareness on the SDGs and elaboration of the baseline reports in Albania, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Uzbekistan, mapping and conducting a gap analysis in Azerbaijan, and the preparation of the technical report on the integration of the SDGs in the agriculture sector in Kyrgyzstan (2.2.2).
- Serbia's forests benefit from a USD 3.2 million grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) financing a four-year project supporting sound data, policy frameworks, practices and capacities for sustainable forest management (2.1.2).
- Following the success of and lessons learned from the previous Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM), a second phase of CACILM, known as CACILM 2, is supported by GEF and is implemented by FAO (FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia and Land and Water Development Division). The overall objective of CACILM 2 is to scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agricultural production landscapes in the Central Asian countries and Turkey.

Considering the broad areas of intervention that fall under climate change work, Regional Initiative 3 is structured to ensure the participation and support of a number of partners with various areas of expertise. Highlights include:

- The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) is seen as a strategic partner for climate, agrometeorological and climate change modelling and monitoring interventions; and
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is key partner for certain Green Climate Fund (GCF) readiness support mechanisms as well as ecosystem-based climate change adaptation work.

Regional Initiative 3 contributes to several SDGs. Highlights include:

- strengthening capacities on prevention and mitigation practices, non-structural vulnerability, sustainable consumption and production under SDG 12;
- addressing the need for more productive and sustainable agriculture under SDG target 2.4; and
- supporting climate change adaptation and mitigation under SDG 13.

Lessons learned

Following the implementation of the first year of the biennium, the following lessons learned will be considered for the second year and for the future of the programme:

- The UNFCCC Paris Agreement and the increasing demand for support on climate change adaptation and mitigation and climate finance provide a strong foundation for the programme and results framework under Regional Initiative 3.
- Regional Initiative 2 responds to country priorities, reflected by most Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs), including priorities related to increasing market access, agricultural sector

competitiveness, value chain development, and export promotion and diversification, as well as addressing food safety, transboundary animal diseases, sanitary and phytosanitary requirements, agricultural policy and sectoral analysis. Building on these strengths there is a need for shifting more systematically to nutrition-sensitive and sustainable food systems approaches, with a holistic approach to value chain development, in view of developing more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems.

- The commitment of countries and United Nations organizations to respond to the 2030 Agenda triggers strong demand for further support to the SDG nationalization processes in the region.⁸
- The three Regional Initiatives offer a programmatic umbrella matching countries' key national development and SDG priorities and provide a results framework for FAO country programmes, linking and integrating all country and regional results.

⁸ See IC background document IC/19/7 on the progress of FAO's support to SDG nationalization in the region, available at http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/reu/europe/documents/events2019/IC2019/IC_19_9_en.pdf