

Informal Consultation for Europe and Central Asia

16–17 May 2019

Budapest, Hungary

Background Note

Session 2

Regional Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan (2019–2022)

Summary Note

I. Objective and background

The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia has adopted a new Regional Gender Equality Strategy for 2019–2022 that represents a common vision of what FAO intends to achieve in the next four years in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment through its interventions in the region, and how FAO intends to achieve it. The strategy defines the priorities, roles and responsibilities of regional, subregional and country offices in gender mainstreaming, and it contains an action plan with time-bound outcomes, outputs and activities.

The objectives of the Regional Gender Equality Strategy 2019–2022 are:

- (i) to contribute to FAO’s efforts to assist member countries in the region in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and contributing to gender equality and women’s empowerment for eliminating hunger, reducing rural poverty and achieving food security for all in the region in a systematic, holistic and sustainable manner; and
- (ii) to minimize gender-related risks and safeguard rural women’s rights in all actions to achieve sustainable and equitable food systems and rural development.

The FAO Policy on Gender Equality¹ and its minimum standards for gender mainstreaming, along with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda – with its key principle of leaving no one behind – will guide the regional work on gender in 2019–2022. Priorities set for 2018–2021 at the Thirty-first session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) define FAO interventions in the region, emphasizing support to smallholder empowerment, trade facilitation and market integration, and the sustainable management of natural resources in a changing climate, with food security and nutrition as an overarching theme. The strategy also takes into account the results of the FAO REU stock-taking exercises conducted in 2012 and 2017 and the feedback received at the Fortieth session of the European Commission on Agriculture, held 27–28 September 2017. Feedback received from nearly 60 technical officers and staff, including gender focal points (GFPs), at the brainstorming session of the Regional Initiative coordination meeting held 12 September 2018 also is reflected in the strategy, along with feedback from the FAO regional gender mainstreaming workshop held 18–19 October 2018 in Ankara, Turkey.

¹ Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3205e.pdf>



The aim of this document is to summarize the overall direction of the strategy.

II. Approach

The Regional Gender Equality Strategy will focus on providing technical assistance across the three FAO Regional Initiatives for Europe and Central Asia and other interventions to ensure that FAO work is responsive to the needs of the most disadvantaged groups and creates equal opportunities for women and men. This will be achieved by:

- 1) Generating knowledge for evidence-based policy dialogue and support for rural women's economic empowerment by increasing their access to productive resources, services, technologies, decent work and social protection. The areas that will be under close attention for specific research in the coming years include assessing the gender dimensions of food security and nutrition, forestry, livestock, fishery, and access to e-agriculture and rural advisory services;
- 2) Supporting countries in developing inclusive and gender-sensitive value chains and promoting women's entrepreneurship through market and value chain analysis and the provision of continuous and direct support for rural women to generate sustainable incomes through alternative and green jobs; and
- 3) Providing technical guidance and support to countries in the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data to monitor progress in closing gender gaps in key areas of FAO's mandates, and ensuring that gender is mainstreamed across all Country Programming Frameworks and Regional Initiatives in achieving sustainable agriculture and food systems; and enhancing the national and regional capacity for better integration of gender concerns in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of development and humanitarian interventions.

III. Follow-up to the Joint Call for Action for the 2030 Agenda

The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia will base its policy support on the Joint Call for Action² for promoting socially inclusive rural development in Europe and Central Asia, which reaffirmed the commitment of Member States and FAO to work towards gender equality. The Joint Call for Action, adopted at the FAO REU high-level conference Promoting socially inclusive rural development in Europe and Central Asia: Action for the 2030 Agenda in Vilnius, Lithuania,³ provides detailed recommendations to FAO, national governments, civil society and the private sector for effective and gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the areas of the FAO mandate.

The development of capacity and the raising of awareness on issues related to gender equality, social protection and rural development will remain at the core of FAO's work in the region, by targeting primarily

² <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7020e.pdf>

³ The Vilnius conference was organized and hosted by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in close partnership with the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) on 30 January–1 February 2017 in Vilnius, Lithuania. It was a follow-up to the high-level event Step It Up Together for Rural Women to End Hunger and Poverty, convened on 16 December 2016 in Rome by FAO, the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the European Commission, in close collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP) and UN Women. The Vilnius conference provided a platform for a policy dialogue among national stakeholders and reinforced commitments towards socially inclusive agriculture and rural development in the region. More details available at: <http://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail-events/en/c/461793/>.



FAO internally but also assisting national partners from ministries of agriculture, forestry and fishery and from national statistical offices and other government and non-government agencies.

To address a lack of documented and region-specific knowledge, FAO will continue to collect case studies of promising practices regarding how gender-equality issues can be addressed in agriculture (forestry, livestock, fishery and aquaculture) and rural development policies and practices across the region, contributing to food security and the elimination of poverty in a just and sustainable manner. FAO will produce policy-relevant and evidence-based reports on selected topics, similar to such recent products as *Gender equality, social protection and rural development in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*⁴ and *What gender mainstreaming means in practice: Selected cases from the European Union*.⁵ FAO also will continue to support the production of country gender assessments. In 2019–2022, these country gender assessments will be developed and published in Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

IV. Roles, responsibilities and targets

The Regional Gender Equality Strategy assigns the roles and responsibilities for different actors in the process. It makes clear that the FAO Representatives and Assistant FAO Representatives bear primary responsibility for mainstreaming gender concerns in country-level policy and programme cycles, such as the Country Programming Framework formulation process (by mandating the country gender assessments, for example, or by involving civil society groups and other stakeholders representing the interests of rural women). This will also imply the formulation, implementation and monitoring of new and ongoing initiatives. The FAO Representatives and Assistant FAO Representatives will ensure a certain share of FAO budget at the country level is allocated to gender- and women-specific targeted interventions (as per Minimum Standard 14 of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality).

The Regional Initiatives coordination team, led by the Regional Programme Leader, will ensure that regional- and country-level planning and reporting integrate gender concerns and that each Regional Initiative Delivery Manager (DM), Strategic Programme Focal Point (SPFP), Lead Technical Officer (LTO), technical officer (TO) and gender focal point (GFP) ensures that gender issues are adequately addressed in the provision of technical assistance, namely in formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating agriculture and rural development policies, strategies and programmes. For this purpose, these people will be responsible for ensuring the gender-responsiveness of their interventions, with the technical support of the regional gender team (based in Budapest and Ankara), for which the team will be contacted at the earliest stage of inception/formulation.

Minimum targets include:

- a) One hundred percent of all Country Programming Frameworks approved in the region meet the FAO minimum standards in gender mainstreaming.
- b) FAO has conducted country gender assessments in all countries in the region in which the Organization provides technical assistance.
- c) At least three ministries of agriculture in the region benefit from the provision of institutional support. This may include technical support for formulating a sectoral gender mainstreaming

⁴ Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5575e.pdf>.

⁵ Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/i8958en/I8958EN.pdf>.



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

strategy and action plan, establishing the gender focal point function or forming a gender-mainstreaming group, or developing capacity in gender and agriculture issues.

- d) In at least three countries of the region, FAO-specific interventions targeting rural women are being planned.