

Rural women, youth and economic opportunities: cases from Europe and Central Asia to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs

Virtual debate co-organized by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and the Union of Hungarian Women

Thursday 18 March 2020, 10- 00 am -11-30 am CET

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Issues

In average, almost one third of the population in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) live in rural areas, with agriculture, forestry and fisheries remaining essential parts of their livelihoods. Despite relatively high key development indicators, agriculture in the region, with few exceptions, is often associated with under-development, limited investments and rural poverty. Family farms, especially in remote areas, have to fight with complexity of issues, from price volatility to high risks of natural disasters and effects of climate change. Investments in agriculture and business in rural areas do not translate to direct benefits to marginalized groups.

Across the region, rural youth, and especially young women, have fewer opportunities for higher education and decent jobs. Rural women have less access to critical productive resources, be it land, agricultural inputs and financial services, and are overrepresented in manual labor as informal, unpaid family workers. In some countries of the region, no more than 10 percent of registered landowners are women and fewer than 10 percent of agricultural enterprises registered on women's names. Just one in ten clients of the extension services in some countries is a woman, which clearly demonstrates gender-based divide in access to agricultural knowledge and technologies. Along with that, low wages, poor infrastructure and lack of social services, prevalence of social practices based on stereotyping and strict gender roles, - all contribute and serve as factors that push young migration in search of opportunities and a more dynamic quality of life in urban areas or abroad.

Objectives

Against this background, a debate will focus on:

- a) sharing good practices and successful experiences that aim to improve the engagement of young women in agriculture, through economic opportunities and providing younger generations with access to health care, education, safe environment and other benefits of development.

- b) The debate will also serve to identify opportunities and promising practices for creation of better conditions and resilient livelihoods in rural areas in the context of the SDGs, that allow women and men to stay and continue farming and engage in non-farming activities in rural areas rather than migrating.

The recommendations that highlight new opportunities and facilitate their active engagement and employment will be in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in particular, with SDG2, SDG1, SDG8, SDG5, SDG9, and SDG10, and with other global and regional level agreements.

Format

This is a virtual panel discussion, which brings together the speakers from farmers' community, civil society, private sector and international organizations. Participants' joining the event virtually will have a possibility to participate in the discussions, and ask questions. The event will be broadcasted at the REU and UNECE webpage.

Speakers¹

The panel will give a floor to the speakers who highlight country level and regional experiences and practices:

- (1) Margit Batthyány-Schmidt, President, Union of Hungarian Women - Moderator
- (2) Mónika Alíz Mészáros, Magyar Női Unió Egyesület: *Organic farming, women's empowerment and boosting rural economies to achieve the SDGs: the Case from Hungary*
- (3) Representative of young rural women – beneficiary of the projects (TBC)
- (4) Elena Polyakova, Corteva Agriscience ², Government and Industry Affairs Lead Central & Eastern Europe: *Key Findings of the Women in Agriculture Study and its Recommendations*
- (5) Dono Abdurazakova, Senior Gender and Social Protection Adviser, FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia: *Promising Practices in the Region Targeting Rural Women*

¹ [THE ABOVE LIST IS SUBJECT FOR FURTHER CONFIRMATIONS AND CHANGES]

² Private sector