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The Gender Gap in Agriculture in Eastern Europe - Results of Recent Country Rural Gender Assessments

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Executive Summary

This document presents the results of country gender assessments undertaken in Albania, Armenia, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. In the latter country sex-disaggregated data was derived from the recent Census. These assessments are part of a greater work programme of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) on research into the socio-economic status of rural women and men (ongoing since 2011). The paper acknowledges the constraints on providing a comprehensive analysis due to the reconfirmed lack of sex-disaggregated data in the agricultural sector in the Region. The paper identifies several important gender gaps in the agricultural sectors of the countries studied and offers recommendations on both policy and field project efforts which could potentially address these issues.

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Guidance sought

The ECA is invited to:

- Note that the general lack of sex-disaggregated data in agriculture – reconfirmed by recent country assessments – hinders the full understanding of existing gender gaps in rural populations, and thus hampers targeted and effective programming.
- Request that member countries cooperate with FAO REU on awareness-raising and capacity development in the ministries of agriculture and national statistical offices in the field of collection, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data in agriculture, with special attention paid to gender-sensitive design of upcoming Agricultural Censuses in the Region. Gender assessments are effective tools for identifying the main gender issues and trends and guide further data collection. Therefore, conducting such assessments in all focus countries in the Region is advised.

Request that member countries collaborate with FAO REU on policy development and field-level activities to reduce gender gaps in the agricultural sectors of countries in the Region. Special attention should be paid to addressing gender gaps in access to agricultural extension and cooperatives, tenure security issues and the lack of enabling environments for female-led agricultural/rural businesses.

I. Introduction

1. The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) 2010-11 “Women in agriculture: closing the gender gap for development” demonstrated that agriculture is underperforming in many developing countries and one of the key reasons for this trend is that women do not have equal access to the inputs and resources that they need to be more productive. More specifically, SOFA indicated that providing women with the same access as men to inputs and resources could raise yields on farms run by women by 20 percent. This could increase national production by 2.5 percent, which in turn would decrease the number of undernourished people in the world by 12 percent.

2. SOFA 2010-11 draws on empirical evidence from developing countries in most regions, although Central Asia and Eastern Europe was represented only by a few references to Tajikistan. In order to fill the existing data gaps, since 2011 FAO REU has been undertaking extensive research on the status of rural women and men in the Region along with methodological and conceptual work on core gender indicators in agriculture. In line with SOFA 2010-11, both conceptual work and research has focused on uncovering existing gender gaps in access to productive resources in agriculture. The first results of review of relevant secondary sources on gender in rural development and agriculture were presented in the 37th Session of the European Commission on Agriculture.

3. The current document presents the main findings of four Country-level Gender Assessments carried out in Albania, Armenia, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, as a more in-depth continuation of a previous desk review on the Region. The assessments sought to understand gender inequalities at three levels – macro, meso and micro – by studying existing policies and legislation and institutions, as well as data on rural households and holdings. Apart from the Moldovan report – which focused more on fresh Agricultural Census data – the country assessments included field interviews with relevant stakeholders, analysis of socio-cultural trends that affect the roles of women and men in agriculture in the Region and a review of available sex-disaggregated data on the agricultural economies of the countries.

4. The paper acknowledges that the four country-level assessments provide analysis on only a sub-set of major aspects of agricultural economies in four countries in different sub-regions of Eastern Europe. However, based on previous analysis of gender statistics by REU, and the shared characteristics of the gender issues identified in the four country-level assessments, there is strong reason to assume that this analysis adequately represents several important trends for the whole of Eastern Europe. The existence of similar trends should also be studied in the Central Asia sub-Region. Country gender assessments can be effective tools for understating the situation of rural women and

gender inequalities in agriculture and rural areas as well as for supporting gender-sensitive policy making. Therefore, similar, systematic assessments should also be carried out in the other countries of the Region, focusing on Central Asia. Furthermore, the assessments reconfirmed the general lack of sex-disaggregated data in the agricultural sector. As such, a central recommendation of this paper is to enhance the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data for the region.

II. Gender statistics in identifying gender gaps in agricultural production

5. The importance of sex-disaggregated data for in-depth analysis of agricultural systems and the development of more sustainable, productive, and efficient rural economies and farming systems cannot be understated. Here it should be emphasized that "FAO believes that progress towards eliminating hunger and poverty will result from: i) ensuring that its programmes and projects, as well as its normative work, reduce the gap between rural women and men in access to productive resources and services; ii) ensuring that women and men have the ability to influence programme and policy decision-making, and building institutional responsiveness and accountability; and iii) ensuring that rural women and men can take up economic opportunities to improve their individual and household well-being." To monitor progress in this, sex-disaggregated data at the national level are essential.

6. For almost two decades, since the Platform for Action of the 1995 Beijing Conference, the collection, generation, and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data has been a priority for governments and the international development community. Most recently, FAO's African Commission on Agricultural Statistics made improved statistical data – including sex-disaggregated information – a top priority for the region during its 23rd session in December 2013. As stated by FAO REU in its report on core gender indicators: "Reliable and accurate data is the basis for evidence-based and informed policy-making processes. In particular, sex-disaggregated data is needed to raise consciousness on the different roles of women and men in rural society, and the unequal access to resources, in order to persuade policy makers to promote change through gender-sensitive policies."

7. Sex-disaggregated information is particularly important for the agricultural and rural sectors of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where agricultural production continues to be vital to the livelihoods of millions of citizens and a foundational sector for the national economies of the region. In Armenia, Albania, and Georgia the rural population ranges from 47-50 percent of the total population, and in Moldova it is as high as 61 percent. In the countries studied by the assessments, small-scale agriculture was identified as a critical part of the agricultural sectors of these countries. In Georgia, small-scale farming was found to be dominant, with 82 percent of these small farms producing for consumption only. Similarly, in Moldova 86 percent of farms were found to produce for consumption only.

8. The sex-disaggregated information generated in the region to date indicates that discrimination against women, particularly rural women, continues to impact livelihoods and agricultural production. Rural women constitute a significant proportion of the agricultural labour force in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and they are important stewards of natural resources and social cohesion in rural communities. While sex-disaggregated data provides critical unbiased insight into the challenges and barriers facing this segment of society, the lack of it indicates that governments are missing an opportunity to target these specific challenges. Proper analysis of sex-disaggregated data offers information to design policies that account for differences by gender, and to identify providing possible paths toward more sustainable and just agricultural production systems.

9. Sex-disaggregated data is also essential for monitoring and evaluating the impacts of policies on the livelihoods of rural women and men. Despite the importance of this kind of statistical information, there is still limited focus and little data available on gender indicators in agricultural, food and nutritional statistics. In response to the challenge that this lack of data poses for effective policy development and evaluation, for the past three years the REU Gender Team has focused intensively on developing a core set of gender indicators, supporting the integration of gender into a number of agricultural censuses in the region, and providing capacity development on gender statistics to National Statistical Offices. Despite significant improvements in several countries, there continue to

be major information gaps which hinder the ability of FAO, governments, local civil society groups, and international donors to advance gender-sensitive policy development, with related national gender-responsive budgeting, and field-level projects in the most effective way possible.

10. A review of national gender-related laws and agreements in each of the four countries assessed showed that gender equality is recognized and promoted through a number of legal, constitutional, and international commitments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Furthermore, some of the countries, most notably Armenia and Georgia, have specific national entities, such as the Division on Gender Issues within the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues of Armenia, dedicated to addressing gender issues. This indicates that gender equality is supported at the highest levels of government in the four countries.

11. In-terms of policy related to gender issues, all four countries mention addressing gender inequality in their FAO Country Programming Frameworks, with Albania and Armenia making explicit commitments to gender equality. Albania has committed itself to making “capacity development and policy support to women’s role in Albanian Agriculture” a top national priority. Gender mainstreaming and promotion of the quality of life of women is specifically addressed in Armenia’s Gender Policy Document, and more generally within a rural development context in Albania’s Rural Development Strategy. Although in other country cases, the role of women in the agricultural sector and strategies for improving gender equality within rural development are less explicit, the commitment exists.

12. Despite the measures taken to eradicate gender discrimination at policy level in the countries studied, both field interviews and the existing sex-disaggregated data reveal that women are underrepresented in the national political institutions. As identified in the Georgia country assessment, a “core issue...[is]...the gap between policy and rights established by law, and their practice. Lack of capacity and resource in implementing and lack of intermediary institutions are exacerbated by a strongly traditional patriarchal culture, particularly in rural areas, along with sometimes discriminatory customs and practices.” This point was specifically supported by the Armenia assessment as well as the Albania report, which stated that “there is a male-dominated decision-making culture both at local and national levels.” Evidence of these trends can be drawn from the political representation of women. For example, in Georgia women represent 59 percent of the electorate while holding only 12 percent of seats in parliament. Similarly, in Armenia, women constitute only 9.2 percent of the National Assembly deputies while female representation in ministerial and deputy ministerial levels actually decreased from 8 percent in 2002 to 4.8 percent in 2008. In both countries women are a minority in all branches of government with the exception of some subordinate and junior roles such as administrative and support positions. Clear statistics on female political representation in Moldova and Albania was not available.

13. The gender gap in political representation in the countries analyzed extends from the national to the local level where women are also generally underrepresented in public institutions and decision-making positions. This issue needs to be seen particularly in the context of feminization of agriculture and absence of men in some rural communities, due to outmigration, and also to the gender discrepancy in life expectancy. In Armenia, where data on the gender of the holders of civil servant positions was most available, the number of women holding political positions at local level has increased since 2005, although it is still severely unbalanced compared to the number of men. For example, of the 48 city mayors in Armenia, none were women; women accounted for only 0.5 percent of 553 city council members and only 2.6 percent of village community leaders. Preliminary research in Albania and Georgia suggests a similar gender imbalance at the local level, particularly in regard to agriculture-related government agencies such as agricultural extension services. But a general lack of in-depth data on this issue does not allow a thorough analysis.

14. Finally, in civil society, including farmer organizations, women are also under-represented. Most non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dealing with gender issues focus on prevention of gender-based violence, particularly in Georgia and Albania. These anti-violence initiatives are often led by women, although they still remain a minority in leadership positions. Besides this issue, the extent of focus on rural women and gender equality was mixed across the four countries. In Georgia

the majority of NGOs are urban-based, and those few organizations working directly with rural women focus primarily on violence prevention. In Albania several NGOs work on gender mainstreaming and promoting women's access to the labour market, but with limited focus on rural issues. Meanwhile Armenia hosts the strongest presence of national and international NGOs working on agricultural development and gender issues. No data was available for Moldova.

III. Gender gaps in employment and wages in Eastern Europe

15. Analyzing men's and women's general participation in labour markets reveals similar levels of gender imbalance in the countries studied. The female employment rate was 43.6 percent in Albania, 54 percent in Georgia, 45.5 percent in Armenia, and 45 percent in Moldova. In all cases this level was below the European Union average of 58.6 percent, suggesting continuing discrimination in hiring women in the region. In fact gender discrimination in hiring was specifically highlighted in surveys in Albania, published by the World Bank in 2011.

16. Challenges resulting from structural transitions of the economies of the four countries into the international free market economy over the past twenty years were identified as a prominent macro-level factor affecting gender employment figures. For example in Georgia it was found that traditional female jobs in agriculture and manufacturing have been relatively stagnant following restructuring and decentralization. Meanwhile, male-dominated sectors such as construction and communication have expanded with new market access. For example Georgian agriculture's share of nominal GDP shrank from 32 percent in 1990 to 8.5 percent in 2012 as the construction, transport and communication sectors grew, with very low levels of employment of women in these expanding sectors; specifically, 6.5 percent for construction/transport and 8.4 percent for communication. Similar trends were found in Armenia where agriculture employs over 45 percent of the female workforce while construction, transportation, and communication combine for less than 3 percent. Albania and Moldova are considered to be in a similar economic situation without specific figures being available.

17. Even more significant is the gender pay gap, or the difference in wages between men and women. In the countries studied by the gender assessments, women earn significantly less than men: 17.4 - 40 percent less in Albania (depending on age), 26 percent less in Moldova, 40 percent less in Armenia, and 40 percent less in Georgia. These figures are particularly striking when gender pay gaps are differentiated by non-agricultural economic sectors. For example in Armenia, almost 52.8 percent of those employed in the financial sector are women, but women make 55.8 percent less than men. Similarly in Georgia, women constitute 80-85 percent of those working in the healthcare and social services sectors but consistently make 42 percent less than men do. These statistics are supported by qualitative studies conducted in Georgia and Albania where women were found to be much more likely than men to be working without any pay at all.

18. As mentioned previously, in all four countries, agriculture is a very important sector for employment of the rural population, but not without economic and gender-based challenges. Wages for both rural men and women were found to be considerably lower than among the urban populations, reflecting the challenging economic circumstances faced by many family farmers. For example in Georgia, where 50 percent of the labour force is dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods and the agricultural sector is dominated by small-scale farming, median-earnings among the rural employed are reported to be 20 percent lower than the salaries of urban employees. Similarly, in Armenia, salaries for both men and women working in the agricultural sector were found to be approximately 50 percent lower than the average salary in the main eight sectors of the national economy.

19. Agriculture is a critical sector of employment for rural women, as significant proportions of the female population reside in rural areas in each country analyzed (as high as 70 percent in Albania). The country assessments clearly show that gender discrimination in wages in the agricultural sector is blatant. Women constitute the majority of the agricultural workforce in both Armenia and Albania, approximately 55 percent of those employed in the agricultural sector, with the actual figure being

much higher since this does not account for the fact that many women work in agriculture informally (an issue stated in the Albania, Armenia, and Georgia assessments). However, women consistently receive less financial benefit working in agriculture than men, as demonstrated by the country cases with available data. For example in Armenia and Georgia women received only 86.9 percent and 82.4 percent respectively of men's salaries. These findings are in line with a previous FAO research on salaried rural workers which showed the gender pay gap to be 18 percent in Moldova. Although the gender pay gap is lower than the average gender pay gaps in the national economies, the challenge for rural women is exacerbated by the fact that salaries in the agricultural sector are consistently lower than in other sectors: in Georgia the average agricultural sector salary for women is approximately 27 percent below the average national salary for women and 56 percent less than the average salary for men. Therefore, women seeking better salaries outside the agricultural sector face more discrimination in-terms of the gender pay gap and less opportunity in general.

20. Although sex-disaggregated data on wages and heads of households was not available from most of the country assessments, data from Georgia indicates that the incomes of female-headed households are nearly 10 percent higher than women's average salaries nationally. This figure suggests that the management authority and social standing associated with being the head of a household is associated with improved economic opportunities. However, despite these higher income levels, female-headed households are still consistently poorer than male-headed households, which earn 24.2 percent more on average. In Armenia this dynamic has led to members of households headed by women finding themselves 33 percent more likely to be living in extreme poverty compared to other households.

IV. Gender gaps in access to resources and services in the agricultural sector of Eastern Europe

21. Another significant disparity in economic opportunity between men and women in the agricultural sector is access to land and other agricultural resources. In the legislation of each of the four countries women and men are granted equal rights in access and ownership of land and natural resources. However, in all cases women were found to form the minority of landholders, even in areas where they constitute the majority of agricultural workers. For example in Albania, a mere 6 percent of registered landholders are women. In Georgia, the rate is higher, with women accounting for 31 percent of landholders in 2010. In Moldova 36 percent of landholders are women, but these holdings account for only 19 percent of agricultural lands. Land is a key agricultural resource, used for example as collateral to access credit and obtain membership of cooperatives. Thus if women are not able to fully exercise their tenure rights, food security of rural households can be severely challenged in the face of changes such as outmigration of the male head of household.

22. Both institutional ineffectiveness and customary practice were identified as factors limiting female land ownership. In Georgia, research found that when women try to claim legal property rights through courts, appropriate legal advice and support is generally difficult to access. In addition, it was found that women often face hostility within the extended family and community, which acts as a deterrent for attempting to claim lands they are rightfully entitled to. Similarly, in Albania women in rural areas are restricted in land access through their inheritance rights because of diffused patrilineal practices on land organization within families. According to a study conducted in central Albania, women, despite being aware of their rights, often do not claim their ownership, as this would be a sign of disrespect to the male head of the household.

23. In addition to women being constrained in their access to land tenure, the Albania report also indicated that similar factors are limiting their access to other natural resources needed for successful agricultural production.

24. The socio-cultural traditions on gender roles were cited to contribute to women's limited access to resources. The gender division of labour varies from one country to the other. In Armenia

and Georgia women and men are generally equally involved in crop production, although specific activities can be divided by gender (for example, men are typically responsible for the most physically demanding activities). In Moldova, men and women plant similar crops. In livestock production, which is one of the mainstays of the agricultural economies of the region, the gender differences are more pronounced. In Armenia, women play a prevalent role in dairy production and are primarily responsible for marketing, mostly done at community level. In Georgia, while women are equally involved in livestock management, they are not involved in breeding or veterinary services.

25. Despite the significant contribution that women make to agriculture, in both Georgia and Armenia the use of mechanical equipment, transport, and pasture activities are almost exclusively male activities. For example, in Armenia, 95 percent of cars and machinery are owned by men. Similarly in Moldova, only 12 percent of all types of agricultural machinery are owned by women.

26. In Georgia several reports, including a FAO/UNIFEM (now UN Women) needs assessment from 2009, identified some shifts in gender roles among Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs). In these communities women were seen to take more active roles and responsibilities in meeting household needs compared to men, who were perceived to be more passive and possibly depressed following the loss of previous employment and provider roles and status. Thus, at least in the Georgian context, community relations and employment status are likely to be two strongly interrelated factors impacting women's and men's position in labour market.

27. One important dynamic resulting from the division of gender roles in the farming sector and low female land ownership is the lack of access to credit and other support services by women working in agriculture. Access to credit is an important service for farmers, particularly at the beginning of the growing season when inputs such as seeds and fertilizers need to be purchased without a guaranteed income stream until the harvesting period. Credit also provides an important financial safety net in times of economic hardship such as environmental calamity (drought, flooding, etc.) or social disruption (i.e. a death in the family or sudden reduction in the farm labour force). Finally, access to credit is particularly important for small-scale growers attempting to scale-up their production to improve their yields, food security, and economic standing. Access to credit is generally dependent on collateral owned by the farmer. But as mentioned above, women are less likely to possess an ownership title for their land or other resources for collateral such as farm machinery or a car. Therefore, as highlighted by the Armenia, Georgia, and Albania assessments, it is harder for women to access credit and loans, which can be a significant disadvantage for agricultural production and access to markets. For example, in Georgia, data indicates that male headed households receive almost twice as much in loans as female headed households do. In Armenia it was found that women usually only benefit from micro-credit or loan programs when money comes from international donor organizations rather than local or national institutions. In Moldova the gender gap in access to credit is less pronounced, but the rate of women accessing credit overall is still quite low (only 6 percent of all female holders). However, across the region there is a pronounced lack of precise sex-disaggregated data on access to credit as well as information on differences in access to credit between urban and rural areas.

28. Another potential factor affecting poor access to credit by women is their lack of education in areas of finance and farm business management. This point was highlighted as a factor in the Albania and Georgia assessments which also indicated that lack of institutional capacity for assisting female farmers in these areas as further compounding this problem.

29. A final important analyses of gender gaps in the agricultural sector concerns access and use of agricultural services which, as highlighted by all four assessments, provide critical assistance to farmers. Data on access to agricultural extension services was limited, and the cases where it was available showed mixed results in terms of gender equality. In Albania only 5 percent of women overall accessed these services, with large deviations in accessibility between regions within the country. In Moldova, only a minority of women use extension services, although at rates close to general female representation in the agricultural sector. In Georgia, only anecdotal evidence was available, which indicated that female participation in extension services was limited. Finally, in

Armenia a study carried out in 2008 analyzing farmers' organizations showed that there are no specific women's farmers' cooperatives and that all the cooperatives studied had more men than women members. In addition, it was stated that women did not appear as active participants in these organizations, but reasons for this were not researched.

V. Findings

30. In all countries assessed, agriculture was identified as a very important sector for the national economy: according to the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) the share of agriculture in GDP in 2011 was 20% for Armenia, 17% for Albania, 12% for Moldova and 8% for Georgia. Additionally, the agricultural sector provides a high share of employment for rural women and men. Furthermore, small-scale agriculture that supports local and community-based food systems, was emphasized as a critical source of food security and sustainable livelihoods.

31. There is significant concern that small-scale farmers, who constitute the majority of producers in the region, are being left behind by a policy approach which emphasizes commercialised and industrial farming.

32. In the four country assessments studied, national legislation, policies, and frameworks were found to be in place prohibiting gender discrimination, and in some cases proactively promoting gender mainstreaming. However, a common issue highlighted across the assessments indicated that these policies and frameworks are not being effectively implemented. Therefore, despite of some positive steps toward achieving gender equality in the agricultural sector, progress has been slow.

33. In all of the countries analyzed, concerns were raised that agricultural policies lacked clear differentiation between rural versus urban men and women, which negatively impacted the effectiveness of some policies, particularly in the rural context.

34. Underrepresentation of women in national and local institutions was highlighted as a major concern.

35. The gender pay gap, both nationally and specifically in the agricultural sector, was found in two of the four country assessments to be as much as 40 percent to the disadvantage of women, with smaller but still significant gender pay gaps found in the two other countries.

36. Low agricultural wages and increased migration of women and men (but particularly men) out of rural areas were highlighted as two negative trends affecting the agricultural sectors of the region, and in particular small-scale family farmers.

37. Low rates of female land ownership were found in the countries assessed. This has a number of negative consequences for women in terms of decision-making authority, eligibility for accessing credit, and economic success in the agricultural sector.

38. Gender imbalances in accessing agricultural extension services was identified as a common trend disadvantaging female farmers with institutional ineffectiveness being highlighted as the driving factor behind this problem.

39. Lack of education for women in technical areas of agronomic production, farm management, and finance was identified as a challenge hindering women's production strategies and hampering their access to agricultural credit and loans.

40. Limited access to, and little ownership of, means of transportation were found to contribute to rural women's social isolation, which in-turn impacts their socio-economic status.

VI. Policy recommendations

41. Enhance and expand the collection, analyses and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data for the Region. Based on recent experience of FAO, gender gaps in agriculture can, to a large extent, be determined using data from Agricultural Censuses. Therefore, capacity development in the field of gender-sensitive design of Census questionnaires is essential. Gender assessments proved to be effective tools in identifying major gender issues and trends and can guide further data collection. In light of this, it is understood that these assessments should be conducted in all focus countries of the Europe and Central Asia Region.
42. Formulate specific field programs or activities to target women in rural areas, focusing on the identified key areas, such as tenure security and entrepreneurship. This should be followed by developing gender-sensitive budgeting and monitoring system indicators.
43. Establish clearer, more robust inter-ministry and inter departmental coordination and accountability systems for implementation of the national gender equality action plan within government structures and institutions, including coordinated sex-disaggregated data bases, monitoring and review indicators and processes.
44. Incorporate local stakeholders, in particular rural women in the agricultural sector, in the design and implementation of rural development strategies focused on promoting small-scale agriculture.
45. Support national and local governmental institutions and civil society, in gender mainstreaming as well as in promoting women's organizations and female leadership at the local and national levels.
46. Support institutional development for more effective agricultural extension services, with particular focus on promoting female farmers' involvement as practitioners and educators, together with enabling gender-sensitive access to agricultural education, particularly in technical knowledge related to agricultural production.
47. Support the development of farmers' cooperatives and associations and enable women's leadership and access to decision-making processes.
48. Promote tenure security and gender equality in land ownership and natural resource governance through institutional development and capacity-building at the local level. Furthermore, encourage co-registration of land and housing assets.
49. Promote the adoption of gender-sensitive taxation schemes and other policies for rural development to support rural women's entrepreneurship opportunities.