

PREPARATION OF THE 2023 INFORMAL CONSULTATION

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I. Background

The Informal Consultation for Europe and Central Asia provides a platform on which the FAO Regional Office and Member Countries can interact between sessions of the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC). It also facilitates consultation, considering the limited presence of FAO at the country level in the Europe and Central Asia. Used successfully since 2010, this mechanism has been well received by all countries in the region.

The main purpose of the informal consultations has been:

- 1) to facilitate an exchange of views among all Members of the Europe and Central Asia region
- 2) to inform and update the Member countries of the region on the implementation of FAO's programme of work in the region
- 3) to review priorities in the region in preparation for the Regional Conference in 2024.

II. Scope of the Informal Consultation

The FAO programme in the Europe and Central Asia region for 2022-23 is guided by the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031, Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2022-2025, the global PWB 2022-2023 and the priority areas of the region for 2022-23 endorsed by the 33rd FAO Regional Conference for Europe¹ (May 2022).

To address the priority areas and support the countries in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), three Regional Initiatives serve as the key programmatic umbrella for the implementation of the work programme in the region. Food security and nutrition, as an overarching priority, is addressed by all the three Regional Initiatives, while gender, youth and inclusion have been embedded as cross-cutting themes. The Regional Initiatives support the implementation of FAO Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs), contributing to the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs).

Since the programming for 2022-2023 was undertaken, the Region has been influenced by a number of significant social, economic and environmental risks that have become further pronounced, requiring urgent action over the next several years, and likely beyond. After partially recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic-induced contraction in 2021, the global economy and the economy in the Region has been experiencing a renewed slowdown in 2022 fuelled by a series of overlapping crises, including the continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the exacerbation from the war in Ukraine, soaring food prices, overall inflation and tightening financial conditions in most regions.

Responding to the needs, FAO is also updating its [Medium Term Plan 2022-25 and preparing the Programme of Work and Budget 2024-25](#)², which will be presented to the Governing bodies in the coming month and expected to be discussed at the FAO Conference in June 2023.

¹ ERC/22/REP – Report, 33rd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe <https://www.fao.org/3/nj289en/nj289en.pdf>

² <http://www.fao.org/pwb>

Related to the challenges and new trends for the Region, the Informal Consultation 2023 will focus on the review of the priority areas and the Regional Initiatives for the 2024-25 biennium, through an exchange of views among all Members of the European and Central Asia Region, in the context of achieving the SDGs.

The 43rd Session of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) will be held in September 2023 and will focus on technical issues related to “*Sustainable use of land and water resources in Europe and Central Asia*”.

The results of the Informal Consultation, the final approved MTP 2022-25 and the PWB 2024-25 and the 43th Session of the ECA will form the basis for the revised priority areas for 2024-25 to be then endorsed by the 34th ERC in 2024, and will guide the work planning in the region for the biennium 2024-25.

III. Modality

The suggested dates of the Informal Consultation are 4-5 May.

Informal Consultations have been organized in presence except the Informal Consultation 2021, which was held virtually in four morning sessions on 12-15 July 2021 due to the travel and COVID-19 restrictions.

A key lesson learnt from this 2021 experience is that although the virtual format provided opportunity for shorter focused discussions, the interaction among the country participants was relatively low.

Considering the above, the event is suggested to be organized primarily with physical presence. Building on the experience of earlier physical Informal Consultations, we suggest organizing the event on two half-days.

IV. Draft agenda

Day 1

11.00-13.00	Registration
12.00-13.00	Lunch
13.00-13.30	Session 1 Opening, Welcome, Main objectives
13.30-14.00	Session 2 Key challenges and opportunities in the region that might affect the priority areas in the region, and should be addressed by the FAO work programme 2024-25
14.00-15.00	Session 3 Update on FAO Response to the multiple crisis in the Region
15.00-15.30	Coffee break
15.30-17.30	Session 4 (working groups) Review of the work programme in the region for 2024-25 in light of the key challenges and opportunities, as well as the priority areas in the region

Day 2

9.00-10.00	Session 4 (plenary) To report and reflect on the outcome of the work groups discussions
10.00-11.00	Session 5 Regional Technical Commissions’ contribution to the regional priorities
11.00-11.30	Coffee break
11.30-12.30	Session 6

	Draft annotated agenda for the 43 rd Session ECA
	Draft provisional annotated agenda for the 34 th Session of ERC
12.30-13.00	Session 7
	Wrap-up and closure
13.00-14.00	Lunch

The ExCom is invited to:

- review the suggested dates, modality and draft agenda for the Informal Consultation 2023 and provide comments, as appropriate.