



PREPARATION OF THE FORTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE (2023)

(prepared by the ECA Secretariat)

I. Introduction

As decided by the Forty-second Session of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA), the Forty-third Session of the ECA should be held on 26-28 September 2023.

Within the mandate of the Executive Committee of the ECA (the ExCom) to oversee the preparation of ECA sessions, the key elements that usually need to be addressed are:

- the location and modality of a session
- review and endorsement of the draft annotated agenda for a session
- oversight over the preparation of the background papers for a session
- preparation of the call for nominations for ECA elections.

II. Location and modality of the Forty-third Session of the ECA

According to an agreement between FAO and the Government of Hungary, sessions of the ECA are held in Budapest, Hungary.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemics and related restrictions, the Forty-second Session of the ECA (19-21 January 2022) was held in virtual modality, in order to make sure that representatives of all Members have equal possibilities to participate. As currently most the restrictions have been lifted, there may be a possibility to hold the Session in an in-person modality. The ExCom is invited to discuss and make a recommendation on the modality for the Forty-third Session of the ECA.

III. Review and endorsement of the draft agenda of the Forty-third Session of the ECA

The draft agenda for the Session has been drafted by the Secretariat of the ECA, based on the decision of the ExCom, confirmed by the ADG-RR, that the main technical theme for the Session would be “*Sustainable use of land and water resources in Europe and Central Asia*”, with related sub-topics.

Moreover, the following standing agenda items have been included in the draft agenda:

- progress made in advancing in gender equality in the region
- implementation of the recommendations of the previous Session of the ECA
- ECA elections.

The Forty-third Session of the ECA will also consider the amendment of the Rules of Procedure of the ECA, following the decision taken by the ExCom at the 39/5 meeting in January 2023.

The preliminary agenda for the Session has been drafted by the Secretariat, and sent for review by REU’s technical officers. The officers provided their inputs and suggested some adjustments to the sub-topics and their descriptions.

The resulting draft annotated agenda of the Forty-third Session of the ECA is presented in Annex 1.

IV. Technical background papers

In order to support and facilitate discussions at the Forty-third Session of the ECA, the following papers should be developed and made available to the Members:

- technical background documents – one for each of the sub-topics under the main technical theme; development of these papers will be coordinated by REU’s technical officers
- update on progress in the implementation of FAO’s gender policies in the region; this document will be developed by REU’s gender officer
- update of the implementation by FAO of recommendations from the Forty-second Session of the ECA; this document will be developed by a designated REU’s technical officer.

According to the plan developed by the ECA Secretariat, the first drafts of the ECA background papers should be developed and shared with the Secretariat by 30 April 2023.

V. Amendment of the Rules of Procedure of the ECA

At the ExCom meeting in September 2022, the Chairperson of ECA made a proposal that the Rules of Procedure of the ECA (RoP) be amended, in order to achieve the following:

- clarify whether the ECA should elect the first and the second Vice-Chairpersons or two equal Vice-Chairpersons (Rule II.1)
- avoid challenges relating to the organization of a formal ExCom meeting immediately after the ECA elections (the first meeting of the newly elected ExCom), through the replacement of the current provision requiring that a meeting of the ExCom be held “whenever the Commission holds a session” (Rule III.3) with a new one stipulating that the first meeting of the ExCom be held within 30 days after the Session
- guarantee that in case a member of the ExCom is prevented from exercising her/his functions for the remainder of the term, the ExCom will continue its work uninterrupted, by replacing “may” with “shall” in Rule III.1
- make sure that the provisions of the RoP fully respect the FAO gender equality policies, through the replacement of the word “his” with “his/her”, wherever appropriate
- provide clearly for quorum for decision-making by the ExCom, as currently the RoP has a provision on quorum for ECA sessions only (Rule IV.7), and it is not clear whether it applies to the ExCom.

The proposal was considered by the ExCom at the January 2023 meeting. The Committee decided to retain current provisions on the first and the second Vice-Chairpersons of the ECA, and requested the Secretariat to make sure that these provisions are strictly followed during the submission of candidates and at the ECA elections. The ExCom also decided to retain the provisions relating to the ExCom meeting when the Commission holds a session, with the agreement that after each ECA election the Secretariat will convene a meeting of the newly elected membership of the Committee. The ExCom decided to proceed with the remaining proposed amendments. The text of the RoP presenting the amendments is available as annex to the minutes of the January 2023 meeting.

On 23 February 2023, the Secretariat sent a letter to the FAO Legal Counsel presenting the proposed amendments and requesting guidance. If the amendments are approved, the Secretariat will develop a meeting paper on the subject for the ECA Session, for consideration by the Members. The Secretariat will update the ExCom on the progress in the proceedings.

VI. Rapporteurs

At the 2023 Informal Consultation, the Secretariat is planning to update the Members of the ECA about the role of rapporteurs at ECA sessions, and encourage them to identify candidates for the rapporteurs in advance of the Session.

VII. ECA Elections

Following the procedure agreed by the ExCom, on 28 April 2023, the ECA Secretariat should share with the Members of the ECA the invitation to nominate candidates for the functions of the ECA Chairperson, the first and the second ECA Vice-Chairpersons, and the other six members of the ExCom. The ExCom may decide that the invitation be accompanied by a submission form, which should guide countries in preparing nominations that contain all necessary information.

The draft invitation for submitting nominations for the ECA elections is presented in Annex 2, and the draft submission form is presented in Annex 3.

The deadline for submitting the nominations should be set for 30 June 2023. On 15 June 2023, the Secretariat should send a reminder to all Members of the ECA. Should the nominations received by the deadline not cover all vacancies, the Secretariat will extend the deadline and notify all Members. Moreover, the Secretariat is planning to present an update on the preparations of the ECA elections during the 2023 Informal Consultation, and invite Members to submit their candidates.

The ExCom is invited to:

- review the draft agenda for the Forty-third Session of the ECA, as presented in Annex 1
- discuss and confirm the location and modality of the Session
- review and endorse the invitation and the draft submission form for the call for nominations for the ECA elections, as presented in Annex 2 and Annex 3, respectively
- agree that the Secretariat adds the invitation and the submission form to the ExCom Information Document¹ as examples, for future reference
- agree that the Secretariat updates the ExCom Information Document to include the processes relating to the preparation of ECA sessions agreed by the ExCom, and presents the revision to the ExCom at the next meeting for review and endorsement.

¹ ECA Executive Committee Information Document: <https://www.fao.org/3/nh593en/nh593en.pdf>

Annex 1. Draft annotated agenda for the Forty-third Session of the ECA

EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE
FORTY-THIRD SESSION
Budapest, Hungary, 26–28 September 2023
PROVISIONAL ANNOTATED AGENDA

I. Introductory items**1. Adoption of the agenda and the timetable****2. Election of the rapporteur(s)****II. Main technical theme:****Sustainable use of land and water resources in Europe and Central Asia**

The topic on the sustainable use of land and water resources in the Europe and Central Asia region aims to explore in an integrated way challenges linked to the sustainable use of land and water resources in Europe and Central Asia. Land degradation, soil salinity, lack of proper land tenure mechanisms and water stress and climate change are among the main issues at the regional level. Extreme events such as droughts and flash floods have become a reality in many countries, showing that proper water management and governance is a must, and it has to be done in an integrated and trans-border way, together with sustainable land and soil management and proper governance of land tenure. The innovative perspective is to connect these topics at a higher level and have a multidisciplinary/multisectoral approach.

A regional approach for policy guidance and governance structures for land and water is necessary to ensure the sustainable use of these natural resources. It would also contribute to a more resilient food system, promote ecosystem services, and the conservation of biodiversity in the region, allowing countries to strengthen their production in a sustainable way, improve nutrition and livelihoods, and share good practices, experiences and lessons learned, moving towards achieving SDG 6 and SDG 15 targets, in particular 15.3 and 6.4.

Integrated land and water resources management, as well as their governance are essential elements for the sustainable use of land and water resources, which the Commission will be invited to explore in-depth as sub-topics of the main technical theme. Each sub-topic will also consider cross-cutting aspects of the land and water nexus, in particular climate change, biodiversity, gender and food security.

3. Integrated land and water resources management

Land and water are essential factors for sustainable agricultural development. Hence, a number of countries in Europe and Central Asia are characterized as water stressed and increasingly impacted by land degradation and soil salinity. Accordingly, growing pressure on limited water resources leads to fierce competition for water among all sectors, reduced the availability of water for sustainable agri-food systems, affecting water, energy, food security, as well as land use and tenure systems.

On the other hand, the progress in the implementation of reformed policies in the agri-food sector has been varying among the countries, as they still struggle with challenges in identifying properly functioning legal and practical settings for inter-sectoral coordination. Analysing the performance of these policies and facilitating the development of improved, integrated land and water policies in the agri-food sector will lead to the enhancement of the sustainable management of both land and water resources in the region.

Integrated land and water resources management will also impact and be impacted by several cross-cutting dimensions. Appropriate governance can only be in place if gender dimensions are properly considered and addressed. In addition, land and water resources management will consider the climate change impacts, biodiversity conservation in an integrated manner, promoting the sustainable use of natural resources, restoring ecosystems, and enhancing food security.

4. Land Governance and Land Degradation Neutrality in Europe and Central Asia

Non-transparent land governance systems, land fragmentation and ineffective land use are common problems in several countries of the region.² Under this sub-topic, the Commission is invited to explore how land governance and land tenure can be enhanced as part of integrated approach to sustainable management of natural resources, in particular through large-scale interventions on the management of natural resources, climate change adaptation and mitigation, ecosystem restoration and biodiversity conservation. The potential of multi-purpose land consolidation and land banking based on good practices in countries in Western Europe will also be discussed.

Given that sustainable land governance is closely intertwined with achieving and enabling Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), the second part of this sub-topic will focus on LDN. Driven by biophysical and socio-economic factors and exacerbated by impacts of climate change, the degradation of land and natural resources is one of the greatest challenges faced by several countries in the region. Although all countries in the region are members of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, not all have set the LDN targets, and for all of them the implementation of the convention still presents challenges.

³[OBJ]

Restoring degraded land is vital for countries to achieve multiple national and international priorities on mitigating climate change, improving livelihoods, reducing desertification, restoring ecosystems, and conserving biodiversity. A strong system for monitoring the Land Degradation Neutrality in the region needs to be put in place, jointly with the strengthening of institutional capacities and designing an adequate policy framework.

5. Water Governance in Europe and Central Asia

Water scarcity and droughts in some countries and floods and flash floods in others become a reality in the Europe and Central Asia region. In addition, uneven distribution at different scales (among regions and societal groups) provides multiple sources of tension, affecting their agri-food systems.

² Mukhtarova, A. (2021) ‘Central Asia performance review in land governance indices and assessment frameworks’, *Central Asian Journal of Water Research*, 7(2), pp. 74–96. doi: 10.29258/CAJWR/2021-R1.v7-2/74-96.eng.

³ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/land-degradation-neutrality-interventions-foster-gender-equality#:~:text=Women%20constitute%20the%20bulk%20of,agriculture%20as%20their%20primary%20livelihood.>

Improving water governance requires rethinking water issues through multiple perspectives, and strategic uses of cooperative partnerships and deliberative processes. A multi-level approach may cover several levels of water management hierarchy. The aim is to manage the interdependencies between various stakeholders with the overall goal of contributing to more secure livelihoods, increased environmental sustainability, and greater social harmony, including climate change, gender and biodiversity nexus. Most of the countries in the region have shifted their national water governance systems to the basin level and developed laws and regulations for establishing basin management structures,⁴ however they still have the challenge to identify properly functioning legal and practical settings for inter-sectoral coordination and allocation of water resources at the national level.

Further enhancement of regional capacity for dialogue and exchange of experience and expertise in water policy development and implementation is recommended to achieve water security and fair allocation of water resources, including peaceful transboundary cooperation, therefore the Commission is invited to discuss the different dimensions (social/ecological/political/environmental setting) and different levels of water governance (macro, meso and micro level), as well as the drivers and management practices, such as the importance of transboundary cooperation and water financing under macro level of governance, paradiplomacy under meso-level of governance, and improving water use efficiency under micro level of governance.

III. Other matters

7. Advancing gender equality in the region: update on the progress made

The agenda item is a standing item for all sessions of the ECA. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia Gender Team will provide an update on the work of the Regional Office in meeting its commitments in mainstreaming gender equality concerns in its development interventions, as well as in specific activities aimed at advancing rural gender equality in the region through knowledge building, dialogue and policy advice. A background paper will be presented to the Members that summarizes key gender and agriculture issues and findings of the review of the country gender assessments conducted in the countries of the region over the past two years, reflecting regional trends and the situation of rural women due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Members will be invited to review the document and present their views and share country practices and cases regarding the mainstreaming of gender concerns in agriculture, food security and addressing malnutrition in their respective countries.

8. Progress made by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia on the main recommendations of the Forty-second Session of the ECA

Following the recommendations on transforming food systems to address malnutrition, which were adopted by the Forty-second Session of the ECA (19–21 January 2022), REU will present an update on recent activities carried out by FAO in Europe and Central Asia, relating to the implementation of the recommendations. The Commission will be invited to note the report and provide comments as deemed appropriate.

⁴ Murat Yakubov (2022) Small Basin Governance scheme: linking water sector reforms and governance in the Aral Sea Basin, *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, 38:5, 783-814, DOI: [10.1080/07900627.2021.1926936](https://doi.org/10.1080/07900627.2021.1926936)

9. Amendment of the Rules of Procedure of the ECA

In line with Rule XII of the Rules of Procedure of the ECA, the Commission will be invited to consider the amendments to the Rules of Procedure, as presented in the respective Session document. The amendments are aiming at making sure that the provisions of the RoP fully respect the FAO gender equality policies, at strengthening the provisions on replacement of outgoing members of the Committee, and at establishing a clear provision on quorum for taking decisions by the Executive Committee.

10. Election of the ECA Chairperson, the first and second Vice-Chairpersons and the other members of the Executive Committee

According to Rule II and Rule III.1 of the Rules of Procedure of the ECA, the Commission will be invited to elect from among the representatives the Chairperson of the ECA, the first Vice-Chairperson of the ECA, the second Vice-Chairperson of the ECA, and six other members of the Executive Committee, for a term of two years.

11. Any other business

12. Date and place of the Forty-fourth Session of the ECA

13. Review and adoption of the report of the Session

Closing of the Session

Annex 2. Draft invitation for submitting nominations to the ECA elections

THIS MESSAGE IS SENT ON BEHALF OF MR VLADIMIR RAKHMANIN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF FAO, REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Excellency,

I have the honour to inform you that the **Forty-third Session of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)** will be held in **Budapest, Hungary on 26-28 September 2023**. Logistical arrangements for the Session will be announced in due time.

At the end of the Session, there will be **elections** of the ECA Chairperson, the first and the second Vice-Chairpersons, and six other members of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee acts on behalf of the Commission between sessions of the Commission, of which it is the executive body.

Hereby, all respective Members of the Europe and Central Asia region are kindly invited to consider nominating their candidates for the above-mentioned positions. The official nominations shall be sent to the ECA Secretariat (ERC-ECA-Secretariat@fao.org) **by 30 June 2023**.

Current membership of the Executive Committee and the Rules of Procedure of the ECA are available at <http://www.fao.org/europe/commissions/eca/executive-committee/en/>.

When submitting nominations, **you are kindly requested to use the submission form attached to this invitation**. Please note that one country can nominate one person only.

For any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the ECA Secretariat:
ERC-ECA-Secretariat@fao.org

Please accept, Excellency, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Vladimir Rakhmanin
Assistant Director-General
Regional Representative
FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

Annex 3. Draft submission form for nominations for the ECA elections

Call for nominations of candidates for the Chairperson of ECA, the first and the second Vice-Chairpersons of ECA and six other members of the Executive Committee of ECA

SUBMISSION FORM⁵

Name of the submitting country:	
Contact person in the submitting country	
Name and surname:	
Institution:	
Current position:	
E-mail address:	

The nominated candidate	
Name and surname:	
Institution:	
Current position:	
E-mail address:	
The candidate is nominated for the following ECA function (please check one):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson of the ECA	<input type="checkbox"/> First Vice-Chairperson of the ECA
<input type="checkbox"/> Second Vice-Chairperson of the ECA	<input type="checkbox"/> Other member of the Executive Committee

⁵ This form should be submitted to the ERC-ECA Secretariat (ERC-ECA-Secretariat@fao.org) by 30 June 2023. In order to minimize the risk of the submission getting lost, the subject line of the message should read "ECA Elections – a nomination from <name of the submitting country>"