



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

Regional Conference

**Promoting socially inclusive rural development in  
Europe and Central Asia:  
Action for the 2030 Agenda**

Vilnius, Lithuania

30 January – 01 February 2017

**Joint call for action**



## Promoting socially inclusive rural development in Europe and Central Asia: Action for the 2030 Agenda

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### We, the participants of the above conference:

*Reaffirm* the commitment to promote and work in partnership towards gender equality and women's empowerment both as a stand alone goal and as an absolute precondition for achieving all of the Sustainable Development Goals;

*Reiterate* that rural poverty, social exclusion, food insecurity, malnutrition, the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work and economic disparities are closely associated with gender inequalities in rural communities, which in turn generate more poverty;

*Recognize* the contribution of rural communities (including rural women) to economic growth;

*Acknowledge* that there are challenges faced by rural women and men – identified in the FAO Regional strategy for gender equality in Europe and Central Asia – that still need to be addressed and overcome in order to effectively eradicate rural poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, and that there are still many areas in which further attention is required in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda;

*Emphasize* the need for a political will and transformative approach to address the deep-rooted, structural barriers that perpetuate gender inequalities in rural and agricultural development;

*Note with appreciation and welcome* the many efforts made and promising practices developed at local and national levels across the region.

### Call for action:

#### For FAO Regional office for Europe and Central Asia:

1. Continue to actively support member states to achieve the SDGs in a socially inclusive manner, by formulating evidence-based and gender-responsive policies and programmes in order to achieve sustainable agriculture and food security, and to ensure equal access to and control over natural and productive resources, infrastructure, services, markets, technology, decent work and social protection;
2. Build knowledge and competencies in issues pertaining to gender equality and women's empowerment to support rural and agricultural development in the region, by providing support in producing, analysing and disseminating gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated data, and raising gender awareness among ministries of agriculture and other national stakeholders, including the agencies responsible for formulating and implementing rural development policies and women and men living in rural communities;
3. Ensure that in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all programmes and projects, their impact on socially deprived and disadvantaged groups, and primarily rural women and men, is adequately taken into account;

4. Engage more actively to address the strategic needs of rural women and girls, increasing their access to resources and economic empowerment through learning, training and income diversification;
5. Ensure the greater visibility and recognition of rural women by (1) establishing an annual award to be given to a prominent rural woman on the International Day of Rural Women, celebrated on 15 October; (2) inviting a group of indigenous rural women farmers from the most economically deprived and remote areas in the region to the European Regional Conference; (3) issuing a letter of appreciation to, or nominating as a champion, a national institution or organization (governmental or non-governmental) that has achieved outstanding results in advancing the gender equality agenda in its work;
6. Work in partnership with relevant regional and international stakeholders, including those within the UN system, in support of results at national level.

**For governments and other national institutions:**

1. Formulate national policies and strategies for agriculture and rural development, including food security, nutrition and sound rural and agricultural development, that are inclusive and gender-responsive, and introduce accountability mechanisms to make sure that they are implemented;
2. Establish and strengthen inclusive governance mechanisms and increase rural women's representation and leadership in governing institutions at all levels, including women's organizations, networks and movements, and raise women's capacity in rural development-related policies and programmes so that they can meaningfully participate in decision-making and in shaping laws, policies and programmes;
3. Formulate and implement equal opportunities policies and programmes for gender equality and the empowerment of women, targeting particularly rural women and financing the implementation of these programmes, to provide rural women with increased access to agricultural knowledge and financial services;
4. Support programmes aimed at rural women's economic empowerment, by improving their entrepreneurship skills, access to financing and markets, agricultural knowledge and education (including tertiary education), creating decent jobs, and overcoming the existing pay gap between women and men;
5. Design and implement transformative social protection policies and measures, and invest in rural infrastructure that specifically targets rural women, including policies and programmes to ensure that unpaid care work is recognized, reduced and reorganized through investment in both rural physical infrastructure and the social infrastructure of care;
6. Address the underlying structural causes of gender inequality in legal and institutional frameworks and ensure that national budgets are gender-responsive;
7. Support the collection and dissemination of information on successful good practices that advance gender equality and the empowerment of rural women.

**For civil society groups, associations and the private sector:**

1. Specifically target rural women and young women from disadvantaged groups to engage in economic activities;
2. Ensure decent working conditions for women, and equal pay for equal work;
3. Assist rural women in gaining access to a range of resources and agricultural inputs, including material (land, water, finance, equipment, seeds) and non-material ones (ICT, knowledge, technology, skills);

4. Ensure women and girls are de facto engaged in training and other learning activities which result in their economic empowerment;
5. Develop specific programmes for young women and men to ensure their access to income generation opportunities in rural areas;
6. Facilitate rural women's access to social protection benefits;
7. Raise gender awareness among policy and decision-makers to increase their commitment to gender-responsive policies and investments;
8. Work with men to overcome stereotypes and balance the gender division of labour.