

REPORT

**Riga, Latvia
7 June 2006**

**European Commission
on Agriculture**

Thirty-fourth Session

Reports of the European Commission on Agriculture (known as European Committee on Agricultural Technology from 1949 to 1952 and as European Committee on Agriculture until 1956) are as follows:

1. Preparatory Meeting Paris, 27–28 June 1949
2. First Session Rome, 26-30 September 1949
3. Second Session Geneva, 27-30 March 1950
4. Third Session Rome, 25-28 June 1951
5. Fourth Session Rome, 3-6 June 1952
6. Fifth Session Rome, 26-29 May 1953
7. Sixth Session Rome, 14-18 June 1954
8. Seventh Session Rome, 20-24 June 1955
9. Eighth Session Rome, 7-11 May 1956
10. Ninth Session Rome, 17-21 June 1957
11. Tenth Session Rome, 19-23 May 1958
12. Eleventh Session Rome, 25-29 May 1959
13. Twelfth Session Rome, 15-19 May 1961
14. Thirteenth Session Rome, 13-18 May 1963
15. Fourteenth Session Rome, 17-21 May 1965
16. Fifteenth Session Rome, 15-20 May 1967
17. Sixteenth Session Rome, 23-26 October 1968
18. Seventeenth Session Rome, 7-11 September 1970
19. Eighteenth Session Rome, 8-12 May 1972
20. Nineteenth Session Rome, 17-21 June 1974
21. Twentieth Session Rome, 17-23 June 1976
22. Twenty-first Session Rome, 19-23 June 1978
23. Twenty-second Session Rome, 23-27 June 1980
24. Twenty-third Session Rome, 21-25 June 1982
25. Twenty-fourth Session Innsbruck, Austria, 18-22 June 1984
26. Twenty-fifth Session Chania, Greece, 8-12 June 1987
27. Twenty-sixth Session Porto, Portugal, 23-26 May 1989
28. Twenty-seventh Session Herrsching, Germany, 1-5 July 1991
29. Twenty-eighth Session Valletta, Malta, 27 September – 1 October 1993
30. Twenty-ninth Session Bled, Slovenia, 2-6 October 1995
31. Thirtieth Session Nitra, Slovakia, 8-11 October 1997
32. Thirty-first Session Rome, 12-14 October 1999
33. Thirty-second Session Rome, 7-8 March 2002
34. Thirty-third Session Rome, 1-2 March 2004
35. Thirty-fourth Session Riga, Latvia, 7 June 2006

Report of the

Thirty-fourth Session of the

European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)

Riga, Latvia, 7 June 2006

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Rome, 2006

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Thirty-fourth Session of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) was held in Riga, Latvia, on 7 June 2006 under the Chairpersonship of Mr Jean-Jacques Soula (France).
2. The List of Participants is given in the Appendix I to this Report.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

3. The Chairperson opened the Session and recalled that the Session was taking place within the context of a revised mandate, as adopted by the 119th Session of the FAO Council, and its new role as technical preparatory meeting of the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC). He also recalled that, following an assessment of the objectives and format of the Regional Conference for Europe and of the ECA itself undertaken during the 2004-05 biennium by the ECA Executive Committee as mandated by the 24th Regional Conference for Europe (paras. 59 – 61 of ERC/04/REP), the Commission was meeting on an experimental basis, back-to-back with the ERC, and just one day before the Conference. The Chairperson drew attention in particular to Items 4 and 5 of the agenda and indicated that both items had been selected by the European Regional Group in Rome, with a view that the ECA should undertake the technical preparation and submit results of the debate and recommendations for endorsement by the 25th FAO Regional Conference for Europe meeting the following day.
4. On behalf of FAO, Ms Jutta Krause, Regional Representative for Europe, welcomed the participants, and expressed appreciation to the Government of Latvia for the hospitality and excellent facilities that had been provided for the Session.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

5. The Commission adopted the Agenda, as given in Appendix II to this report. In this connection, the Chairperson indicated that considering the reduction of the Commission's session duration to one day, it might not be possible for the Commission to adopt its report. The Commission therefore, endorsed the Chairperson's suggestion that, if necessary, and depending on the Commission's debate, at the conclusion of Item 9 of its agenda, the Commission would suspend its session for approximately one hour to allow the Rapporteur to draft a summary of conclusions of the day's deliberations on which he would seek the Commission's endorsement. In view of the time constraints, this summary of conclusions would be ready in English only. The summary would form the basis of the oral report of the Commission's Rapporteur to the 25th Regional Conference for Europe scheduled for the afternoon of the following day (8 June 2006).
6. However, insofar as the proposed summary of conclusions could not be considered a report in accordance with Rule VIII, paragraph 1, of the Rules of Procedure of the ECA, the Commission recommended that the Executive Committee should, during the intersessional period, undertake a review of the Rules of Procedure of the ECA (adopted at its 29th Session in 1995) and propose the adjustments required in light of the evolution of the Commission. Amendments to the Rules of Procedure would be adopted by the Commission at its 35th Session in 2008.

APPOINTMENT OF RAPPORTEUR

7. Mr Zohrab V. Malek (Ambassador of Armenia to FAO) was appointed Rapporteur of the Session.

THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN REVITALIZING ABANDONED/DEPOPULATED AREAS¹

8. The Item was introduced by Ms Jutta Krause, Regional Representative for Europe. She underlined the main causes leading to the abandonment and depopulation of areas and enumerated a number of policies which could be applied in order to revitalize these areas. She also indicated that the relevant document included a set of recommendations in Section VI, to be forwarded to the 25th Regional Conference for Europe for endorsement in order to facilitate the Commission's deliberations on this item.
9. The Commission welcomed the document and thanked the Secretariat for the practical and pragmatic analysis in the paper and noted that agriculture has a role to play beyond production.
10. The Commission took note that the document used the EU experience, among others, as a reference for defining different policy options.
11. The Commission highlighted that sometimes the EU policies were presented in the document in a distorted manner and that the reformed rural development policy of the EU was not designed to simply ensure its consistency with the WTO rules but that rural development policy had a much wider scope to fulfil, such as contributing to economic growth and employment opportunities, to satisfy consumer demand for food quality and to provide attractive livelihoods.
12. Member Nations suggested to consider agriculture and rural development policies as a result of a more complex and diversified process, implicating different sectors of the economy, different demographic structures, different systems and preference of livelihoods, different stages of development and a changing global context, each having a differentiated impact on processes of land abandonment and depopulation of rural areas.
13. The Commission noted that in developed countries land abandonment no longer coincided with depopulation, while the two processes remain associated in developing and less developed countries.
14. The Commission took note that in the EU the viability of rural areas was associated with the repopulation of such areas, driven by the service and manufacturing sector and not only agriculture. Abandonment, depopulation and ageing represented only one aspect, the most traditional one of the evolution of rural areas.
15. Member Nations highlighted that one of the EU rural development policy main objectives was to improve the competitiveness of farm and forest enterprises through support for restructuring and innovation.
16. The Commission requested that the specific problems of developing countries should be studied in a more particular manner, especially factors such as the sizeable peasant populations engaged in subsistence agriculture and temporary migration.
17. The Commission suggested that revitalization policies should be differentiated according to the socio-economic conditions of rural areas.
18. The Commission also suggested to differentiate the diagnosis on the basis of the degree of the development as well as based on different behaviour related to land abandonment and depopulation in relation to the character of the rural economy and environment rather than referring it only to agriculture.

¹ ECA/34/06/2 and ECA/34/06/2-Sup.1

19. The Commission took note of Ireland's remark that the FAO statistics in paragraph 8 of the document did not reflect the national statistics of Ireland and that footnote 8 of the same document did not reflect the official position of Ireland.

20. The Commission requested to consider differentiation policies addressing the environment, landscape and biodiversity on the basis of intensive or extensive land management patterns and levels of modernization, as well as, the organization of coherent and complementary agriculture and rural development policies as a package rather than opting for a generalized menu of broad orientations for all rural areas.

21. The Commission endorsed the recommendations and requested forwarding them to the 25th Regional Conference for Europe for their endorsement.

DEVELOPMENT IN THE EUROPEAN AGRIFOOD MARKETS: IMPACT ON PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS AND PERSPECTIVES²

22. The Item was introduced by Mr David Sedik, Chief, Policy Assistance Branch of the Regional Office for Europe, who outlined why the nature of food supply relationships matter for food and agriculture policy-makers and how the linkages between farmers and the buyers of their produce were changing in Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and what were the implications of this restructuring for domestic policy-makers and international agencies, such as FAO. He also outlined a number of key questions from the document for discussion.

23. The Commission welcomed the document as it provided a useful contribution on a number of important elements concerning agricultural and food supply chains, especially in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS countries.

24. Special reference was made by the Commission regarding the importance of traceability as a very important concept in EU policy and a fundamental part of its integrated "from farm to fork" approach.

25. The Commission took note of the efforts in the document to explore the impact of changes in contractual arrangements on agricultural productivity, quality, and opportunities for small farmers.

26. The Commission highlighted that marginalization of small farms would be an important point to be examined.

27. The Commission also took note of the references made to the different approaches in measuring competitiveness, particularly the ability by retailers or producers to meet standards and recalled that other factors such as infrastructure, storage, transport costs and integration of markets could also strongly influence competitiveness.

28. The Commission underlined that assuring food quality and safety standards continued to be challenges in parts of the Region and further efforts should be devoted to this important aspect.

29. The Commission noted that improving production and marketing and adopting food quality and safety standards in the processing industry were considered crucial for increasing trade opportunities of new EU member states to the Western European market.

30. The Commission suggested to support enhancing access to information, resources and equipment allowing gradual quality improvement also for small and medium-sized agrifood businesses.

² ECA/34/06/3

31. The Commission highlighted that vocational training, strengthening agriculture extension services and stimulating farmer groups and marketing cooperatives were important measures to improve access of small farmers to the market.

32. The Commission endorsed the recommendations outlined in the document and requested forwarding them to the 25th Regional Conference for Europe.

STATUS OF THE ECA WORKING PARTY ON WOMEN AND THE FAMILY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT³

33. The Item was introduced by the Regional Representative for Europe. In her introduction she drew the Commission's attention to the two options included in the document which the Commission was invited to comment upon.

34. The Commission welcomed the preparation of the document outlining the evolving status of the WPW.

35. The Commission highlighted however, that the document failed to provide sufficient information and an analysis of the need for the WPW on which a sound decision on the future of the WPW beyond December 2007 could be based.

36. The Commission acknowledged the budgetary constraints faced by FAO related to the work of the WPW.

37. The Commission urged that gender issues with its relevance to rural areas should still be a priority of the work of FAO in the European Region.

38. The Commission recalled that the WPW played a valuable role in promoting, networking and capacity building.

39. The Commission highlighted that the preparation and analysis of statistics broken down by gender and the use of indicators to study the position of women in rural areas would be a significant factor in addressing the problems faced by rural women today.

40. The Commission acknowledged the availability of extra-budgetary funds by four donors (Austria, Lithuania, Norway and Switzerland) to ensure the continuation of the WPW activities, particularly in CEE and CIS countries and requested further administrative assistance by SEUR and SDW.

41. In addition, Finland presented a statement on this item, which is attached as Appendix III.

42. The Commission endorsed the conclusion of the Chairperson:

- a) The Executive Committee would be mandated to undertake, in collaboration with the WPW and the Secretariat, an assessment of the objectives of the WPW and its methods of work which should include cost effective proposals with an aim to enhance the activities of gender issues in the Region;
- b) The Executive Committee would report its findings to the 35th session of the ECA.

³ ECA/34/06/04

ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE ECA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR A TERM OF OFFICE OF TWO YEARS

43. In accordance with Rule III of its Rules of Procedure, the Commission unanimously elected the following members of the Executive Committee for another term of two years, eligible for re-election for up to one additional two-year term:

- Ms Daniela Moyzesová (Czech Republic)
- Mr Soren Skafte (Denmark)
- Ms Rita Mannella (Italy)

44. Rule III of the Rules of Procedure states: “The Executive Committee shall comprise of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson of the Commission as ex officio members and five members elected by the Commission from among the representatives.”. Considering that the European Region had recently increased in membership, and in view of the fact that three candidatures had been received to replace two members of the Executive Committee who had indicated that they could not continue in this function, i.e. Romania and the FYR of Macedonia, the Commission elected the following members for a term of two years, eligible for re-election for up to two additional two-year terms:

- Ms Daniela Rotondaro (San Marino)
- Mr Yüksel Yücekal (Turkey)
- Russian Federation (the curriculum vitae of the candidate to be conveyed to the Chairperson of the ECA in due course)

45. The Commission however underlined that the above decision was taken on an exceptional basis and requested that the ECA Executive Committee, which was to undertake a review of the Rules of Procedure of the ECA should also recommend an amendment to its current Rule III with a view to increasing the composition of the Executive Committee taking into consideration the increased membership of the Region.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH SESSION

46. The Delegation of Austria proposed that they will host the 35th Session of the ECA together with the 26th Regional Conference for Europe.

47. The Commission took note of the offer which would be brought to the attention of the Director-General for consideration and decision in consultation with Member Nations in the Region, on the understanding that the ECA would continue to meet back-to-back with the Regional Conference for Europe.

48. The Commission took note of the proposal of Armenia to host the 36th Session of the ECA and the 27th Regional Conference for Europe.

**APPENDIX I
ANNEXE I
APÉNDICE**

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
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LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES**

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APPENDIX II**AGENDA**

1. Opening of the Session
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Appointment of Rapporteur
4. The role of agriculture and rural development in revitalizing abandoned/depopulated areas
5. Development in the European agrifood markets: impact on producers and consumers and perspectives
6. Status of the ECA Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development
7. Election of Members of the ECA Executive Committee for a term of office of two years (2006-2007)
8. Other Business
9. Date and Place of the Thirty-fifth Session
10. Adoption of the Report
11. Closing of the Session

APPENDIX III**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF FINLAND REGARDING
AGENDA ITEM 6: STATUS OF THE ECA WORKING PARTY ON WOMEN
AND THE FAMILY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

We fully endorse the statement of the EU Presidency and would like to add the following points based on our own experience of the WPW.

Finland has been an active member of the ECA Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development (WPW) since the 1970s. We are very grateful to the representatives of rural women's organizations and universities for their contribution of time and expert resources for this work.

The work of the WPW has been a small scale activity between rural women and experts on rural development in various countries of the FAO European Region. Why on such a small scale? WPW is a good example of women's activities, the financial resources are minimal but the enthusiasm and voluntary work is remarkable. Only the kind contributions from Austria, Lithuania, Norway and Switzerland have made it possible to manage the administration for the WPW, whereas the time and resources of FAO allocated to this activity have been minimal.

We strongly believe that the work of the WPW should continue and that the FAO Secretariat should reconsider its efforts and attitude towards the Working Party. Why do we think that the WPW should continue? Finland has always placed great emphasis on gender issues in rural development. Our own experience speaks for itself; our over a hundred year old rural women associations have played a vital part in raising our rural areas from extreme poverty only a hundred years ago to the wellbeing of today. Even today, when the European countryside is facing severe pressure for adjustment due to global changes in the agricultural sector, our women spearhead this adjustment process through countless grassroots participatory local action groups.

Our experience is that women from both new EU member countries and CIS countries have been enthusiastic about the possibility to share experiences with other European rural development activists. We think this kind of sharing and learning from each other is very important. We would hope that more countries would join the work of the WPW.

If WPW is, however, discontinued we want to see a new contract effort by FAO in Europe for rural women on a scale relevant to the nature of the problems. Or if FAO is seen as an organization only active in developing countries, a clear policy decision should be made on this.

Mr Chairman, we would like to include our statement in the report of the Commission's session.

Thank you