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Продовольственная и
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Organización
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para la
Agricultura
y la
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TWENTY-SEVENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE

Yerevan, Armenia, 13 and 14 May 2010

Agenda Item 11

**Main conclusions and list of recommendations stemming from the
debate on Agenda Items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 during the 36th session of the
European Commission on Agriculture**

Item 4: Mapping policy response to climate change impacts on agriculture and rural areas: ECA 36/10/2

1. The Commission expressed its appreciation and support for the work of the secretariat on inventory of climate change impacts on agriculture and rural areas and capacity building for Ministries of Agriculture related to adaptation and mitigation of climate change.
2. A number of countries presented assessments of negative impacts of climate change on crop production, deterioration and loss of soils and water resources, soil salinization and loss of forest cover and secondly, experience in programmes to counteract these, including attracting private investment in development of sustainable irrigation systems and increasing productivity through new drought resistant varieties. The Commission supported, for the attention of FAO, the recommendations included in paragraphs 25 to 32 of the document **ECA 36/10/2**. In addition it added:
 - the full involvement of Ministries of Agriculture in work on adaptation and mitigation and on National Communications to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and work on Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Strategies;
 - to incorporate climate change related policies into rural development and agriculture policies as well as national programmes for sustainable management of land and water resources, farm level environment protection programmes and multifunctional use of land and improved management of rangelands;
 - dissemination of policies on good agriculture practices for adaptation to climate change impacts and their mitigation, based on solid scientific foundations, for sustainable management of land and water and protection of biodiversity.

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Item 5: Challenges of water scarcity in the European and Central Asia region and recommendation for adaptation: ECA/36/10/3

3. The Commission welcomed this agenda item as water scarcity was a problem that currently many countries in the region face and it was expected to become more severe in relation to climate change. Many countries are already facing serious water management problems that require immediate actions.

4. The Commission acknowledged the strategic approach developed by FAO and supported the technical assistance which has been provided by FAO for the member countries in the region.

5. A number of countries presented assessments of the water scarcity and government responses at national and transboundary levels. It was emphasized that the situation was most critical in the Caucasus and the Central Asian region.

6. The Commission proposed the following recommendations for the attention of the governments:

- develop governance structures taking into account the experiences of some Mediterranean countries as well as initiatives for the rivers Maas, Schelde and Rhine;
- develop regulatory frameworks through multilateral agreements for water management based on river basins and as an integrated approach to preserve the ecosystems;
- promote dry land agricultural practices to improve water productivity and address the problems related to large-scale salinization of irrigated areas;
- policy options and related strategies dealing with water scarcity should be based on the set of solid principles as suggested by the secretariat:
 - base strategies on a clear understanding of the causes of water scarcity;
 - ensure cost-effectiveness with a full assessment of externalities;
 - improve water governance and institutional capacity;
 - adapt response to local conditions;
 - ensure policy alignment between water, agriculture and food security;
 - anticipate change through robust decision-making and adaptive management.

7. The Commission supported for the attention of FAO the recommendations included in paragraphs 47 to 56 of the document **ECA 36/10/3**.

8. The Commission welcomed the establishment of the FAO Water Platform as endorsed by the FAO Programme Committee. It looks forward to the development of an FAO Water Strategy taking into consideration the recommendations of the evaluation of FAO's role in work related to water. Special attention should be given to the needs of the different regions to improve the related activities of the Organization through both better internal coordination and improved cooperation with partners, including International Financing Institutes (IFIs).

Item 6: Improvement of rural livelihoods in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS through sustainable improvements in livestock production: ECA 36/10/4

9. The Commission congratulated the secretariat for the excellent paper prepared on this item and the clear and concise format of the recommendations in Annex 1 of ECA 36/10/4.

10. The Commission emphasized the importance of the document's recommendation that sustainable progress in livestock sector development depends largely on integrated approaches, which take into consideration many relevant activities of the whole value chain. In a number of countries the livestock sector continues to be the main income source of a considerable proportion

of rural population. The aspects and correlations of animal and human health were also highlighted as was the importance of cooperation in the prevention of an outbreak of zoonoses.

11. One observer stated that their livestock sector continues to be based on large-scale interventions and an unchanged government support system, thus addressing better production management, animal health and food safety issues.
12. The Commission's main recommendation for the attention of the governments was that:
 - policy measures and instruments in the various country groups of the region follow an approach which integrates improvement of feed and fodder levels, advice and other activities to improve breeding and the husbandry and animal health situation as well as access to inputs including land, credit, market information, support services and markets and all other important conditions to achieve sustainable development of livestock farms;
 - use be made of the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities related to the geopolitical differences and socio-economic specificities among countries to set suitable policy options and instruments that best contribute to the sustainable development of the livestock sector.
13. The technical recommendations for the attention of FAO in paragraphs 58 to 60 of ECA/36/10/4 were adopted.

Item 7: Income diversification for sustainable development of European and Central Asian Rural Areas – Role of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): ECA/36/10/5

14. The Commission congratulated the secretariat for the preparation of a comprehensive background document and welcomed this agenda item as it demonstrated the importance of agriculture and related diverse economic activities for the economic development of rural areas and captures the main obstacles and also the opportunities.
15. The Commission recognized the role that FAO plays in assisting countries implementing effective agricultural policies that allow farmers to seize the opportunities of national, regional and global markets, while specifically helping small-scale farms not to lag behind. In this regard, cooperatives and farmer associations should be promoted.
16. Some Members of the Commission expressed their view that the renewed Common Agricultural Policy and the European Union Rural Development Policy were good examples of policies oriented towards a sustainable and competitive agriculture, while setting a whole range of measures to improve rural livelihoods and income diversification.
17. A number of countries presented their ongoing programmes in this field including territorial development, landscape preservation, rural infrastructure development, income diversification through handicrafts, agritourism, promotion of local markets and transboundary trade. It was also pointed out that a number of conditions should be met to create an enabling environment for diversification starting from land use rights to access of resources and services and also that income diversification strategies should be tailored to each specific country.
18. The Commission stressed that exchange of experiences and related networking among member countries were of utmost importance. It was emphasized that learning best practices from other countries and sharing their experiences would be welcomed.
19. The Standing Working Group on Regional Rural Development in Southeastern Europe (SWG) expressed its gratitude for FAO and other partners of cooperation for the support of their activities, invited other countries from the subregion to join and offered to share their experiences

with the Central Asian countries. It emphasized that the case of the SWG could be seen as a worthwhile initiative to be followed also in other subregions.

20. The Commission recognized the excellent assistance FAO and especially the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and its associated subregional offices provide for member countries in the region supporting a number of income diversification programmes and projects in the region and expects that in the decentralization process this assistance would be further enhanced in the future.

21. The Commission welcomed the involvement of FAO in activities supporting income diversification in the region, such as the Agricultural Policy Forum for Southeastern Europe and the collaboration in a wide range of donor funded projects on agriculture and rural development for countries in Europe and Central Asia. Collaboration with other partners in this area was encouraged. Efforts should be made to continue with FAO's involvement in ongoing activities of partners in the region.

22. The Commission supported, for the attention of FAO, the recommendations included in paragraphs 47 to 60 of the document ECA 36/10/5. In addition it added that FAO could further strengthen its assistance to help countries diversify the income of rural areas by:

- promoting quality linked to geographical origin and geographical indications;
- human capital and skills development through vocational training and outreach activities, mainly aimed at small industries and producers;
- improving advisory services to farmers and rural enterprises and sharing experiences on land consolidation.

Item 8: Implementation of the Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2010-2011 and areas of priority actions for the European region for the following biennium 2012-2013: ERC/10/5

23. The Commission welcomed the opportunity to review "Implementation of the PWB 2010-11 and proposed areas of priority action for the European region for the biennium 2012-13", in line with the new role of the Regional Conference as a Governing Body of FAO.

24. The Commission found that the background document did not provide the basis for a thorough discussion on areas of priority action in the region for the current and future biennia. It recognized that the process of prioritization was a work in progress, involving Members and the secretariat, and improvements were to be expected in future documentation. For the current biennium, elaboration of regional areas of action should be linked to indicators in the results frameworks, identification of opportunities for use of the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) and leverage of voluntary contributions.

25. The Commission agreed that continuation of the present areas of priority action for the 2012-13 biennium was a sensible approach linked to the four-year MTP, with adjustments to take account of emerging issues, linkages to the reformed Committee on World Food Security (CFS), and partnerships. Members expressed their appreciation of the informal consultation held in Budapest in March 2010, which resulted in the identification of possible areas of priority action at subregional level, including: support to smallholders in improving land tenure systems, market access, food safety, promotion of food quality, support to genetic resources and evaluation of food security. It was regretted that the outcome of that meeting could not be reflected in the background document due to the time constraints despite that the member countries attending the Budapest meeting considered the priorities identified there as important priority areas for FAO interventions in the region.

26. To address the food and agriculture challenges in the region, and taking account of FAO's Strategic Framework and its core functions, the Commission emphasized that priority should be

given to regional activities involving advocacy, policy support, capacity building, knowledge management and neutral fora for discussion in the following areas of action:

- provision of basic global data and statistics;
- assistance to define national economic, social, food and nutrition policies, with a focus on capacity building for least developed countries to meet global expectations and benefit from market opportunities;
- normative role at global level, as well as capacity building to reinforce technical and institutional capacities, especially for least developed countries;
- implementation of food safety, sanitary and phytosanitary standards including global conventions;
- animal and plant transboundary diseases;
- emergencies and rehabilitation;
- interface between climate change and agriculture;
- conservation and management of plant and animal genetic resources;
- sustainable management of forests.

27. The Commission also stressed that the development of the European Union seemed to be important for all member countries of the region and thus the experience from European Union countries should be further transmitted to other member countries of the region.

28. Members appreciated the informal discussion inspired by the Chair following the formal statements, which allowed a more open dialogue among the member countries and with the secretariat, while recognizing that the results of informal consultations need to be formally endorsed.

29. The Commission recommended that:

- the priorities outlined in paragraph 2 should be taken into consideration in the preparation of the Programme of Work and Budget 2012-13;
- the report of the Informal Consultation in Budapest in March 2010 should be included in the priority identification process for the Programme of Work and Budget 2012-13 (Annex to the ERC Report);
- informal dialogue among Members and with the secretariat should be encouraged during preparation of the Programme of Work and Budget;
- new approaches and formats be considered for the work of the ECA during and between sessions, involving formal and informal mechanisms, as they are needed to bring national and subregional priorities to bear on formulation of regional areas of priority actions.

30. Therefore, the Commission proposed [for consideration by the ERC] that:

- the Executive Committee of the Commission should liaise with the Chair of the ERC and the Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia during the intersessional period, including on regional areas for priority action for the next biennium;
- the informal meetings of Members in the region should continue to increase dialogue on the preparation of areas of priority action for the next Programme of Work and Budget.

Item 9: Mainstreaming gender in rural development through the ECA Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development (WPW) Activities: ECA 36/10/6

31. Following a summary presentation from the FAO Gender Focal Point in the region the Commission underlined the (i) importance of incorporating gender into farm support and rural development policies, programmes and projects; (ii) assistance to female rural entrepreneurs in developing products and services to market in order to diversify sources of rural populations'

incomes; and (iii) improved access for women to land and other production inputs. The issue of manifold impacts of migrations on rural society, both negative in terms of labour loss but also positive through investment of remittances was put as a new emerging issue area of priority. Furthermore, the growing role of women in agriculture was seen as a road to innovativeness and new ideas.

32. The Commission noted that the Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development (WPW) could not hold its 15th session back to back with the present 27th session of the Regional Conference for Europe in Yerevan and considered that the issue of mainstreaming gender in rural development should be included as a standing item in future ECA meetings.

33. The Commission requested FAO to take a leading role in underscoring the importance of women for agriculture, food security and nutrition. Capacity building in rural areas, fostering of gender policies for governments and policy-makers, and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data are key factors.

34. The Commission stressed that reform-led improvement of gender analysis at FAO must continue and FAO should also draw on the lessons learned by IFAD in this area.

35. The Commission took note of the urge of the European Union to governments to carry out necessary reforms to overcome institutional, social, legal and political barriers to gender quality and to specifically ensure that both women and men have equal rights and access to all resources. It is expected that FAO and other agencies and programmes of the United Nations provide guidance on this.

36. The Commission took note of the European Union to urge governments to promote a number of significant non-agricultural policies targeted to women for the elimination of rural poverty.

37. The Commission welcomed the Gender and Land Rights Database developed by FAO and its further update and extension.

38. The Commission also took note of the proposal to invite the ECA WPW to improve its working methods and to include in its agenda all issues of special relevance to foster policy advice and the integration of women in rural development, such as social issues relating to non-agrarian economies, migratory patterns, demographic trends, land as collateral for non-agriculture investment and the influence of these factors on women's involvement in rural development and agriculture. It also urged the countries in the region to actively participate in future sessions and activities for the ECA WPW.

39. The Commission took note of the request of the Chair of the WPW to support its initiative to develop close cooperation with other statutory bodies of FAO, such as the CFS among others, and ensure that funding is provided also on a Regular Programme basis for the implementation of Strategic Objective "K" on Gender.

40. The Commission endorsed the work programme as outlined in paragraph 23 of the document ECA 36/10/6 and proposed to include this item in the future as a standing item of the agenda of the ECA sessions.

41. The Commission recommended that FAO support the Central Asia countries through targeted policy and project sharing experience activities, including gender aspects of land reform and follow-up and, at the request of the WPW Chair, support from extrabudgetary resources be mobilized for the WPW activities.