

## 43rd Session of the FAO Conference

### Introduction to Item 11.3: Report of the 33rd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe ((Łódź, Poland, 10-13 May 2022)

The 33rd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) was held in Łódź, Poland, from 10 to 13 May 2022 in a hybrid modality. The Session was attended by 269 participants, including 15 ministers, 13 deputy ministers and state secretaries, and representatives from 52 Members, along with more than 50 Observers.

The Regional Conference global policy discussions focused on: i) Implications on world food security and agriculture, including global food prices, arising from the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine<sup>1</sup>; ii) The road to transformative agrifood systems in Europe and Central Asia – Regional actions to implement the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31; and iii) Sustainable food value chains for nutrition, a practical approach for transforming agrifood systems for healthy diets in Europe and Central Asia.

Under the item on the Implications on world food security arising from the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, Members adopted by vote a decision *en bloc* condemning the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, demanding that the Russian Federation immediately cease its unlawful activities and ensure the resumption of shipments of food and agricultural commodities from and to Ukraine, recalling and reaffirming the decision<sup>2</sup> adopted by the FAO Council at its 169th Session on 8 April 2022 in this regard. Furthermore, Members requested FAO to assess the damage and the reconstruction and rehabilitation costs to the Ukrainian agriculture and food sector, to prepare and implement short, medium and long-term assistance plans for Ukraine, as well as for the most affected countries in the Black Sea region, Central Asia, the Caucasus and Western Balkans, and to contribute to strengthen global market transparency and coordination among Members, through initiatives such as the Agricultural Market Information System.

The Regional Conference underlined the impact that the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine is having in stoking prices for food, fuel, fertiliser, and other agricultural inputs. Hence, the Regional Conference expressed grave concerns that the war in Ukraine posed serious risks for short-term global food security outcomes, as well as for the broader 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Regional Conference remained seized of the matter and decided to add it to the agenda of the next regular session of the ERC. The Regional Conference requested FAO to report regularly to Members, including through the FAO Governing Bodies.

In relation to the item on the Road to transformative agrifood systems, the Regional Conference recommended that Members affirm the critical importance of coordinated action and investment in technology, digital solutions, innovation, data and complements (governance, human capital and institutions) to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development towards more sustainable agrifood systems, while sharing experiences on effective actions and best practices identified as critical to ensuring that agrifood systems developments contribute to an acceleration in the delivery of the SDGs. Furthermore, the ERC recommended that Members continue facilitating cooperation among multiple stakeholders, including policymakers, the private sector and civil society and across sectors to build upon the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) results and commit to supporting national, regional and local actions, including the implementation of national pathways. Working together to address common regional agrifood systems issues through multilateral instruments and platforms, and the important role of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the continuation of implementing the CFS guidelines and policy recommendations, including those related to food loss and waste and agroecology, were recognized as well.

The ERC recommended Members continue collecting and sharing data and evidence to inform policy decisions and actions and to measure the performance of agrifood systems by including targets and results for sustainability. The ERC also recommended strengthening resilience by investing in smallholders and family

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<sup>1</sup> Reference is made to ERC/22/INF/14: Letter from FAO Members – request for an additional agenda item at the 33rd Session of the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC).

<sup>2</sup> CL 169/REP, paragraph 11.

farms, short supply chains and local markets and updating agrifood systems to be better prepared, adaptable and autonomous.

Under the same item the Regional Conference recommended that Members commit to focusing sustainable agrifood interventions to provide healthy diets for all, including a production shift to increase availability of plant-based foods, with due attention to facilitating the nutrition transition. Further recommendations were given to Members to work in a cross-sectoral way to improve the food environment for consumers, including in schools, and increase consumers' awareness of food and nutrition so that they can make informed choices to address all forms of malnutrition; and to promote sustainable agrifood systems through nature-based solutions and the greening of the sector, including through responsible investments, agroecology, bioeconomy and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Furthermore, the ERC recommended that Members improve the social sustainability and inclusivity of agrifood systems through gender- and age-balanced approaches to empower women and youth as agents of change in order to ensure sustainable rural development and equitable agrifood livelihoods in line with the framework of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDF), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

With regards to the item on Sustainable food value chains for nutrition, the Regional Conference emphasized the need to upscale the use of the nutrition-sensitive value chain approach to identify nutritional challenges and potential solutions and to consider the development and updating of sustainable national food-based dietary guidelines. The ERC supported the development of voluntary tools, mechanisms or instruments that encourage the adoption of responsible business conduct that focus on nutritional approaches. Emphasis was also given on building nutrition-sensitive value chain capacities among agricultural and other extension services to transform agrifood systems and fill gaps in understanding practical techniques for the storage, distribution, processing, packaging, retail and marketing of safe, nutrient-rich and diverse food. The ERC further emphasized the need to embed in ongoing food policy alignment efforts (including trade policy) a concept of "value" that moves beyond a purely economic focus to one that encompasses nutrition, health, social and environmental values. The need to raise the level of ambition for nutritional outcomes by targeting not only economically active groups but also the nutritional needs of vulnerable groups, including women and youth was also emphasized.

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