



## **European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)**

**35/3 Meeting of the Executive Committee**

**4 March 2015**

**Espace Gabon**

**14.00 – 17.00**

### **Minutes**

#### **Present**

**Chairperson:** Ms Natalie Feistritzer (Austria)

**Vice-Chairperson:** Ms Alina Popescu (Romania)

**Members:** Mr Vasily Lawrovskiy (Russian Federation – by teleconference)  
Mr Damien Kelly (Ireland – absent)  
Ms Marieta Okenkova (Slovakia – absent)  
Mr Hilmi Ergin Dedeoglu (Turkey)  
Mr Mirosław Drygas (Poland)  
Mr Siim Tiedemann (Estonia)

**REU Secretariat:** Mr Raimund Jehle, Secretary of the 39<sup>th</sup> ECA (REU)  
Mr Goran Stavrik, Secretary of the 30<sup>th</sup> ERC (REU)  
Ms Dono Abdurazakova, Senior Gender Consultant (REU) – by video – Agenda item 4  
Ms Aroa Santiago Bautista, Junior Gender Consultant (REU) – by video – Agenda item 4  
Ms Beata Somogyi, Programme Assistant, REU – by video

Mr Eduardo Rojas, ADG – Forestry Department – Agenda item AOB  
Mr Peter Csoka, Senior Officer, FOD - Agenda item AOB  
Mr Ekrem Yazici, Secretary of the EFC – Agenda item AOB (by Skype)

#### **Agenda:**

- 1. Update on the Preparation of the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the ECA 2015 in Budapest**
- 2. Revised agenda for the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the ECA 2015 in Budapest, Hungary**
- 3. Revised cost estimation for the future session of the European Commission on Agriculture**
- 4. Update on the Social Protection Network**
- 5. Any other business**

The Chair welcomed the members of the Executive Committee to the third meeting after the 38<sup>th</sup> Session of the ECA and also welcomed Mr Goran Stavrik, newly appointed Secretary to the 30<sup>th</sup> Regional Conference for Europe. The Chair informed the members that not many responses had been received from the ERG members regarding the proposed dates of the Informal Consultation to be held in Hungary. In light of this, the decision should be left to the secretariat, with the request for the Secretariat to cross-check the dates with possible parallel events at HQ or the other Rome based agencies

**Agenda item 1: Update on the Preparation of the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the ECA 2015 in Budapest**

The Secretariat informed the meeting that the ECA was now scheduled for 22-23 September 2015, and will be organized in the same way as other FAO technical meetings. The logistical preparations and support will be less formal; i.e. there would be no transportation for delegates and the Secretariat will not book hotels. The venue will be at the premises of the Ministry of Agriculture in Hungary. Interpretation would be provided to the four official languages in the Region. The plenary room will be set-up classroom style, allowing the participation of observers and NGOs (similarly to the ERC). The required funds for supporting selected countries' delegates to participate in both the Informal Consultation and the ECA, have been provided by Hungary. The format of item 1 on the agenda might change in terms of presentation: rather than introducing the item, followed by the members' statements, there could be a more interactive approach, in the form of a panel discussion and exchange of views..

During the discussion, the members raised the following issues:

- Welcomed the less formal approach to organizing the ECA, as well as the invitation of non-state actors (CSOs, NGOs) as observers. It was clarified that, subject to the agreement of the Member countries, the intervention of the observers would be done as a part of the discussion during the respective item. It was also agreed that the Secretariat would present a draft list of observers to be invited for the ECA session (defined existing list of observers based on the past ECA sessions, supplemented with a list of suggested academia) at the next meeting of the Executive Committee.
- Appreciated a different format in presenting agenda item 1 using a panel discussion for the introduction of the item. However, it was highlighted that the Secretariat should ensure that sufficient time is left for interventions from the Member Countries.

**Action:** The Secretariat should present a list of observers to be invited to the ECA session, at the next meeting of the Executive Committee

**Agenda item 2: Revised agenda for the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the ECA 2015 in Budapest, Hungary**

The Secretariat introduced the revised agenda for the ECA session in Budapest. Following the discussion at the last Ex Com meeting in December, the items on family farming, land degradation and linkages to the International Year of Soils, including the standing item on gender and social protection, have been adjusted. The annotation under the items has been fine-tuned to reflect the subject of discussion, the basis for policy recommendations, to include the results of studies and to guide what kind of contribution and decisions are expected by the Member Countries. As an additional item titled "Addressing the social and

economic burden of malnutrition through nutrition-sensitive agricultural and food policies in the region of Europe and Central Asia” was added taking the results of ICN2 into consideration.

During the discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Need for clarification under item 2 regarding regional and subregional soil partnerships as it was not clear if they already exist or are to be formed.
- Need for clarification under item 5, as to how selection of CIS and Georgia has been done and what the selection criteria were.
- Concern was raised regarding the wide range of agenda items from a technical point of view and thus the difficulties that members might have in terms of sending adequate technical experts for the ECA session. The suggestion was to eventually consider one of the agenda items as a main agenda item of the session, allowing the participating members to better decide for which of the topics they would like to send technical specialists. In this regard, item 4 entitled “Combating land degradation for food security and provision of soil ecosystem services in Europe and Central Asia” was proposed to be the most important item on the agenda from a regional point of view. The Secretariat was requested to adjust the text accordingly to give more importance to this topic. However, it was also stressed that de-emphasizing the other items on the agenda should be avoided.
- Concern was raised that the narrative description of content of the topic focused too much on the analysis of the situation rather than having an outlook approach. The outline for the agenda item should not only describe the current situation, but should concentrate what solutions are expected and what policy recommendations. It should further focus on what member countries would be expected to contribute at the ECA session and this should be consistently described across the agenda items. Also, from the description it was unclear whether some of the studies are still to be prepared or are already available. This needs to be adjusted.

The Secretariat also introduced the revised timetable for the ECA session in Budapest. In this regard, it was mentioned that since the ECA session requires the preparation of a report for adoption (similarly to the ERC), and since the preparation and translation of the report needs time, there would be a study tour organized for the morning of 23 September 2015.

During the discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Clarification was requested regarding whether the report covers both decision and information items or only one of these. The Secretariat confirmed that it should be only decision items.
- Clarification was requested about when the location of the 40<sup>th</sup> ECA session would be decided. The secretariat confirmed that a decision would need to be taken by the 39<sup>th</sup> ECA at the end of the meeting in line with common practice. As the cost proposal for the three locations is one of the agenda items, a decision of the location should in principle be already taken at the conclusion of this agenda item.
- The evaluation of the quality of the ECA session in 2015 will be subject of the next, 40<sup>th</sup> session in 2017.

**Action:** The language of the agenda will need to be adjusted to reflect the current status quo rather than the status when the documents are published (August 2015). The item on the cost proposal has to be included in the agenda as well as the Timetable, as last item on Tuesday afternoon. The timing of the afternoon session on Tuesday in the timetable should be adjusted and the afternoon session should be started at 13.30. The updated agenda and timetable will be presented to the Ex Com during their next meeting in May 2015.

### **Agenda item 3: Revised cost estimation for the future session of the European Commission on Agriculture**

The Secretariat informed the meeting that no background paper was provided on this item, as no relevant data was available at the time. The Secretariat collected data and information from the three locations (Ankara, Budapest and Rome) but the analysis did not yet provide clear comparable results. The draft document should be ready for the next meeting. The Secretariat recalled that during the last Ex Com meeting, the Members decided on three major cost items: Member Countries' costs, cost of the Secretariat and cost of the host countries.

The Secretariat informed about the following:

- For the travel cost of Member Countries, it was difficult to make them comparable, as it was no longer possible to use IATA full fare ticket prices. The prices depend on airlines, timing, etc. and are no longer at standard prices. Therefore, the recommendation of the Secretariat was that this item be excluded from the paper.
- For the costs of participation of Member Countries (daily rate), the only way to make the figures comparable was to use the UN DSA standard rate. However, very few countries use UN DSA rates. While it would be comparable, it was not in line with the actual daily rates of the different countries and so it would be also arguable. Therefore, the recommendation of the Secretariat was that this item should also not be included in the paper.
- For the costs of the host country (Hungary, Turkey and Italy), the Secretariat informed that the costs for lunches cannot be included (in line with meetings in HQ), so this cost should also be removed from the paper, leaving it to the host country to give it as a contribution. The costs for study tours in Hungary and Turkey can be borne by the countries, but Rome has no host Government to provide funds for this. Since the figures here are again not comparable, the suggestion was that they be excluded from the paper.
- For the cost of the Secretariat, it would be broken down to translation of documents, interpretation during the sessions (different prices as interpreters travel from all over Europe) and technical staff. These would all be comparable figures.
- The overall conclusion was that the cost for participation by Member Countries, the lunch and the study tour should not be included in the cost proposal.

The Members agreed to the proposal of the Secretariat.

**Action:** The Secretariat is to continue with the preparation of the cost proposal, based on the outcome of the discussion and present the draft paper during the next meeting in May 2015.

#### **Agenda item 4: Update on the Social Protection Network**

The Senior Gender Consultant gave an update on the Social Protection Network. She informed that FAO has started researching social protection, has contacted relevant experts and is planning consultative workshops to proceed with the draft paper. FAO is in the process of gathering information and receiving responses from country based experts. The list of experts has been shared. A 60 point questionnaire has been designed and FAO is currently receiving the responses (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Moldova have already responded, the rest is on the way). REU is creating a database on the current status of social protection in focus countries and has initiated a comparative analysis. There will be a consultative meeting on 23-24 April in Baku, in order to synthesize the report, and an online consultation involving a broad range of stakeholders. The feedback received will contribute to the regional paper.

During the discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Upon question of one Member of the Executive Committee, the Secretariat informed that Dr. Alexandra Moskovskaya is involved in the preparation of the paper from Russia.
- The Secretariat clarified why the CIS and Georgia were selected for the social protection programmes: the selection was a result of the prior analysis of the REU policy team and the communalities of challenges they encounter. The focus was on post-soviet countries, with an exception of the Baltic states. While Turkey and the Balkans are facing a number of developmental issues, it would be unrealistic to extend the scope of the study. This is a new subject for REU, and the intention was to first explore and build knowledge. The area of research will eventually be expanded and addressed on a step by step basis.
- It was a challenge for REU to make the report as focused as possible and thus would first like to look at social insurance and existence scheme. The inclusion of employment-unemployment issues from a gender perspective was something that should be considered in the future and would be taken into consideration as much as possible. REU would consult ILO to see if cooperation is possible.
- The major parts of the report would be finalized by end of March or early April 2015, but would still be an internal paper. The report would be reviewed at the consultative meeting in Baku, after which it would be finalized and subject to peer review within FAO and other stakeholders. The final paper was planned to be available by May 2015, including the Russian translation. The Secretariat welcomed the interest of the Executive Committee to see the final paper during their next meeting in May 2015.

**Action:**

#### **Agenda item 5: Any Other Business**

##### **Synergies and linkages between the European Commission on Agriculture and the European Forestry Commission**

As one of the main conclusions of the Forestry Evaluation (2012) COFO started a process of coordination with; e.g. COAG and COFI in order to share experiences and as well substantive discussions in joint areas (agroforestry, restoration, rural land use planning, etc.) As a result, linkages between the EFC and the ECA could be further explored.

The ADG Forestry has been invited to the meeting to brainstorm the issue of possible cooperation with the ECA as a consequence of the Forestry evaluation.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- The synergies should be taken on board, but there needs to be grounds for this and it needs to be further explored by the Secretariat. It was suggested that the secretariat could present possible synergies during one of the next Ex Com meetings.
- In general there was an agreement to the Chair's proposal; namely, that it was difficult for member states' representatives to see how to bring these bodies together, although the Ex Com would be open for discussion. The process was welcomed, thinking of possible inter linkages. The agenda for the ECA has been finalized and most of the topics have linkages to Forestry. It was suggested that an observer from the EFC could participate in the ECA.
- The importance of bringing the technical commissions together with the governing body meetings was emphasized, as was the harmonization of the reporting schedule of the different commissions to the governing body meetings. The elements strongly highlighted by the EFC could be reflected in the ECA technical papers. Discussions at the EFC could be taken up at the future Ex Com meetings.
- It would be good if corresponding papers had consistent messages, linking them at the ERC. As the ECA and ERC sessions are not held back to back it would allow the reporting to be more streamlined and also the other regional technical commissions and could feed better into the ERC.

**Action:** The Secretariat and the Forestry Department is to present a joint document on possible synergies, for a subsequent Executive Committee meeting

### **Closing of the Session:**

The Chair thanked the Secretariat for the good preparation of background documents and their support throughout the meeting.