



European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)

35/3 Meeting of the Executive Committee

4 March 2015

Espace Gabon

14.00 – 17.00

Agenda Item 2

Revised agenda of the 39th Session of the ECA 2015 in Budapest, Hungary

Opening of the Session

- 1. Adoption of the agenda**
- 2. Appointment of the Rapporteur**
- 3. Innovation in family farming**

Today's challenges in agriculture differ in complexity, scale and speed from any that human history has faced before, which is leading to increasing demand for support to sustainable farming systems through adequate policies that will enable farmers to innovate and prosper.

The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) 2014: Innovation in family farming highlights that family farms should not be considered an obstacle but rather as part of the solution for ensuring long-term global food security, rural poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. Therefore, promoting innovation in family farming is becoming a priority for politicians and policy makers around the world, including member nations in Europe and Central Asia. In the last twenty years, the agricultural sector in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia has been marked by an overall shift from collective to individual land tenure, generally accompanied by privatization of legal land ownership. This has (i) created a massive number of family farms with unequal access to knowledge, markets, conditions and opportunities for innovation, and (ii) left governments with challenges regarding policies and institutional capacities to adequately address innovation demands. Therefore, a study has been launched for the Region, which draws *outcomes of the State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) 2014 and experiences in the region, and contains country- and subregion- specific challenges related to fostering innovation in family farming. The study has also identified policy options and capacities required to address those challenges. Strong focus has been placed on the demand for a transition from linear, top-down, non-inclusive national research systems, serving centralized economies in the past,*

towards inclusive, decentralized and pluralistic agricultural innovation systems¹ that facilitate and coordinate the activities of all stakeholders involved in agricultural innovation. The broad participation and involvement of family farmers – including smallholders, women and disadvantaged or marginalized groups – in these systems will be essential if they are to benefit fully. Family farms across the region show extreme diversity in size, market and knowledge access and other characteristics, some of them region-specific, which implies diversity in the policy options for agricultural innovation systems.

The study concluded that:

- Family farms are part of the solution for achieving food security and sustainable rural development;
- The challenges faced by agriculture and the institutions that support agricultural innovation are far more complex than ever before; the world must create an innovation system that embraces this complexity;
- Public investment in agricultural R&D and extension and advisory services should be increased and refocused to emphasize sustainable intensification and closing yield and labour productivity gaps. Improved monitoring of these investments is needed in the region;
- All family farmers need an enabling environment for innovation, including good governance, stable macroeconomic conditions, transparent legal and regulatory regimes, secure property rights, risk management tools and market infrastructure;
- Capacity development for innovation should be based on a long-term strategy covering three interconnected dimensions: individual innovation capacity, organizational innovation capacity, and the creation of an enabling environment.
- Effective and inclusive producer organizations are key for supporting innovation for their members.

It is expected that the member nations are reviewing the recommendations from the analysis but also provide information regarding their experience at national, regional and local level. The discussion on this topic should result in an agreement for comprehensive policies fostering innovation in agriculture and also giving clear guidance to FAO regarding its focus of work in the next biennium.

A decision box containing the recommendations from the discussion will be prepared for adoption at the ERC 30th Session.

4. Combating land degradation for food security and provision of soil ecosystem services in Europe and Central Asia.

Land degradation is a growing threat to food security and soil ecosystem services in Eurasia. Driven by biophysical and socio-economic factors, aggravated by effects of climate change and unsustainable use of land and water resources, it is one of the greatest challenges faced by all the European and Central Asian countries. Soils, a core component of land resources, are under increasing pressure, and the number of areas reaching the limits of their productive capacity is fast increasing.

¹ The term 'agricultural innovation system' refers to the individuals, organizations and enterprises that bring new products, processes and forms of organization into use to achieve food security, economic development and sustainable natural resource management. Like any 'system', it encompasses the different stakeholders or actors as well as the linkages between them. It also includes the so-called 'enabling environment' which, as the name suggests, includes the factors making it all possible, such as political commitment and vision; policy, legal and economic frameworks; budget allocations and processes; governance and power structures; incentives and social norms (FAO, 2012).

To address the challenge, under the Global Soil Partnership, the European Soil Partnership and the associated sub-regional Eurasian Soil Partnership were recently launched with the aim of improving regional governance of limited soil resources and promoting sustainable soil management at all levels. Country partners have started drafting the implementation plan for the (sub-) regional partnership to move into concrete field action at regional, national and local levels.

FAO and other international partners have been promoting a global framework for assessing land degradation on different scales that can provide a baseline, assist in targeting investment and planning interventions for efficient, equitable and sustainable agricultural development. Thanks to this assessment, even incomplete, we start having an answer as to **where** land degradation takes place, **which impacts** it has on the population, **how** the situation can be improved, and **what the costs** of action and inaction are to governments and the land users. Though the development of this baseline is a long-term task, we should move forward in this direction in order to achieve the proposed target of a “30 percent increase in the area of land under crops, grazing land and forestry under sustainable land management” of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

In the framework of the International Year of Soils 2015, the study will highlight the status, trends, challenges and costs related to land/soil degradation in the region of Europe and Central Asia and, in particular, specify the potential contribution of healthy soils for food security and nutrition, climate change adaptation/ mitigation and ecosystem services in the region for guiding policy reforms and investment decisions related to sustainable soil management.

Member nations will be requested to support the execution of the implementation plans of the (sub) regional soil partnerships, with priority actions for arresting and reversing current trends in soil degradation at regional, national and local levels, in order to successfully achieve the aforementioned development objectives.

Recommendations issued from the discussion held during the ECA will be presented in a decision box for the ERC.

5. Gender-sensitive analysis of social protection programs for rural residents

The positive impact of social protection on rural development is widely recognized, making it a crucial element of pro-poor policies including the post-2015 agenda. From this perspective, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is committed to supporting governments and partners in addressing the main challenges of agricultural development and rural poverty reduction by incorporating social protection into regional and national strategies and actions. To build knowledge and understanding of the benefits of social protection programmes for women and men living in rural areas, which are particularly relevant in view of social protection reforms ongoing in the region, a comparative analysis of existing social protection programmes in the CIS Countries and Georgia has been prepared.

The situation of the social protection programmes in the CIS countries and Georgia is different in comparison to other parts of the world as in the process of transition to a market economy, the countries have had to abandon the universal system in order to move to a more targeted approach that would reach the neediest. Drawing on the information from the study and the social protection programmes in other countries of the Region, the background paper for the topic will synthesize information for the Region and will present policy recommendations and lessons learned regarding the use and implementation of social protection programmes for the Region for the member countries as well as further work proposals for FAO in the coming biennium.

The member nations may want to review the results of the study and the synthesis in the background paper and share their experiences regarding social protection programmes on rural development in their country and provide suggestions for recommendations to improve the existing programmes and give recommendations for the future work of the organization.

Recommendations issued out from the discussion held during the ECA will be presented in a decision box for the ERC.

6. Addressing social and economic burden of malnutrition through nutrition-sensitive agricultural and food policies in the region of Europe and Central Asia

Despite a significant growth in food production over recent decades, stunting among children under five years and undernutrition is still present in some countries of the region. Moreover, due to economic and nutritional transition, the prevalence of overweight and obesity are on increasing, a phenomenon associated with micronutrient deficiencies that results from unbalanced and nutrient-poor diets. The consequences of malnutrition are multiple and diverse, including non-communicable diseases (NCDs) caused by dietary factors, which are relevant for all countries, income groups and ages. NCDs have been recognized as main causes of disabilities and mortality worldwide with high social and economic costs: every 10 percent rise in mortality from NCDs involve 0.5 percent decrease of yearly economic growth. The social cost of malnutrition, measured by the “disability-adjusted life years” (DALY) is very high worldwide, including in the region. Beyond the social cost, malnutrition causes high costs to national economies due to lost productivity and employment, high health care costs, missed educational targets and income opportunities. Without action, these problems may expand and become greater. The challenge for policy-makers is how to address undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, while at the same time avoiding or reversing the scaling up of overweight and obesity in transition economies of the region.

The objective of the discussion on this topic is to highlight the status of social and economic costs of malnutrition and diet-related non-communicable diseases in the region of Europe and Central Asia and to recommend a set of policies and priority actions to address the reduction of social costs and socioeconomic inequalities in nutrition applicable to various clusters of countries in the region in line with the ICN2 Framework for Action. The role of various sectors and actors in implementing the ICN2 Framework for Action, including the role of smallholders and family farms, will be detailed. The paper will explore ways of improving policy coherence across major sectors with an impact on nutrition. Mechanisms for more effective inter-sectoral coordination for nutrition will be assessed. A special focus will be placed on leveraging the potential advantages of agri-food systems in improving nutrition. The background document will provide an overview of policy options, tools and best practices for ensuring food and nutrition security, sustainability in availability and access to quality and safe food for all income categories of population, especially targeting the most vulnerable.

It is expected that member nations review the outcomes of the background document and policy recommendations and also recommendations for future actions of FAO and the member nations.

Recommendations issued from the discussion held during the ECA will be presented in a decision box for the ERC.

- 7. Election of members of the Executive Committee**
- 8. Other business**
- 9. Date and place of the Fortieth Session**
- 10. Summary of conclusions presented by the Rapporteur**

Closing of the Session