



European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)

36/2 Meeting of the Executive Committee

15 June 2016, 9.30-12.30

Room B2L2 (CSD Divisional Meeting Room), HQ Rome

Minutes

Present

Acting Chairperson: Ms Marieta Okenkova (Slovakia)

Members present: Mr Spyridon Ellinas (Cyprus)

Mr Siim Tidemann (Estonia)

Mr Damien Kelly (Ireland)

Mr Mirosław Drygas (Poland)

Mr Oleg Kobiakov (Russian Federation)

Mr Hilmi Ergin Dedeoglu (Turkey)

REU Secretariat: Mr Raimund Jehle, Secretary of the ECA (REU)

Mr Goran Stavrik, Secretary of the 30th ERC (REU)

Ms Erzsebet Illes, Assistant

Agenda:

1. Revision of the Rules of Procedure of the European Commission on Agriculture (35/08/5)
2. Revised Workplan and Meeting Schedule of the ECA Executive Committee (36/2-1)
3. Scope and direction of Informal Consultations (ICs) in 2016-2017 (36/2-2)
4. Eurasian Soil Commission (36/2-3)
5. Update on the Regional Initiatives (36/2-4)
6. Main outcomes of the ERC with reference to ECA (36/2-5)
7. Regional Gender Strategy and Action Plan for Europe and Central Asia 2016-2017 (36/2-6)
8. Evaluation of the European Commission on Agriculture

The Meeting was opened by the Acting Chair, Marieta Okenkova, Permanent Representative of Slovakia to FAO. The Chair welcomed the members of the Executive Committee to the second meeting after the 39th Session of the ECA. The members agreed with the draft agenda for the meeting as it was distributed by the Secretariat.

Agenda item 1: Revision of the Rules of Procedure of the European Commission on Agriculture (35/08/5)

The Secretariat informed the Ex Com about the outcomes of the revision of the present Rules of Procedure of the ECA. The secretariat found that the specific sections of the Rules of Procedure do not conflict with the current state of the ECA. Although Section 8.1 mentions the possibility of preparing a summary of conclusions presented by rapporteur(s) after the ECA sessions, it allows the preparation of a normal report to be transmitted to the Director General as well. Based on this, and taking into consideration the undergoing assessment of the ECA, the Secretariat advised that the document does not need to be changed or adjusted due to the separation of the ECA and the ERC.

During the discussion the members of the Ex Com raised the following points:

- review of Rule III related to the membership of the Executive Committee to deal with the fact that members are changing their government positions and thus may not be able to carry out the function of an Ex Com Member between the ECA sessions, meaning that the Ex Com may not be fully operational and would require interim ad personal appointment;
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- introducing a special provision for the Acting Chair;
- take into consideration the possibility to appoint new representatives of the countries of the leaving member to regular Ex Com Members, Chair or Vice Chair on an ad-interim basis;
- the Secretariat highlighted that “ad persona” appointment of members is a key requirement for an operational Ex Com to ensure consistency and allow informed decisions by the Executive Committee;
- the Secretariat was requested to present a paper about the amendment of the Rules of Procedure based on the Ex Com’s suggestions on the next session in November 2016;
- the amendment of the Rules of Procedures should be linked to the Terms of Reference for the assessment of ECA (Agenda item 8), considering that any kind of suggestion may become obsolete if the evaluation brings contradicting outcomes.

Action:

Secretariat to prepare a note for the 40th Session of the ECA about the amendment of the Rules of Procedures, with special regard to Section 3, based on the suggestions by the Ex Com to be reviewed at the next session in November 2016.

Agenda item 2: Revised Workplan and Meeting Schedule of the ECA Executive Committee (36/2-1)

The Secretariat presented the revised time schedule and session plan including the main agenda items of the Ex Com meetings for the current biennium up to the 40th Session of the ECA in autumn 2017, with the following adjustments:

- Task 2 – Preparation of the Informal Consultation meetings to take place in June 2016

(instead of May 2016)

- Executive Committee Meeting 36/3 – November 2016 – Agenda item on Terms of Reference for Assessment of ECA should be added.
- Executive Committee Meeting 36/6 - Agenda item on update on Informal Consultation meeting should be cancelled (Agenda item 2)

Overall the Members expressed their agreement with the work and time plan and they suggested updating the ERG with the plan. The Secretariat explained that this is a rolling plan and always tentative, thus it does not recommend sharing the session plan itself. However, the Chair shall present the draft agenda of the IC and the ECA to the ERG.

Considering that the Informal Consultation is scheduled for May 2017, the timing of the Ex Com meeting planned in the same month should be reconsidered.

Action:

Secretariat to present on the next session in November, if update of the work- and session plan needs further changes.

Agenda item 3: Scope and direction of Informal Consultations (ICs) in 2016-2017 (36/2-2)

The Secretariat, in line with the ExCom suggestions from the previous session, proposed organizing only one Informal Consultation (IC) during the biennium in Budapest in May 2017, and provided an overview related to the scope and direction of the IC.

The 30th Regional Conference has agreed on the trends and developments for the upcoming Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2018-2021. However, it is important to consult with members in the region on further details regarding the next PWB 2018-19. The main elements of the IC should be:

- Implementation of the PWB 2016-17 and particularly the Regional Initiatives;
- Review of the priorities for the Region for the 2018-19 biennium and confirm or adjust the priorities;
- Consultation regarding possible Regional Initiatives for the biennium 2018-19 taking into consideration the importance of SDGs implementation in the region.

The Ex Com agreed on the timing and the preliminary agenda of the IC, taking into consideration, that priority areas have not been discussed at the 30th ERC. Members raised the following issues in this regard:

- Mobilization of adequate number of member countries and their active participation is the key
- Format of the IC should encourage active participation and make the discussion more motivating and inclusive (e.g. with the establishment of working groups, who present their outcomes);

The Secretariat asked the Ex Com to give some further thoughts about the organization of the IC, especially about its format.

Action:

Ex Com members to share further thoughts about the organization of the IC, especially about

its format with the Secretariat (via email until 15 September). The Secretariat is to update Ex Com on the preparation of IC at the next meeting in November.

Agenda item 4: Eurasian Soil Commission (36/2-3)

As a follow-up to the 39th Session of the ECA, the Secretariat presented the background paper on Eurasian Soil Commission. Considering that the Bishkek Communiqué stated that the existing Eurasia Soil Partnership (EaSP) should be strengthened and the 30th ERC confirmed that no further efforts in forming a Eurasian Soil Commission should be undertaken, the paper did not analyze the advantages and disadvantages of establishing Eurasian Soil Commission, but concluded on the recommendations on strengthening the existing partnership.

The Executive Committee agreed that there is no further need to set up Eurasian Soil Commission, as an additional body, considering that the structure is well established and further efforts are needed to strengthen ESP and EaSP, inter alia through rising the awareness of relevant actors at the regional and sub-regional level

Action:

No action needed.

Agenda item 5: Update on the Regional Initiatives (36/2-4)

The Secretariat presented the main results achieved and work planned under the two Regional Initiatives (RIs) in REU – RI-1 Empowering small holders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods and poverty reduction and RI-2 Agri-food trade and market integration - in this biennium. Answering the questions of Members, the Secretariat added:

- RIs are conceptual frameworks for delivering our work in a more focused manner in the region and their main objective is to provide region-wide support. Focus countries are selected based on having a larger impact and on a strong political will for support including rural development as a national priority.
- RI budgets give 40 percent of the assessed contribution (salaries and non-staff resources in the Regular Programme). This proportion does not include the staff time at country office level, or the technical support coming from the HQ. Besides, trust funds provided by donors are used under the RIs.
- KYR, ARM, MOL, UKR are the focus countries under RI-2. WTO support is not limited to these four countries, but it covers the Balkan countries as well.

The Ex Com drew up the following suggestions regarding RIs:

- Considering that there is a linkage to the work of EFC and EIFAAC, Delivery Managers of RIs should further strengthen coordination with these Commissions.
- Further emphasis should be put on publishing related events and making publications available on FAO REU website.
- The Secretariat mentioned that the synthesis of the comprehensive study of the agricultural trade policies of 12 post-Soviet countries would be published in English by the end of June. After having crosschecked with the authors, a small adjustment is needed regarding the date of publication: it is now expected by the end of July. Ex Com members asked the Secretariat to alert them when it is published.

Action:

Secretariat to inform RI Delivery Managers about the suggestions of the Ex Com. Secretariat to alert Ex Com Members when the synthesis of the study on the agricultural trade policies of 12 post-Soviet countries is published in English.

Agenda item 6: Main outcomes of the ERC with reference to ECA (36/2-5)

The secretariat briefed the Ex Com on the outcomes of the 30th ERC in Antalya, Turkey on 4-6 May 2016 with implications to ECA and related follow-up. Considering that the ERC Report is available, the Secretariat highlighted some of the relevant recommendations, including:

- establishment of a Eurasian Soil Commission should be reconsidered in view of the objective to restrict the number of Article VI and Article XIV bodies (already as ExCom agenda item 4)
- the Conference underlined the importance of the assessment of the ECA and its contribution to FAO's work in the region. (already as ExCom Agenda item 8)
- the Conference encouraged FAO to maximise synergies by collaborating with other relevant international organizations in the region
- Reports from the EFC and the EIFAAC were for the first time presented as separate agenda items at the Conference. Consideration could be given for further enhancing the cooperation between the three commissions, with special regard to the MYPOW 2016-2019.
- Recommendations on the SDGs and their implications for agriculture and rural development in Europe and Central Asia region are relevant for the work of the ECA

Members of the Ex Com suggested further enhancing cooperation among the three article-VI bodies by sharing information including minutes of the meetings between the ECA sessions. The Ex Com suggested inviting members of the other two commissions to the Ex Com meeting in order to share views regarding the scope of cooperation. The Secretariat recommended considering SDGs as an umbrella item of the joint work of the three committees.

Action:

The Secretariat is to contact EFC and EIFAAC and invite their representatives to the next Ex Com meeting in November in order to share views on cooperation under the umbrella of the SDGs.

Agenda item 7: Regional Gender Strategy and Action Plan for Europe and Central Asia 2016-2017 (36/2-6)

FAO's Regional Gender Strategy and Action Plan for Europe and Central Asia 2016-2017 were presented to the Members. REU is the only Regional Office where there is such a coherent strategy. By implementing the strategy we are moving towards a cost-effective and impact oriented approach based on the guidance of FAO governing bodies.

The Ex Com appreciated the outcomes of the Regional Gender Strategy and Action Plan for Europe and Central Asia 2016-2017 and gave congratulations on the study.

Action:

No action needed.

Agenda item 8: Evaluation of the European Commission on Agriculture

After the 39th Session, ECA asked for an assessment of the Commission's work with an emphasis on the effectiveness of separation of ERC and ECA. The 30th ERC underlined the importance of the assessment of the ECA from the point of view of its contribution to FAO's work in the region, the Secretariat asked the Ex Com Members to provide guidance regarding the scope of the assessment. Ex Com Members initial recommendations are as follows:

- the timeframe, scope, TORs and financial resources of the assessment should be preliminary decided by the Ex Com
- a decision on whether this is a wide evaluation or an assessment should be made
- experience with other assessments in FAO should be taken into consideration
- member states should be involved
- assessment should be a topic at the next ECA
- the Evaluation Unit should be contacted in order to plan the assessment
- the ERG group should be contacted to ask for their views regarding the assessment.

The Ex Com agreed that the Chair will collect views from the EU and ERG and present them to the Secretariat by the end of July. Suggestions from Ex Com members are expected via email by this deadline as well. Based on the inputs, and with the involvement of the Evaluation Unit, the Secretariat will prepare an assessment plan and TORs for the next ExCom in November for discussion.

Action:

The Secretariat should prepare a draft email for the Chair of the Ex Com and send it to the ERG to collect further views on the scope of the assessment. These should be presented to the Secretariat by the end of July. Ex Com members are to share further suggestions with the Secretariat via email by this deadline as well. The Secretariat is to prepare an assessment plan and TORs for the next ExCom in November for discussion.

Closing of the Session:

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