Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)

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Agenda item 5 – Background note

Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction

Background

Sustainable natural resource management, including adaptation to climate change is a key challenge for many countries in Europe and Central Asia and particularly in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Many natural resources are being degraded and are unsustainably used due to increasing pressure from agriculture and other sectors. Lack of natural resource management practices, unsustainable practices, as well as an increase in natural hazards and extreme events has already resulted in considerable ecological and economic damage in the region (including land and forest degradation, desertification, transboundary pests and diseases, water scarcity, soil salinization and GHG emissions).

Climate change is already a reality and will further exacerbate the problem, hampering food production, rural economic growth and national food securities. The IPCC 4th Assessment Report states that climate change poses serious threats to the environment, ecological and socio-economic systems in the region, particularly due to its arid nature. Models indicate that there will be severe impacts on regional temperature and precipitation regimes and also on natural ecosystems, agricultural crops, livestock and human health.

Overall many countries in the region are already facing warmer temperatures, changing hydrology, and more extreme events as well as suffering from a range of multiple threats and natural hazards (floods, landslides, extreme temperature fluctuations, droughts and wildfires). According to the World Risk Index 2015, exposure in the region to natural hazards is already high for many countries and the changing climatic conditions in the region are expected to increase the frequency, scope and severity of such natural hazards.[1]

The main regional characteristic is the limited capacity of agricultural sector actors to prepare for and reduce the effects of natural hazards in the short and long term. All the above makes preparedness and ecosystem-based climate change adaptation in agriculture a priority on national agendas and is identified as needing technical support in the Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) with FAO.

At regional level, the current DRRM is mainly focused on emergency response, with little attention in the agricultural sector given to prevention, mitigation, preparedness and longer-term climate change adaptation planning. Although some elements of DRRM and CCA have already been established in certain countries, with the main authority falling under the ministries responsible for internal affairs and environment respectively, cooperation of agricultural sector

[1] Fifth IPCC Assessment Report

actors at regional level, as well as involvement of the agricultural sector in existing cooperation mechanisms is very limited.

Even though some of the countries already have climate change adaptation strategies in place, they often do not have sound integration of risk reduction practices and tangible climate change adaptation measures for agriculture. This is further influenced by ineffective cooperation within agricultural subsectors and among different national institutions, which is significantly impeding data collection, information management and, as a consequence, efficient decision-making.

The way forward

It is clear that there is a need to transition to agricultural production systems that are more productive, use inputs more efficiently and sustainably and are more resilient to risks, shocks and long-term changes in climate.

The FAO concept of Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) addresses these complex interrelated challenges of food security, development, climate change and DRR holistically, and in an integrated manner. CSA takes into consideration the socioeconomic and environmental context and identifies potential synergies, reducing trade-offs and optimizing the use of natural resources and ecosystem services. CSA brings together practices, policies and institutions that are not necessarily new, but are used in an optimal integrated way in the specific context were they are being applied.

FAO is already undertaking some key areas of relevant work, for example the FAO sub-regional office in Turkey has developed the second phase of the Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM2) that seeks to scale up integrated natural resource management approaches in Central Asia and Turkey.

The CSA approach is also being applied in the Western Balkans where and integrated CSA and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) approach is being developed. Implementing integrated approaches were farmers are encouraged to take an active role can greatly reduce the frequency and severity of impacts on both agricultural and other sectors and communities within the landscape and watershed.

These and other existing programmes can form the core of a more systematic approach towards integrating climate change and DRR into agricultural and rural development strategies and interventions in the region.

In particular the envisioned CSA/DRR work in the REU region will directly support the adaptation and mitigation commitments of countries under their Nationally Determined Contributions of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement as well achieving a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 2, 12, 13, 14, 15 and also 1, 5, 7, 8.

REU also has great potential for the sharing of CSA information and lessons learned between its member states. Currently alliances have been established, including the Global Alliance for CSA (GACSA) and regional alliances in Africa, North America and Asia. There could be benefits and the potential to develop a European CSA alliance. These should facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information as well as collaboration among its members, promote

the upscaling of CSA across the region, and enable the uptake of CSA practices by farmers and other stakeholders.