



REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF FAMILY FARMING IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

The characteristics of family farming in Europe and Central Asia (ECA)

- Almost 1/3 of the population in Europe and Central Asia live in rural areas.
- Commercial family farms are the backbone of agriculture in most EU member countries.
- Small family farms are dominating the farm structures, in particular in the Western Balkan, Caucasus and Central Asia countries (av. farm sizes < 3 ha and excessive land fragmentation).
- Rural poverty has been declining over the years, but this trend has recently slowed.
- Rural people – especially women, youth and other disadvantaged groups – have fewer decent employment opportunities.
- Family farms should not be seen as an obstacle but rather as part of the solution for ensuring long-term global food and nutrition security, reduction of rural poverty and environmental sustainability.
- Small farms do not constitute one homogeneous group (different pathways for development – commercial family farming path, diversification path and exit path).
- Many rural households adopt mixed livelihood strategies.

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Needs and constraints of small family farms in ECA

- Small family farms and rural populations in general are and will be hit hard by the multiple crisis (climate, COVID 19 and the impact of the war in Ukraine).
- Smallholders have in general the least capacities and resources to cope with shocks and crisis.
- Family farms have limited access to production factors, natural resources and finance. They often suffer from poorly managed and maintained irrigation and drainage systems and from limited access to land.
- Inefficient farm structures often lead to low productivity and competitiveness, resulting in land abandonment and out migration.
- Investment support, e.g. from Rural Development Programmes, is usually not tailored towards small farms.
- Outdated technology, low input quality and low skills are key constraints.
- Lack of organized cooperation and collective action between small producers and processors.
- Small farms have often a low level of specialization.
- The country policy frameworks for agriculture and rural development do often not focus on the specific needs and constraints of small family farms.

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FAO support to family farming in ECA (1/3)

- Support to smallholders, family farms and youth is one of four regional priorities for FAO in Europe and Central Asia.
- Support is provided through the programmatic umbrella of the “Regional Initiative on empowering smallholders, family farms and youth through inclusive rural transformation, digitalization and innovation” (RI1).
- RI1 components:
 1. Sustainable and resilient agricultural production policies and practices
 2. Inclusive rural transformation
- Ongoing support to the preparation of National Action Plans for Family farming in Kyrgyzstan, Albania and Moldova.



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FAO support to family farming in ECA (2/3)

- FAO REU published in 2020 country studies on needs and constraints of smallholders and family farms in eight countries in Europe and Central Asia (Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia and Tajikistan).
- Sub-regional training workshops on UNDROPP to be conducted in autumn 2022.
- Ongoing study on good regional practices on community development.
- Conduct mapping and document case studies on family farming in the region to enhance knowledge exchange through good practices
- Study planned on good practices in the region for investment / grant measures targeting directly small family farms and other SMEs.
- Study on the situation and the needs of rural youth in the Western Balkan countries planned during 2022-2023.
- Study on European good practices on land banking published in 2022 – Access to land to young farmers and small farms.
- Enhanced support to digitalization and innovation (Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has the potential to enable farmers to access not only information and knowledge but also credit, insurance, market systems, etc.



<http://www.fao.org/3/ca9586en/CA9586EN.pdf>

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FAO support to family farming in ECA (3/3)

- Conducting a study of sustainable crop production and innovative intensifications technologies and management practices.
- Identification of best practices on cattle breeding and artificial insemination programmes among small dairy holders.
- Enhancing women's empowerment and gender equality through awareness raising and capacity development for national stakeholders and improving women's access to extension services.
- Country gender assessments for Albania, Kosovo, Belarus and Kazakhstan are published.
- Support to regional dialogue on transformative and resilient agri-food systems and improving the rural populations' access to social protection through capacity development workshops with focus on shock-responsiveness.
- Improving farm structures and addressing land abandonment through the introduction of land consolidation and land banking instrument and developing agricultural land markets.

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Thank you!