



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

**36/4 Meeting of the Executive Committee  
13 February 2017, 11.00-13.00  
B-318, HQ Rome  
Minutes**

### **Present**

**Acting Chairperson:** Ms Marieta Okenkova (Slovakia)

**Members present:** Mr Spyridon Ellinas (Cyprus)  
Mr Damien Kelly (Ireland)  
Mr Oleg Kobiakov (Russian Federation)

**Observer:** Mr Ruve Sank (Estonia)

**Member absent:** Mr Mirosław Drygas (Poland)

**Members resigned:** Mr Siim Tidemann (Estonia)  
Mr Hilmi Ergin Dedeoglu (Turkey)

**REU Secretariat:** Mr Reuben Sessa, Secretary of ECA (REU)  
Mr Goran Stavrik, Conference Affairs Officer (REU)  
Ms Erzsebet Illes, Programme and Monitoring Associate (REU)

### **Agenda:**

1. Introduction of the New Secretary of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)
2. Revision of the Rules of Procedure of the European Commission on Agriculture
3. Preparations for the Informal Consultation 29 – 30 May 2017
4. Proposed subjects for the Agenda of the 40<sup>th</sup> Session of the European Commission on Agriculture
5. Assessment of the European Commission on Agriculture
6. Workplan and Meeting Schedule of the ECA Executive Committee
7. AOB

The Meeting was opened by the Acting Chair, Ms Marieta Okenkova, Permanent Representative of Slovakia to FAO. The Chair welcomed the Members of the Executive Committee (Ex Com) to the fourth meeting after the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the ECA. The members agreed with the draft agenda for the meeting as distributed by the Secretariat.

**Agenda item 1: Introduction of the New Secretary of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)**

Mr Reuben Sessa, Climate change, DRR and Energy Coordinator for Europe and Central Asia, newly appointed Secretary of the ECA, shared his introductory thoughts and introduced his 17 years of professional experience with FAO.

ECA Ex Com members welcomed Mr Sessa's appointment and confirmed that they were looking forward to collaborating in the future.

**Action:**

No action needed.

**Agenda item 2: Revision of the Rules of Procedure of the European Commission on Agriculture**

Based on the suggestions of the Ex Com, the Secretariat invited Mr Antonio Tavares, Legal Counsel, LEGD and Ms Marta Pardo, Legal Officer, for further consultation on the amendment of the Rules of Procedure of ECA (RoP), with special regard to Rule III. The discussion focused on the procedure for replacing Ex Com members, considering that Mr Hilmi Ergin Dedeoglu (Turkey) and Mr Siim Tiidemann (Estonia) will not be able to carry out their functions as Members of the ECA Executive Committee in the future.

Mr Tavares confirmed that the common practice in FAO governing bodies is that an Ex Com member who is unable to serve his or her mandate in the future, can be replaced by a person nominated by the government of the same country. The nomination is subject to approval by the Ex Com. The common practice applies to replacing the Chair as well: if the elected Chair is unable to fulfil his or her function anymore, the Vice Chair acts as Chair until the next regular ECA session.

Although, Mr Tavares does not see any obstacles for the amendment of the RoP, he called the Ex Com members' attention to two observations:

- amendments should not create overly specific rules in the text of the RoP so as to preserve the flexibility of the document;
- the timing of the amendment should be reconsidered, bearing in mind that the ECA assessment, which might influence the future of the Commission, is ongoing, and the ECA Ex Com has issues with the quorum.

The Ex Com proposed that the Secretariat prepare the amendment to the Rules of Procedure of the ECA. Whether or not it will be presented and discussed at the 40<sup>th</sup> Session of the ECA should be decided based on the results of the ongoing assessment. The next Ex Com in May will come back to this issue.

LEG agreed to propose a text for the amendment of the RoP, including the critical points suggested by the Ex Com, especially:

- Replacement of Ex Com members
- Replacement of the Chair and appointment of ad interim Vice-Chair
- Nominations and appointments being subject to the Ex Com's approval

Until the revised RoP is approved and enters into force, the ECA and Ex Com can follow these rules as common practice.

**Action:**

LEGA to share their suggestions on the amendment in the text of the Rules of Procedure of the ECA with the ECA Secretariat and the Ex Com members. Secretariat proposes to share the suggestions until 10 April.

The Secretariat is in agreement with the ExCom members on following-up on the nomination of the new members with Estonia and Turkey.

**Agenda item 3: Preparations for the Informal Consultation on 29-30 May 2017**

The Secretariat presented the workplan and the draft agenda for the Informal Consultation to be held in Budapest on 29-30 May 2017 for the Ex Com Members' views and suggestions.

The Secretariat informed the members that REU Deputy Regional Representative will take over the role of ERC Secretary from Mr Goran Stavrik, who will support the organization as a Conference Affairs Officer in the future. Ex Com members agreed with the agenda and the workplan.

**Action:**

Secretariat to work on the preparation of the Informal Consultation based on the agreed agenda and workplan.

Secretariat to consider whether to hold the next ExCom meeting in the afternoon of 30 May after the IC in Budapest.

Secretariat to organize a meeting of Chairs and Secretaries of all regional governing bodies during the IC in Budapest to discuss the possibilities of working in partnership and to increase efforts to further integrate governing bodies in the region.

**Agenda item 4: Proposed subjects for the Agenda of the 40<sup>th</sup> Session of the European Commission on Agriculture (36/4-4)**

The Secretariat presented the suggestions for the Agenda items of the 40<sup>th</sup> Session of the European Commission on Agriculture to be held in Budapest, Hungary, on 27-28 September 2017, for the Ex Com Members' views and suggestions. The Secretariat informed the Ex Com that Hungary has confirmed the funding of the event.

Suggestions from the Ex Com members:

- The ECA should focus on fewer topics and at the same time on technical areas and discussions. This should be reflected in the agenda in order to encourage countries to send technical experts to the ECA;
- Proposal 1.3 on *Climate change and transboundary animal diseases* could be the main focus of the 40<sup>th</sup> Session and all the other items, including trade, migration, gender, AMR, livestock and climate change should be arranged around this one with overarching contribution to the Agenda 2030;
- Proposal 1.1 on the *Relevance of the sustainable food and agriculture's principles*

<p>(SFA) is not recommended to be put on the agenda;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For Proposal 3 on <i>Addressing the Gender Gap in Agriculture in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Responding to challenges in the implementation of the Gender Strategy</i>, the wording “Gender Gap” is suggested to be adjusted;</li> <li>- Proposal 4 on <i>Reviewing the finding of the assessment on the ECA</i> is suggested to be completed with the amendment of the Rules of Procedure of ECA</li> <li>- Additional proposal for sub-items on the agenda: international years’ contribution to regional priorities (IYFF, IYS, IYP).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Action:</b></p> <p>Secretariat to review and adjust the agenda based on the suggestions from the Ex Com members and go ahead with the preparation of the 40<sup>th</sup> Session of the European Commission on Agriculture.</p>

<p><b><u>Agenda item 5: Assessment of the European Commission on Agriculture</u></b></p>
<p>Ms. Tullia Aiazzi, Evaluation Expert, updated the Ex Com about the status of the Assessment of the ECA. She highlighted some preliminary findings related to the agenda of the current Ex Com meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the interviews with the permanent representations in Rome have been completed. 17 members were interviewed, which is 30% of the membership. As two requests have already been sent out, only the interviews that have already been planned will be conducted;</li> <li>- processing of the questionnaire survey submitted to participants of the ECA between 2010 and 2016 has been completed. Enough responses were processed to make it statistically relevant and reliable. However, some caution is advised in relation to some extreme options;</li> <li>- The interviews confirmed the demand for the ECA to put more technical focus on 1 theme and to hold more interactive meetings. These are in line with suggestions to increase the attractiveness of the ECA;</li> <li>- there was mixed feedback on what the links between the ECA and the ERC should be. In general, it is considered that the ECA should not be a preparatory body for the ERC and so as not to waste time, the ERC should not re-open topics already discussed at the ECA. ECA should provide only technical input (except in particularly serious matters);</li> <li>- although all other UN Regional Economic and Social Commissions have formally embarked on monitoring progress towards the SDGs at the regional level, the Economic Commission for Europe has not done this yet;</li> <li>- outcomes of the assessment will not require amendments in RoP, as per the progress in the analysis so far.</li> </ul> <p>Comments and suggestions from Ex Com members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the assessment should clarify what SDG indicators, and related progress, the ECA should discuss, considering that the FAO framework is already aligned with the Agenda 2030.</li> <li>- countries’ participation in the regional groups should be clarified and consolidated, considering that some of them are members of two regional groups, others (e.g. Tajikistan) are not members of any;</li> <li>- the agenda of the ECA Sessions should be formulated according to the expected</li> </ul>

<p>participants: PWB is about the programme countries, while donor countries are interested in activities under their projects. This can explain the low level of participation of Western countries in the Sessions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the issue of different membership should be addressed (ERG 48 countries, ERC 53 countries, REU program countries), specifically in relation to five countries not being members of the ERG. These should consider their status as observers in the ERG.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Action:</b></p> <p>Ms Tullia Aiazzi to reflect the Ex Com's comments and finalize the first draft of the report by 17 March. Secretariat to send the draft report to the Ex Com members for their comments and review.</p>

<p><b><u>Agenda item 6: Workplan and Meeting Schedule of the ECA Executive Committee (36/4-5)</u></b></p>
<p>The Secretariat presented the updated workplan and schedule for the meetings of the Executive Committee by the 40<sup>th</sup> ECA Session 2017 in Budapest as agreed at the 36/3 meeting of the Executive Committee. Ex Com members confirmed the workplan.</p>
<p><b>Action:</b></p> <p>No action needed.</p>
<p><b><u>Agenda item 7: AOB</u></b></p>
<p>The Acting Chair informed the Ex Com that the ERG Chair is organizing a regular thematic discussion, which could be an opportunity for REU to update the ERG on major areas of its work as it is done at ExCom meetings.</p>
<p><b>Action:</b></p> <p>No action needed.</p>

<p><b>Closing of the Session:</b></p> <p>The Chair thanked the Secretariat for the good preparation of background documents and their support throughout the meeting.</p>
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