

FAO Expert consultation on knowledge sharing for agricultural innovations applicable for smallholders and family farmers in Europe and Central Asia

Gödöllő, Hungary

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Background

[The State of Food and Agriculture: Innovation in family farming report](#) (FAO, 2014) highlights that family farms are part of the solution for ensuring long-term global food security, rural poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. However, they need to be supported through adequate policies, competent institutions and capacities to innovate^[1] and thus, achieving those goals.

Therefore, promoting innovation in family farming is becoming a priority for politicians and policy makers around the world, including nations in Europe and Central Asia. Despite this fact, still very little is being done in transforming their knowledge systems from linear and centralized models towards inclusive, decentralized and pluralistic [Agricultural Innovation Systems](#) (AIS)^[2] that would revolutionize the sector (FAO, 2012). This is not a simple task. Family farms across the region are extremely diverse in size, market and knowledge access and other characteristics, implying diversity in the policy options for agricultural innovation systems.

On its [39th session, the European Commission of Agriculture](#) (ECA)^[3], recognized the need for FAO to assist countries in developing capacities required by AIS actors in Europe and Central Asia, and need for a forum for countries in the region provided by FAO acting as a neutral broker for knowledge sharing on transforming the AIS in the Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region towards more efficient, inclusive, decentralized and pluralistic systems.

^[1] Agricultural innovation is the process whereby individuals or organizations bring existing or new products, processes and forms of organization into social and economic use to increase effectiveness, competitiveness, resilience to shocks or environmental sustainability, thereby contributing to food and nutritional security, economic development and sustainable natural resource management. TAP Common Capacity development framework on AIS.

^[2]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).

^[3] [Report of the 39th session of the European Commission on Agriculture](#)

Furthermore, during the [31st session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe](#) (ERC^[4]), the FAO member countries in Europe and Central Asia encouraged FAO to continue its efforts on knowledge sharing on policies and good practices, in particular with focus on smallholders and family farmers and provide a neutral regional platform on which to share knowledge and support the implementation of national e-agriculture strategies for countries in Europe and Central Asia.

The expert consultation contributes to the FAO regional result 50472 on the establishment of a regional knowledge-sharing platform on innovations applicable for smallholders and family farms, and regional result 50504 enhancing capacities of regional organizations and e-agriculture networks, and supports REU [Regional initiative 1: Empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods and poverty reduction](#).

Objectives

The consultation will discuss

- (i) the criteria for data collection on agricultural innovations for smallholders;
- (ii) the mechanisms for data collection and validation,
- (iii) related existing platforms/mechanism and gaps;
- (iv) interaction and collaboration with other platforms and networks to avoid duplication.

More specifically, the expert consultation will:

- Elaborate and validate criteria for selection and data management of agricultural innovations, applicable for smallholders and family farms in Europe and Central Asia
- Identify and discuss relevant knowledge sharing platforms, identify gaps, define scope, parameters, and means of collaboration with other relevant platforms and networks in view of avoiding duplication of work
- Identify and present case studies for innovations for smallholders and family farms based on a country survey^[5]

^[4] The ERC requested that FAO:

- i. continue to assist countries in Europe and Central Asia in transforming their agricultural sectors and leveraging the livelihoods of farmers, both women and men, through e-agriculture and to foster its responsible use through the three Regional Initiatives;
- ii. collect and analyse good practices, tools and mechanisms in e-agriculture for knowledge sharing and provide policy advice and capacity development to maximize benefits and minimize risks;
- iii. develop, in collaboration with national, regional and international partners, an inclusive capacity-development framework and strategy in e-agriculture; and
- iv. provide a neutral regional platform on which to share knowledge and support the implementation of national e-agriculture strategies for countries in Europe and Central Asia

^[5] Invited country experts will be requested to participate in a survey prior the consultation

- Strengthen the regional e-agriculture network and support the innovation platform^[6]
- Discuss the parameters of the regional observatory for e-agriculture innovations for stakeholders *and family farms and e-agriculture policies*
- Validate the review of the e-agriculture strategy guide for the region.

Expected outputs:

- Clear value proposition for a new platform
- Criteria for selection and data management of agricultural innovations
- Scope, parameters of the platform, and means of collaboration with other relevant platforms and networks defined
- Initial collection of case studies and good practices (entries)
- Regional e-agriculture network with redefined scope, mandate, mode of operation, sustainability
- Regional observatory for e-agriculture innovations for stallholders and family farms and e-agriculture policies with redefined criteria for data collection and management
- e-agriculture strategy guide for the region commented and revised

[6] Refers to the ECA recommendation for a regional knowledge sharing platform for innovations, applicable for smallholders and family farms in Europe and Central Asia