

European Commission on Agriculture

37/6 Meeting of the Executive Committee

2 July 2019,

14 – 16 hours

Rome, Italy, Room B-318

Agenda item 4 – Background note

**Draft Review and recommendations on REU Work Programme 2018-19 -
FAO's work on regional priority on food security and nutrition**

**Forty-first Session of the European Commission on Agriculture
Budapest, Hungary, 1–2 October 2019**

Introduction on Regional Initiatives

The Thirty-first Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe confirmed¹ the following three Regional Initiatives for the medium term period within the corporate Medium Term Plan 2018-21:

- 1) “Empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods and poverty reduction” - formulating effective policies for sustainable and inclusive growth for farmers and the rural population with emphasis on smallholders and family farms;
- 2) “Improving agrifood trade and market integration” - enhancing the reach towards new markets through alignment of trade, food safety and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) policies to meet WTO commitments and through value chain development to meet international food safety and quality requirements;
- 3) “Sustainable natural resource management under a changing climate” - promoting sustainable natural resources management, combating land degradation and desertification, including mitigation and adaptation to climate change;

Addressing food insecurity and reduction of all forms of malnutrition has been embedded in the three Regional Initiatives as an overarching priority, for example through policy development support, evidence-based advocacy, nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food value chains, and nutritional sensitive school food and social protection programmes.

Cross-cutting priority: Addressing food insecurity and reduction of all forms of malnutrition

Main approach

¹ERC/18/REP <http://www.fao.org/3/mw908en/mw908en.pdf>

Issues of smallholders, trade and natural resource management are inter-related and key determinants of food security and nutrition. The Regional Initiatives in Europe and Central Asia region enhance its efforts to address food security and nutrition by promoting incorporation of food security and nutrition objectives and enhancing coordination mechanisms related to food security and nutrition. Nationalization of SDG targets, aligning national policies with food security and nutrition related SDG targets, and monitoring of the progress towards them are also important activities related to this priority. The lead Strategic Programme for the priority is Strategic Programme 1².

Main activities under the priority

1. Evidence-based advocacy on the importance in addressing food insecurity and malnutrition

FAO strengthened evidence-based awareness raising on evolving nature of food insecurity and malnutrition in Europe and Central Asia region. Since 2016, **Regional Overview of Food Insecurity in Europe and Central Asia** has been devoted to the theme of how the character of food insecurity and nutrition has evolved in the region over the past two decades. The four pillars of food security are consistently used to demonstrate how the challenges of food insecurity and nutrition in the region have changed substantially from insufficiency of overall food supply to access to nutritious diet. Today, the main issues on household food insecurity concern malnutrition, particularly persistent micronutrient deficiencies and rising obesity. The themes covered the climate change (2017), migration (2019) and economic transformation (2019) in the ECA region. Key messages and findings are shared widely through high-level events such as **World Food Day**, **FAO conferences** and **regional symposiums**.

In 2019, FAO initiated **a study on food system and nutrition** and the development of **country profiles** on food system and nutrition. Rapid increase in obesity among children and adult population has become an important concern with respect to combating Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Such increase is associated with a rapid income growth, urbanisation and increased supply of higher-value processed foods which have led to significant changes in people's diets, away from staples and fresh foods. Understanding these potential determinants of rising obesity and NCDs is critical for developing national policies and strategies to address rising obesity and NCDs. The study is ongoing in selected countries including Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine. The study will be complemented by **a focused research on the impact of trade policies and market integration on food security and nutrition**.

2. Strengthen the capacity of national governments to tackle food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition through multi-sectoral approach

In the policy development process, solutions to issues of malnutrition have largely been considered as a health sector problem, and the roles of agriculture and food related sectors tend to be ignored owing to limited understanding and knowledge on the role of diets and food systems in the prevention of malnutrition. FAO promotes multi-stakeholder engagement in the development of a more holistic approach towards addressing problems of malnutrition. In Europe and Central Asia region, **a Sub-regional Nutrition Capacity Development and Partnership Platform (NCDPP)** has been established in 2018 by FAO, UNICEF, WFP and WHO for the following objectives:

- Develop the capacity of 8 countries in Central Asia and Caucasus to tackle all forms of malnutrition
- Promote a better understanding of food system and nutrition governance in the region
- Advocate for higher investment on nutrition and food systems in the region

A two-year action plan has been developed for strengthening the capacity of 8 national governments. Beneficiary ministries and agencies include not only those responsible for health, but also agriculture, food safety and social development. The action plan includes advocating for importance of financing,

² Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition

investments and strengthening nutrition governance, as well as joint capacity building in priority areas such as food-based dietary guidelines.

NCDPP gathered representatives of member states for a **Sub-regional Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems and Nutrition Governance for Healthy Diets** in May 2019. NCDPP member states discussed regional priorities and mechanisms to enhance the capacity of key actors engaged in nutrition. Food systems approach served as the reference framework to advance diet throughout the Symposium. Food supply chain, food environments, behaviours, strengthening data and evidence and evidence-based advocacy have been identified as main priority areas of action.

FAO supports capacity development of multi-country organization of the region. During 2018-19, FAO provided technical support to the **Economic Cooperation Organization Food Security Coordination Centre (ECO-RCC)** in identifying the main impediments to food security and formulating **Regional Food Security Programme of Economic Cooperation Organization**. In partnership with FAO, ECO-RCC will support the implementation of Programme which aims to tackle the main impediments to food security in ECO-RCC member states.

3. Pilot nutrition-sensitive social protection approach to advocate for higher investment on nutrition and food system in the region

Cash and food transfers, school meal programmes and other forms of social protection for vulnerable populations can provide better access to healthy diets, when the programmes incorporate explicit nutrition objectives and activities and targeted to nutritionally vulnerable populations. FAO promotes the adoption of **a food systems perspective to school feeding** in the region in order to achieve long-term gains in nutrition and broader rural development pilots. In Armenia, the pilot established 3 greenhouses to supply fresh vegetables for school feeding in 14 schools, thus improving school food rations as well as their nutritional value. In Kyrgyzstan, a logistics centre has been established to supply locally produced agricultural products to meet the needs of 30 schools. In Tajikistan, the project has established 22 greenhouses to increase food supplies and meet the nutritional needs of schoolchildren in 20 schools.