



PREPARATION OF THE 42ND SESSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE (2021)

(prepared by the ECA Secretariat)

I. Introduction

The ECA Executive Committee (ExCom) discussed the preparation of the 42nd Session of ECA at the 38/7 meeting (June 2021).

The ExCom expressed its preference for a physical or hybrid Session and agreed that the decision on the modality should be taken following a broader consultation at the 2021 Informal Consultation (IC) (12-15 July 2021) and when more information is available on the pandemic situation and travel restrictions within the region. Irrespective of the modality, the Session would start on 20 October, and would last two days (a physical meeting) or three days (a hybrid or online meeting).

The ExCom reviewed the draft annotated agenda of the Session and made no comments.

With reference to the ECA elections, the ExCom requested the Secretariat to send a reminder message to all Members in the region about the deadline for submitting nominations for the positions of the Chairperson of ECA, Vice-Chairpersons of ECA and the other members of the ExCom.

II. Update on the state of preparations to the 42nd Session of ECA

The modality for the 42nd Session of ECA

As requested by the ExCom, the modality of the 42nd Session of ECA was brought to the attention of the Members of the region at the IC. The Members were requested to provide their opinions on the preferred modality of the Session. Members did not express their preferences on any of the modalities of the Session, which was attributed to the difficulty to support any of the options, due to the ever-changing pandemic situation.

The draft agenda of the 42nd Session of ECA

The draft agenda for the Session was proofread and some editorial changes were made. The revised draft agenda is presented in Annex 1, for the ExCom's reference.

Technical background papers

Three background documents relating to the three technical sub-topics identified for the 42nd ECA Session are under preparation. Some of the drafts have been submitted to the ECA Secretariat, and the remaining ones are expected in the coming days. According to the Rules of Procedure of ECA, the papers should be made available to the Members of the region no later than 30 days prior to the start of the Session. ECA documents are published in four languages (English, French, Russian and Spanish).

Rapporteurs

At the Informal Consultation, Members of the region were informed about the explanatory note on the role of rapporteurs at ECA sessions. Members of the region were invited to identify candidates for rapporteurs in advance of the Session.

ECA Elections

On 30 April 2021, the Secretariat shared with the Members of the region the invitation to nominate candidates for the functions of the ECA Chairperson, the first and the second Vice-Chairpersons, and the other six members of the ExCom. The deadline for submitting the nominations was set for 30 June 2021. On 15 June, the Secretariat sent a reminder on the ECA elections to all Members of the region. By the deadline, three nominations were received (one for the ECA Chairperson, and two for the members of the ExCom). In that situation, on 30 June, the Secretariat notified all Members of the region that the deadline for submitting the nominations was extended until 31 July 2021. By the time this paper was finalized, one more nomination for an ExCom member was received by the ECA Secretariat.

Should the number of nominations still be insufficient by the deadline, it may need to be further extended.

The ECA Secretariat presented an update on the preparations of the ECA elections on the last day of the 2021 Informal Consultation, on 15 July 2021, inviting Members to submit further candidates for the elections.

The ExCom is invited to:

- note the update on the state of preparations of the 42nd Session of ECA;
- note the revised draft agenda for the 42nd Session of ECA;
- decide on the modality of the 42nd Session of ECA, considering the outcome of the consultation at the IC.

Annex 1

EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE
FORTY-SECOND SESSION
XX–XX October 2021 (Budapest / online)
PROVISIONAL ANNOTATED AGENDA

I. Introductory items

1. Adoption of the agenda and the timetable
2. Election of the rapporteur(s)

According to Rule II.3 of the Rules of Procedure of the ECA, the Commission may elect one or more rapporteurs from among the representatives. Members are kindly invited to consider nominations for the function of the rapporteur.

II. Main technical theme: Transforming food systems to address all forms of malnutrition in Europe and Central Asia

3. Transforming food systems in Europe and Central Asia for improved nutritional outcomes

This agenda item will provide the opportunity to highlight specific aspects of food systems in Europe and Central Asia in which action is needed in order to attain better nutrition and ensure food security for all. The food choices people face and the choices they make are profoundly determined by the food system of which they are part. Demonstrating the linkages between food systems and nutrition, a discussion will be facilitated on how to adopt a holistic food systems approach to provide affordable and accessible healthy diets, which in the current context includes, among other challenges, the impacts of COVID-19 and of recovery efforts. The discussion also will cover how a food systems approach promotes and improves resilient livelihoods; reduces poverty and vulnerabilities in food security and nutrition for urban and rural women, men, girls and boys; and protects the planet's natural resources.

In the context of addressing all forms of malnutrition, attention will be given to the role played by consumers, through their food choices and actions, in driving sustainability and influencing food systems. Attention also will be given to consumers' "access" to healthy, diverse diets and to the role of policy measures (e.g. subsidies, food prices, education and social norms) in diets and dietary patterns.

Members will be invited to discuss how food systems can be sustainably transformed to balance economic, environmental and social dimensions; what needs to be done differently (and by whom and how it can be done sustainably); and how nutrition influences our food systems. Furthermore, the agenda item will provide the opportunity to agree on policy recommendations for the region.

4. Better production to increase access to diverse, nutritious foods

Better production means investing in agriculture for sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems. The entry point on nutrition is inclusiveness – and the actions that strengthen it. At the farm level, support may need to be diversified, with an angle on smallholders/family farms, who are mostly net food buyers.

Connecting smallholders/family farms to markets should come into the picture (in-country and export markets, direct-to-consumer sales, value-addition processing sector, rural–urban linkages), but the emphasis should remain on primary production to increase diversification at the farm level. Protecting the environment and natural resources is central – through climate-smart agriculture and agroecology, for example, in addition to policy decisions on biodiversity management and greenhouse gas emissions. There also is a need to refer to better production at the national level (room for commercial farmers) and the importance of trade.

Members will be invited to discuss how sustainable agriculture production could facilitate the availability of and access to diverse and nutritious food – both by large-scale, specialized agriculture and by smaller-scale, diversified production at regional, national and local levels – and how it could facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

5. Territorial approaches and community development to drive local change and prevent all forms of malnutrition

Territorial approaches are key instruments to achieving sustainable food security and nutrition, targeting multisectoral local development and investment in the increase of both competitiveness and social protection. Input from multiple stakeholder groups is central to shaping local food systems, including aspects of production, markets and agribusiness opportunities. The various development pathways outlined in the paper on family farming and youth from the Thirty-second Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (<http://www.fao.org/3/nc486en/nc486en.pdf>) will be discussed. The background paper will put a spotlight on addressing inequalities – including those related to gender and the need to implement the principle of leaving no one behind – in order to achieve improved and resilient livelihoods and an inclusive, socially just and sustainable transformative change, connecting with Action Track 4 (“advance equitable livelihoods”) of the Food Systems Summit. The paper also will emphasize the importance of dialogue and participatory collective action at the community level, built on evidence and an analysis of local needs, constraints and opportunities. This also includes the need for support for a broader range of diverse economic opportunities for rural groups, including on-farm and off-farm diversification activities (e.g. extension services targeting the needs of small farms and rural business, start-ups, etc.), targeting vulnerable groups such as women and, particularly, young women and men.

Members will discuss how to include territorial approaches in their national development pathways in support of transforming the local food systems and will use the opportunity to learn from each other on successful entry points.

III. Other matters

6. Advancing gender equality in the region: update on the progress made

The agenda item is a standing item for all sessions of the ECA. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia Gender Team will provide an update on the work of the Regional Office in meeting its commitments in mainstreaming gender equality concerns in its development interventions, as well as in specific activities aimed at advancing rural gender equality in the region through knowledge building, dialogue and policy advice. A background paper will be presented to the Members that summarizes key gender and agriculture issues and findings of the review of the country gender assessments conducted in the countries of the region over the past two years, reflecting regional trends and the situation of rural women due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Members will be invited to review the document and present their views and share country practices and cases regarding the mainstreaming of gender concerns in agriculture, food security and addressing malnutrition in their respective countries.

7. Progress made by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia on the main recommendations of the Forty-first Session of the ECA

Following the recommendations on plant health adopted by the Forty-first Session of the ECA (1–2 October 2019), a REU agricultural officer will present an update on recent plant health-related activities carried out by FAO REU in the region. The Commission will be invited to note the report and provide comments as deemed appropriate.

8. Election of the ECA Chairperson, the Vice-Chairpersons and the other members of the Executive Committee

According to Rule II and Rule III.1 of the Rules of Procedure of the ECA, the Commission will be invited to elect the Chairperson of the ECA, two Vice-Chairpersons of the ECA (the first Vice-Chairperson and the second Vice-Chairperson), and six other members of the Executive Committee, for a term of two years.

9. Any other business

10. Date and place of the Forty-third Session of the ECA

11. Review and adoption of the report of the Session

Closing of the Session