

Informal Consultation for Europe and Central Asia 12-15 July 2021

Annotated Agenda

Background

The Informal Consultation Meeting for Europe and Central Asia provides a platform on which the FAO Regional Office and Member States and non-state actors can interact between sessions of the European Regional Conference. It also facilitates consultation, considering the limited presence of FAO at country level in the Europe and Central Asia region. Used successfully since 2010, this mechanism has been well received by all countries in the region.

Main purpose

- 1) to facilitate an exchange of views among all members and non-state actors of the European and Central Asia Region
- 2) to review priorities in the region for 2022–2025 in preparation for the Regional Conference in 2022.

Scope

The Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) 2020 endorsed the regional priorities for 2020-21¹ for the European and Central Asia region, emphasizing support to smallholders, food systems transformation, natural resource management under climate change, and addressing food security and nutrition. The three Regional Initiatives are the guiding programmatic principles.

Following the development of the new FAO Strategic Framework,² the United Nations Reform (implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks³) and the emerging challenges in the region – not in the least due to the COVID-19 crisis – a review of the regional priorities is required in preparation of the workplan for the 2022–23 biennium and the upcoming Regional Conference 2022, where the priorities for 2022–2025 would be endorsed.

The Forty-second Session of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) will be held in fall 2021 and focus on technical issues related to *transforming food systems to address all forms of malnutrition in the Europe and Central Asia region*. The ECA Session will be an integral element of the preparation to the ERC 2022 and will discuss technical issues for decision.

¹ ERC/20/REP – Report, Thirty-second Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe:
<http://www.fao.org/3/ne289en/ne289en.pdf>

² FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31: <http://www.fao.org/3/ne577en/ne577en.pdf>

³ Considering that CPFs are derived from the UNSDCFs as per ERC/20/5/Web Annex 3 – FAO Country Planning and Programming in the context of the repositioning the UNDS: <http://www.fao.org/3/nc386e/nc386e.pdf>

The discussion and results from the Informal Consultation and the ECA Session will inform on the revised regional priorities for 2022–25⁴ for the ERC 2022 and guide the work planning in the region for the biennium 2022–23.

The Informal Consultation further offers opportunities to discuss priority themes and initiatives for the region, such as the International Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028), the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025) and progress made in achieving relevant SDGs.

Agenda

TIME	MONDAY 12 JULY	TUESDAY 13 JULY	WEDNESDAY 14 JULY	THURSDAY 15 JULY
9.00– 10.00	Session 1 Senior officials meeting – kick-off 1.1. Welcome, objectives 1.2. FAO Strategic Framework and Regional Priority Areas	Session 4 Selection of value chains – Regional Priority 2 Country case study	Session 6 One Health in Europe and Central Asia – Regional Priority 2 Technical discussion	Session 9 Senior officials meeting – closure 9.1. Presentation of discussions on priorities
10.00– 10.15	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK
10.15– 11.15	Session 2 Smallholders and family farms – Regional Priority 1 Country case study	Session 5 Environmental sustainability in agricultural production systems – Regional Priority 3 Country case study	Session 7 Nature-based solutions in Europe and Central Asia – Regional Priority 3 Technical discussion	9.2. ECA42 and ERC33 Agenda draft 9.3. Closure
11.15– 11.30	BREAK		BREAK	
11.30– 12.30	Session 3 Closing the digital gap in Europe and Central Asia – Regional Priority 1 Technical discussion		Session 8 Connecting school meal programmes with local food systems – Regional Priority 4 Country case study	

Session 1 – Senior officials meeting – kick-off

The kick-off meeting will outline the main objectives to be achieved in the Informal Consultation. It is planned to be opened by FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Europe and

⁴ ERC/20/5 WA7 – The future of food systems in Europe and Central Asia – 2022–2025 and beyond:
<http://www.fao.org/3/ne075en/ne075en.pdf>



Central Asia, the Minister for Agriculture of Uzbekistan, as Chair of the Regional Conference for Europe, as well as by the Chairperson of the Europe Regional Group, and the Deputy State Secretary for International Relations of the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary, as host of the Informal Consultation.

The session will provide a key overview of the new proposed Strategic Framework for FAO and its linkages to the challenges in the region, as well as an overview regarding the review of the regional priority areas for 2022–25. This presentation will serve as a starting point for the discussion of the future priorities for the region.

The session will have the following elements:

1.1. Welcome and objective of the meeting

Mr. Vladimir Rakhmanin, Assistant Director-General, Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

H.E. Jamshid Khodjaev, Chair of the Regional Conference for Europe, Minister for Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture of Uzbekistan

Ms. Iwona Krzeszewska, Chairperson of the Europe Regional Group, Minister Counsellor, Embassy of the Republic of Poland, Office of the Permanent Representative to FAO, WFP and IFAD

Mr. David Bencsik, Deputy State Secretary for International Relations, Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary.

1.2. FAO's new Strategic Framework and regional priority areas (background document: IC/21/1a)

The main scope of the presentation is to provide an overview about FAO's new Strategic Framework 2022–31⁵ and its linkages to the challenges in the region. Proposals for the slight revision of the regional priority areas for intervention and action in 2022–25 will be presented, as a result of an internal review process in the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in April 2021, considering FAO's new Strategic Framework, the challenges in the region, and country priorities deriving from the Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs). It also provides the basis for the discussions of priorities in the subsequent sessions.

Update on the Implementation of the PWB 2020–21 (background document: IC/21/1b)

The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief overview regarding progress in the implementation of the 2020–21 Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) in Europe and Central Asia, with emphasis on 2020. Highlights of achievements are presented under the Regional Initiatives, including its cross-cutting fields and the FAO COVID19 response efforts. The report builds on FAO's Mid-Term Review Synthesis Report (MTR) 2020, which was considered by the Programme Committee in March 2021.

Session 2 – Smallholders and Family Farms – Regional Priority 1 (background document: IC/21/2)

⁵ FAO's new [Strategic Framework 2022–31](#) and the [Medium Term Plan 2022–25 and Programme of Work and Budget 2022–23](#) were presented at the 130st Session of the Programme Committee in March 2021 and will be submitted for approval to the FAO Conference in July 2021.



Through a case study from Armenia, this session will focus on the challenges for smallholders and family farms in the region, including the main needs and constraints and policy recommendations for the development of the small farms. Focus also will be placed on diversification of the rural economy, poverty reduction and increased rural livelihoods.

A moderated panel discussion will focus on the adjustment of Regional Priority 1 coming out of the ERC 2020 and the REU internal review process, considering COVID-19 recovery, Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), and other factors in achieving the SDGs.

Members and non-state actors are invited to provide their thoughts and views along the lines of the guiding questions in the background document on the directions of the support to be provided by FAO to smallholders, family farms, women and youth in Europe and Central Asia in order to address Regional Priority 1.

Session 3 – Closing the digital gap in Europe and Central Asia – Regional Priority 1 (background document: IC/21/3)

This technical session will allow for a deeper dive into digitalization and innovation in Europe and Central Asia, reflecting the big challenge of how to ensure that smallholders and other vulnerable groups in rural areas become part of the digital transformation.

A moderated panel discussion will highlight the issues of digitalization and the importance of its inclusion in the programme of the region as an accelerator (as outlined in the Strategic Framework) towards achieving the SDGs.

The session also expects members and non-state actors to provide their thoughts and views along the lines of the guiding questions in the background document regarding how to contribute to closing the digital gap, ensuring that smallholders become part of the digital transformation in order to address Regional Priority 1.

Session 4 – Selection of value chains – Regional Priority 2 (background document: IC/21/4)

The main scope of this session is strengthening value chains, as well as the related opportunities and untapped potential in the agrifood processing sector in the region, highlighted through a case study on the value chain selection processes in Ukraine.

A moderated panel discussion will explore specific aspects of value chain work in the region and the importance of supporting food systems transformation in achieving the SDGs.

The session expects members and non-state actors to provide their thoughts and views along the lines of the guiding questions in the background document on the value chain innovations needed to project food systems into the future, in consideration of social, economic and environmental aspects of food systems transformation. The discussion should reflect on addressing regional Priority 2.

Session 5 – Environmental sustainability in agricultural production systems – Regional Priority 3 (background document: IC/21/5)



The main scope of this session is sustainable management of land and water resources in agricultural production systems, reflected through a case study on integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agricultural production systems in Kazakhstan.

A moderated panel discussion will facilitate focusing on integrated natural resource management and its importance in greening agriculture and in facilitating the achievement of the SDGs.

The session expects members and non-state actors to provide their thoughts and views along the lines of the guiding questions in the background document on the challenges and opportunities of investing in the reduction of agricultural land degradation and climate change adaptation measures, in order to address Regional Priority 3.

Session 6 – One Health in Europe and Central Asia – Regional Priority 2 (background document: IC/21/6)

This session will focus on the One Health approach in its complexity, including animal and environmental health in Europe and Central Asia, keeping in mind the main goal of preventing and limiting disease transmission, within and between countries but also between animal species (i.e. livestock, poultry, humans and wildlife).

A moderated panel discussion will explore the main challenges of and the support needs for implementing the One Health approach among members and non-state actors in the region.

Members and non-state actors are invited to provide their views and expectations on the implementation of the One Health approach in the region, considering the human, livestock and environment sectors. The discussion should reflect on addressing Regional Priority 2.

Session 7 – Nature-based solutions in Europe and Central Asia – Regional Priority 3 (background document: IC/21/7)

The session will focus on nature-based solutions (NbS) to be applied to degraded agro-ecosystems and solve current agricultural problems. It also will focus on relevant FAO support provided to countries in Europe and Central Asia seriously exposed to weather extremes and warm temperatures.

A moderated panel discussion will highlight the challenges of implementing NbS in agriculture in Europe and Central Asia, such as lack of data and information, low knowledge and awareness of the financial and environmental benefits, and limited research and extension services.

Members and non-state actors are invited to provide their thoughts and views on investing in green recovery projects implemented with an NbS approach that implies investing in natural capital and positive financial returns for society, along with environmental benefits. The discussion should reflect on addressing Regional Priority 3.

Session 8 – Connecting school meal programmes with local food systems – Regional Priority 4 (background document: IC/21/8)

The session will focus on the rapid transition of nutrition patterns in the region; in contrast to the progress in reducing hunger, micronutrient deficiencies and multiple forms of malnutrition, the prevalence of obesity



has been increasing in many countries. Such a rapid transition calls for the need to address both the supply and demand sides of food systems. This will be highlighted through the case study of innovative models of school meal programmes in Kyrgyzstan.

A moderated panel discussion will explore challenges and good practices related to school meal programmes and linking them with local food systems in Europe and Central Asia.

The session expects members and non-state actors to provide their thoughts and views on the needs for a holistic approach to address food and nutrition security issues and on the expectations from FAO to improve school food and nutrition. The discussion should reflect on addressing Regional Priority 4.

Session 9 – Senior official meeting – closure

The objective of this meeting is to review the summary from the technical sessions and the case study discussion under the priorities, as well as the suggestions for the Provisional Agenda for the Forty-second Session of the European Commission on Agriculture in 2021 and the Thirty-third Session of the European Regional Conference in 2022.

Members and non-state actors are invited to provide their thoughts and views on the outcome of discussions on the regional priority areas for 2022–25 (9.1.) and the Provisional Agenda for the Forty-second Session of the European Commission on Agriculture and the Thirty-third European Regional Conference (9.2.) from high-level officials.

The session will have the following elements:

9.1. Presentation of discussions on priorities

A synthesis of the discussions in the various sessions and the inputs from participants will be presented by the Secretariat.

Regional Technical Commissions' contribution to the regional priorities (background document: IC/21/9a)

Although the contribution of the Regional Technical Commissions to the regional priorities will not be presented at the Informal Consultation, the background document provides an overview to members and non-state actors.

9.2. ECA42 and ERC33 provisional agenda (background documents: IC/21/9c and IC/21/9b)

The Provisional Agenda for the Forty-second Session of the European Commission on Agriculture, as well as proposals for agenda items for the Thirty-third Session of the Regional Conference for Europe, will be introduced by the ECA Secretariat.

9.3. Closure

The Secretariat will present follow-up on the Informal Consultation and close the discussion.