

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

### **Background Note**

#### **Session 1**

### **Update on the Implementation of the PWB 2020–21**

#### **Introduction**

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. The report builds on FAO's Mid-Term Review Synthesis Report (MTR) 2020, which was considered by the Programme Committee in March 2021.<sup>1</sup>

The FAO programmatic framework in the region is guided by the revised Regional Initiatives (RIs) that were endorsed at the 2020 Regional Conference for Europe (ERC)<sup>2</sup>: RI-1 on empowering smallholders, family farms and youth, facilitating rural livelihoods and poverty reduction; RI-2 on transforming food systems and facilitating market access and integration; and RI-3 on managing natural resources sustainably and preserving biodiversity in a changing climate. Addressing food insecurity and reducing all forms of malnutrition are embedded across the RIs as an overarching priority. The Regional Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan for Europe and Central Asia (2019–2022) guides the RIs to ensure equality between women and men in sustainable agricultural production and rural development. Highlights of achievements in 2020 under the Regional Initiatives, including its cross-cutting fields and the FAO COVID-19 response efforts, are presented below.

#### **Highlights of achievements**

##### **Regional Initiative on Empowering smallholders, family farms and youth, facilitating rural livelihoods and poverty reduction**

During the biennium, RI-1 intends to reinforce its support for smallholders, women and youth in rural areas of the region, increasingly leveraging a strong, people-centric approach in policy- and community-level programmatic interventions. The Initiative acts to strengthen the capacities, competitiveness and resilience of farmers and to improve their livelihoods, in view of their pivotal role as change agents for economic and social transformation within agriculture-dependent rural communities. The contribution of RI-1 advances, in particular, countries' progress on SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10 and SDG 17.

Highlights of achievements in 2020 under the Regional Initiative include:

---

<sup>1</sup> This took place at the 130th Session of the Programme Committee (22–26 March 2021). For the list of documents, see <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/programme-committee/pc130/documents/en/>.

<sup>2</sup> The report of the Thirty-second Session of the Regional Conference for Europe in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, held in 2021, is available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ne289en/ne289en.pdf>.



- In **Georgia**, FAO strengthened the capacities of farmers and stakeholders on **innovative sustainable agriculture production practices** through the organization of 25 farmer field schools (FFSs), 60 demonstration plots, six trainings of master trainers (TMTs) as well as other trainings, reaching more than 1 500 farmers (of which 28 percent were women). These capacity-strengthening programmes, focusing on priority agricultural crops, covered a wide range of topics, including climate-smart agriculture, environmentally friendly practices and various conservation agriculture methods such as no-till farming.
- In **Uzbekistan**, FAO supported **rural entrepreneurship and income-generating activities** targeting women within four pilot areas. Women produced carpets, blankets and other traditional crafts using the locally available environmentally friendly sheep wool. In this context, trainings were organized on washing, disinfecting and scratching the available raw sheep wool and on processing, spinning, knitting, dyeing, carpet weaving and blanket making. Trainings also were held for all stages of the value chain (supply, processing, transportation and sale). Women participants also strengthened their knowledge and understanding on gender equality and women's empowerment principles.
- FAO has provided **regional support on digital agriculture** in order to improve access to technologies for rural poor. A regional report on the status of digital agriculture in 18 countries of ECA was developed, published and disseminated at an ITU–FAO Webinar on Fostering Digital Agriculture in ECA. A special event on innovation and digitalization was conducted at the Thirty-second Session of the ERC in November 2020. In addition, a Central Asian ministerial round table on digitalization and external and internal workshops on digital agriculture have been organized. Furthermore, in **Armenia**, FAO supported the elaboration of a draft **Digital Agriculture Strategy for 2021–2030**, including priorities, action plan and roadmap.
- FAO supported the **introduction of land consolidation instruments** in the region by publishing a Legal Guide on Land Consolidation<sup>3</sup> based on a study on European good practices of land consolidation legislation. The Legal Guide was presented and discussed at webinars and regional workshops. In addition, FAO has been supporting the implementation of the National Land Consolidation Programme in North Macedonia.

### **Regional Initiative on Transforming food systems and facilitating market access and integration**

RI-2 operates at policy level, with the objective of enhancing institutional capacities across Europe and Central Asia to maximize the potential of trade and markets, including through digital solutions, and to increase the potential of small- and medium-scale agrifood producers by leveraging inclusive and sustainable food systems. Aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its programme of work directly contributes to SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 12 and SDG 17.

Highlights of achievements in 2020 under the Regional Initiative include:

- An **Issue-based Coalition (IBC) on Sustainable Food Systems** has been established in the region, co-chaired by FAO, the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) as members. The IBC has developed a repository of key United Nations messages and available evidence, best practices on COVID-19 and food systems, and a technical note to support United Nations Country Teams in

---

<sup>3</sup> This guide is available at <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9520en/>.

adopting a food systems lens in the development and revision of national processes<sup>4</sup>. Webinars on the UN Food Systems Summit and COVID-19 and sustainable food systems have been implemented. Prior to the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit 2021, the Regional Conference for Europe in November 2020 focused the Round Table on Sustainable Food Systems and Healthy Diets in ECA as one of the main topics.

- A high-level discussion was organized by FAO, WHO and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) on action and partnership on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) to ensure a coordinated **One Health approach** in Europe and Central Asia on 23 November 2020. It outlined the importance of setting up the new Regional Tripartite Joint Secretariat on AMR. The Regional One Health Coordination Mechanism was officially launched on 23 April 2021 by the regional directors/representatives of FAO/OIE/WHO to mobilize stakeholders and partners and coordinate action across the region, to make optimal use of available resources, to foster synergies, and to avoid duplication of efforts.<sup>5</sup>
- Support to agricultural policy was provided through the online workshop “**Quantitative agricultural policy monitoring in eight post-Soviet countries,**” and detailed agricultural policy monitoring based on OECD budget review methodology was prepared for the **Republic of Moldova and Albania** (for data covering 2007–2019).
- In **Ukraine**, FAO supported the government in its municipal **food loss and waste reduction** efforts through a pilot programme methodology on “Feed Your Neighbour,” where surplus food could be donated for social food programmes. FAO identified participants and established communication platforms, including a webpage<sup>6</sup> with information on the pilot project, donors, participants and results.
- In **Kyrgyzstan**, FAO supported the government in making policy improvements in line with **World Trade Organization (WTO)** obligations, based on an analysis of the effectiveness of state agricultural support policy and needed recommendations on the improvement of domestic support policy.

### **Regional Initiative on Managing natural resources sustainably and preserving biodiversity in a changing climate**

RI-3 responds to sustainability challenges faced by the agriculture, livestock, forestry and fishery sectors across the region, with a multidisciplinary and holistic programmatic framework. Its analytical, policy and capacity development assistance components aim at promoting the sustainable management of natural resources and climate-resilient food systems, ecosystems and rural livelihoods, and it contributes to countries’ achievements under the 2030 Agenda, particularly SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 6, SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 14 and SDG 15.

Highlights of achievements in 2020 under the Regional Initiative include:

- In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, FAO – together with other United Nations agencies – supported the review and adjustment of local development strategies in order to strengthen their **disaster risk reduction and crisis management considerations**, including food security and nutrition as well as climate change aspects. The main deliverables included the development of participatory rural

<sup>4</sup> FAO, WFP, WHO, UNICEF, UNECE & WMO. 2021. Technical note on sustainable food systems. Issue-based Coalition on sustainable food systems [online]. <http://www.fao.org/3/cb2584en/cb2584en.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> WHO. 2021. WHO, FAO, and OIE call for stronger coordination in mitigating health threats. In: *WHO Regional Office for Europe* [online]. <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/antimicrobial-resistance/news/news/2021/4/who,-fao,-and-oie-call-for-stronger-coordination-in-mitigating-health-threats>

<sup>6</sup> This page is available at <http://www.sd4ua.org/category/platforma-nagoduj-susida/prodovolcha-bezpeka/>.

appraisal tools, a local disaster risk assessment template, and a guidance note for local governments on integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change into local development strategies.

- In **Uzbekistan, climate-smart and innovative technologies** were upscaled, including pasture rotation, conservation agriculture practices and seed production for drought- and salt-tolerant crops. In addition, greenhouse nurseries were established to serve as a good model for seedling and sapling production, addressing climate shocks and creating more sustainable conditions for nurseries.
- As part of the climate finance activities in the region, a **Toolkit for Access to Climate Finance** and a compilation of best practices were developed. Moreover, FAO supported North Macedonia in identifying and assessing capacity needs linked to climate action and financing to support achievement of the country's nationally determined contributions and engagement with the **Green Climate Fund**. In Ukraine, to support natural resources management in degraded landscapes in the forest-steppe and steppe zones, a shelterbelt inventory was performed on more than 1 000 ha under a project funded by the **Global Environment Facility**.
- In **Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan**, FAO distributed a high quality, elite sort of potato seeds and other vegetables to seed producer farms to **boost the seed subsector capacity** and improve the livelihoods and resilience of **selected local farmers and vulnerable families**. With support from the Agency for Development Initiatives, FAO and WFP contributed to **strengthening resilience to climate shocks** through providing agricultural trainings and input.
- The capacities of the **regional** technical networks and research institutions have been strengthened on various aspects of sustainable natural resources management, such as data collection methodology within the **Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems** and applying the **Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation** methodology. Furthermore, the **State of Europe's Forests 2020 and National Reporting on Sustainable Forest Management** in eight countries of Caucasus and Central Asia were published in cooperation with UNECE and Forest Europe, and the joint UNECE–FAO **interactive online platform was created to share forest data** in the region.

### Highlights of achievements under the cross-cutting themes and gender

In **Turkmenistan**, FAO strengthened the national capacities of various authorities on the nationalization of SDG indicators under FAO custodianship through implementing ten webinars during 12–16 October 2020. Participants gained better understanding on FAO's role in SDG monitoring and implementation at regional and national level; methodology of the 21 indicators under FAO custodianship; data needs for producing the indicators and steps to be undertaken by the country to be able to satisfy these data needs; and procedures for producing these indicators and interactions with FAO during these procedures.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, a country gender assessment (CGA) was conducted with clear recommendations on policy support, gender equality and women's economic empowerment. While preparing the CGA, capacity development support was provided to relevant government institutions and stakeholders for improving design and monitoring initiatives on gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

Under the overarching priority of **addressing food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition**, FAO, jointly with the members of the IBC on Sustainable Food Systems, reviewed the progress made towards achieving the SDG 2 food security and nutrition indicators across the region with its annual flagship publication *2020*



*Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia.*<sup>7</sup> The special theme of this edition was the affordability of sustainable, healthy diets and their usefulness in ending hunger and malnutrition in the region.

### Highlights of the regional response to COVID-19

A task force on COVID-19 was set up by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in April to coordinate the programmatic response in the region. Through the rapid survey of food supply chains, some 500 key informants along food supply chains in 18 countries have been regularly contacted since April 2020 to assess the functioning of major agrifood value chains. Key findings and recommendations of the survey have provided inputs for two regional food market situation and policy bulletins. FAO has facilitated cross-country learning through a webinar series<sup>8</sup> on issues, such as the impacts of COVID-19 on smallholder farmers, migration, social protection and agricultural trade, etc. Two ministerial meetings and regional dialogues with representatives from civil society organizations and the private sector were organized in order to understand the implications and facilitate a multi-stakeholder response.

FAO's regional programmatic response to COVID-19, which is based on the three Regional Initiatives, has built on the seven areas of the FAO Global COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme. The Regional Office held a regional dialogue to consult with current and prospective partners on opportunities to sharpen and realize the proposed response in the region, leveraging data, innovation and responsible investments. The impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture in Europe and Central Asia and FAO's response was presented at the Regional Conference for Europe and Central Asia on 2–4 November 2020.<sup>9</sup>

Highlights of actions at country level:

- In **Kyrgyzstan**, FAO supported the provision of emergency technical support to the farmers most affected by the COVID-19 crisis. In all, 1 067 farmers who were severely affected and left without funds to buy agricultural resources received support. In total, 133.9 tonnes of fertilizer, 24.5 tons of diesel fuel and 81.6 tons of seeds were purchased, for a total of USD 150 000.
- In the **Republic of Moldova**, capacities were strengthened in assessing the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak in agriculture through the preparation of a detailed study on the outbreak consequences for the food security situation, with concrete recommendations and follow-up actions.
- In **Serbia**, FAO contributed to the UN's comprehensive Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) Report and a follow-up Socio-Economic Response Programme. A specific in-depth report was finalized on the COVID-19 pandemic's consequences on the food system. Stakeholder consultations were organized to present the findings and recovery/resilience options of the reports and assessments. While some of the measures already took place, the majority are implemented this year, as the plan was adopted at the end of 2020.
- FAO issued regular country situation reports, rapid assessments and specific studies (in **Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan**) to attend to specific country needs.

<sup>7</sup> For more information on the launch of the *2020 Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia*, see <http://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail-events/en/c/1393139/>.

<sup>8</sup> This webinar series is available online at <http://www.fao.org/europe/resources/webinars/en/>.

<sup>9</sup> For more information, see ERC/20/5/Web Annex 6, titled *The impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture in Europe and Central Asia and FAO's response*, at <http://www.fao.org/3/ne001en/ne001en.pdf>.