

## **Informal Consultation for Europe and Central Asia**

**12–15 July 2021**

### **Background Note**

#### **Session 9c**

### **Draft Agenda for the Forty-second Session of the European Commission on Agriculture**

In 2021, the Forty-second session of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) will be held. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) and the Executive Committee of the ECA have been working on the preparation of the Session since late 2020.

The basis for the preparations of the Session have been the Rules of Procedure of the ECA and the recommendations of the assessment of the ECA conducted in 2017. Accordingly, the key issues that needed to be agreed upon were the main technical theme and the draft agenda for the Session.

The Executive Committee discussed several proposals for the main technical theme and recommended that the main technical theme for the Session be “Transforming food systems to address all forms of malnutrition in Europe and Central Asia.” This theme was confirmed by the Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative. The theme will be an umbrella under which several technical subtopics have been identified for discussion by the Commission. The subtopics, along with their brief descriptions, can be found in the draft annotated agenda for the Forty-second Session of the ECA, which is presented in the Annex.

Members are kindly invited to note that apart from the technical items, the agenda includes such standing items as an update on progress in the implementation of gender equality and an update on recent plant health-related activities in the region, in the context of the recommendations of the Forty-first Session of the ECA.

Members may note that the draft agenda does not yet include information on the modality and dates of the Session. This is because the Executive Committee preferred to defer its final decision on the modality of the Session until Members of the region are consulted at this Informal Consultation. During a meeting, the Executive Committee expressed its preference to holding the Session in Budapest as a physical meeting. As a second preference, the Executive Committee saw the possibility of holding a hybrid Session (physical and online) to make sure that all delegations could participate if difficulties in arrival to Budapest were to occur for any of the delegations. The least-preferred option was an online Session.

The Executive Committee also considered the dates for the Session. Considering the calendar of events, including the Food Systems Summit and other FAO meetings, the proposed dates are 20–21 October or 20–22 October. The number of days will depend on the modality of the Session. Two days would be sufficient for a fully physical Session, while with an online component, the Session would need to be extended by one additional day to compensate for the reduced time available for discussions on each day of the Session.

Members of the region are kindly invited to:

- note the draft annotated agenda of the Forty-second Session of ECA and provide comments, as needed; and



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- provide opinions on the preferred modality for the Session (physical, hybrid or online).

## Annex 1

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

**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 further 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