



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

(prepared by the ECA Secretariat)

I. Introduction

In March 2021, the ECA Executive Committee (ExCom) discussed preparations for the 42 Session of ECA. In this context, the Secretariat was requested to finalize the annotated agenda with the approved sub-topics under the identified main technical theme, to identify possible dates for the 42nd ECA Session, taking into account the RBA calendar, to develop a detailed information note on the role or the rapporteurs at ECA sessions, to be shared with the Members of the region, to raise awareness on the role and importance of the rapporteurs for the ECA Session at the Informal Consultation, to invite Members to identify candidates for rapporteurs using the opportunity of distributing the draft agenda for the ECA Session, and to organize and coordinate the procedure of nominations for the ECA elections, as endorsed by the ExCom at the 38/6 meeting in March 2021.

The decision on the exact date of the Session and whether the Session should be a physical or an online meeting was deferred to a later meeting, when more information would be available on the pandemic situation and travel restrictions within the region.

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

The date, modality and agenda for the 42nd Session of ECA

The specific date for the 42nd Session of ECA has not been decided yet. It is proposed that the Session be held in the week 18-22 October, in order to minimize collisions with other meetings. The ExCom is requested to decide on the date for the Session, and consider whether currently available information on COVID-19-related situation allows for making a decision on its modality (physical or virtual).

The draft agenda

The draft agenda for the Session of ECA was reviewed by REU Gender Team, who provided comments. The comments relating to the technical sub-topics were reviewed by REU's technical officers. The finalized draft agenda was approved by REU management. The revised draft annotated agenda is presented in Annex 1, for the ExCom's endorsement.

Technical background papers

Three technical sub-topics were identified and were endorsed by the ExCom. For these sub-topics, a set of three background document is being drafted by REU technical officers. Once the drafts are submitted to the Secretariat, they will be reviewed by REU and relevant FAO divisions in Rome, formatted, proofread and translated into the ECA languages (English, French, Russian and Spanish), prior to sharing with the Members of the region.

Rapporteurs

The explanatory note on the role of rapporteurs has been drafted by the ECA Secretariat and finalized by REU. It will be presented at the Informal Consultation, and Members of the region will be invited to identify candidates for rapporteurs in advance, prior to the Session. The note is presented in Annex 2.

Elections

The Secretariat has prepared and 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 invitation was shared on 30 April, with 30 June as the deadline for the submission of nominations, fully in line with the schedule endorsed by the ExCom.

The ExCom is invited to:

- decide on the date of the 42 Session of ECA;
- decide on the modality for the Session, if currently available information on COVID-19-related situation allows for making such decision;
- endorse the draft annotated agenda for the 42nd Session of ECA, as presented in Annex 1;
- note the explanation on the role of rapporteurs at ECA session, as presented in Annex 2.

Annex 1. Draft annotated agenda for the 42nd Session of ECA

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 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

The agenda item based will give the opportunity to highlight specific aspects of food systems in Europe and Central Asia, where action is needed in order to attain better nutrition and ensure food security for all. The food choices people are faced with 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 impact of COVID-19 and recovery efforts, and at the same time, will be promoting and improving resilient livelihoods, reducing poverty and vulnerabilities in food security and nutrition for urban and rural women, men, girls and boys, and protecting the planet's natural resources.

In the context of addressing all forms of malnutrition, attention will be given to consumers, including their role, through their food choices and actions, in driving sustainability and influencing food systems, the "access" by consumers to healthy, diverse diets, and 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, 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 agricultural production means investing in primary agriculture for sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems. The entry point on nutrition is inclusiveness, and 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 small-holders/family farms to markets should come into the picture (in-country and export markets, direct to consumer, or to value-addition processing sector, rural-urban linkages), but the emphasis should remain in primary production, to increase diversification at 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 is also 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 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 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 achieve sustainable food security and nutrition targeting multi-sectoral local development, investment in both increase of competitiveness and social protection. Input from multiple stakeholder groups is central to shape local food systems, including aspects of production, markets and agri-business opportunities. The different development pathways outlined in the ERC 32 paper on family farming and youth (<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 of implementing the principle of Leaving No One Behind to achieve improved and resilient livelihoods, as well as an inclusive, socially just and sustainable transformative change, connecting also with Action Track 4 of the Food Systems Summit – Advance equitable livelihoods. The paper will also emphasize the importance of dialogue and participatory collective action at community level built on evidence and analysis of local needs, constraints and opportunities. This also includes the need for support to a broader range of diverse economic opportunities for rural groups, including farm and off-farm diversification activities (e.g. extension services targeting the needs of small rural business, starts-ups, etc.), targeting the most vulnerable groups, such as women, and particularly young women and men.

Members will discuss how to include territorial approaches into their national development pathways in 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 ECA. REU 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 aiming to advancing rural gender equality in the region, through knowledge building, dialogue and policy advice. A background paper will be presented to the Members, summarizing key gender and agriculture issues and findings of the review of the country gender assessments conducted in the countries of the region over last two years, reflecting regional trends

and rural women's situation due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Members will be invited to review the document and present their views, 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 ECA

Following the recommendations on plant health adopted by the 41st Session of 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 ECA, the Commission will be invited to elect the Chairperson of ECA, two Vice-Chairpersons of 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 ECA

11. Review and adoption of the Report of the Session

Closing of the Session

Annex 2. REU's explanatory note on the role of rapporteurs at the sessions of ECA

Role of Rapporteurs at the sessions of the European Commission on Agriculture

The Rapporteur is a key function supporting the session of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA, the Commission).

Rapporteurs are elected by the Commission from among the representatives of the Members of the Europe and Central Asia region present at the session.¹ Usually, the Commission elects two Rapporteurs.

The Rapporteurs have the ultimate responsibility for the preparation of the report. They are assisted by Report's Officers provided by the ECA Secretariat, who prepare the draft report based on the deliberation and statements at the session.

Following the pre-defined reporting schedule, the Report's Officers prepare different sections of the draft report in English, in order to allow timely translation of the draft report into the three other languages of the ECA session (French, Russian and Spanish) prior to its adoption by the Commission on the last day of the Session.

The Rapporteurs review and guide the Report's Officers on the preparation of each of the sections. The role of the Rapporteurs is to ensure that the report is an accurate record of the Commission's discussions and decisions taken at the session.

When working on the draft report, the session recording is made available to the Rapporteurs, if needed.

The Rapporteurs present the report to the Commission for adoption. Following the adoption of the report and the closure of the session, the Secretariat finalizes the report, to be reviewed by the Rapporteurs in order to make sure the outcome of the last day of the session and the changes agreed by the Members during the adoption of the report are captured correctly.

Rapporteurs should be able to use Microsoft Word for the review and commenting on the draft session report (in track-change mode).

¹ Rules of Procedure of ECA: <http://www.fao.org/3/mu352e/mu352e.pdf>