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Partnering for food security and sustainable management of natural resources

Regional workshop highlights the success of the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programmes

A regional workshop dedicated to the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programmes (FTPP) took place on 24 January 2023 in Baku, Azerbaijan, to discuss the results and successes of recent projects. The workshop participants consisted of high-level representatives of relevant institutions in countries of the subregion involved in the projects. The workshop formed part of the project “Enhancing the visibility of the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programmes”.

Building on Türkiye’s long-lasting partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programmes have had a transformative impact on agriculture, food and natural resources management, notably in beneficiary countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Since the initial phase of the FTTP in 2007, the scope of the programme has widened to include more countries and encompass new themes. Türkiye’s total contribution to the programmes now amounts to USD 30 million. Currently, the FTTP consists of two components: the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programme on Food and Agriculture (FTTP II) and the FAO-Türkiye Forestry Partnership Programme (FTFP). Together, the FTTP II and FTFP comprise 20 projects covering a wide array of topics including but not limited to fisheries, forestry, food security, food safety,

food loss and waste, and rural women.

The one-day workshop provided participants from the Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan with a valuable opportunity to exchange knowledge and share experiences on how to enhance food security, reduce rural poverty and strengthen capacities in forestry, natural resources, desertification and sustainable development.

Speakers, panellists and participants discussed the objectives, activities and accomplishments of FTTP projects implemented under the programmes, exchanging lessons learned and experiences, and discussing steps for the future.



FTTP is transforming the agri-food system in the subregion.

The workshop included various panel discussions on good practices highlighting project successes,

with a focus on gender and rural development, as well as exchanges on the future of the FTTP, where panellists shared their opinions on innovative approaches and linked current and emerging issues at the country level with global and regional trends in food and agriculture and natural resources management. The panel also discussed the relationship between FAO's Four Betters concept and innovations in production, nutrition, environment and life.

This regional event demonstrated that the FTTP responds effectively to current challenges in the agriculture and food sectors and natural resources management in the beneficiary countries. All participants agreed that the resulting regional collaboration and synergies enable the FTTP to function as a powerful support mechanism for achieving the SDGs, in particular No Poverty and Zero Hunger.

Conference spotlights regional food system sustainability

In 2020, the BSEC member states established a Regional Cooperation Centre for Sustainable Food Systems (BSEC-CSFS) in Ankara, Türkiye under a project implemented by FAO through FTTP II. On 7–8 March 2023, BSEC-CSFS organized a regional conference on food systems sustainability in the BSEC region, held in Istanbul, Türkiye to discuss the policy interventions required for the sustainability of food systems and to share with national and international public the key findings of assessment studies on the current state of national food systems in the 13 BSEC member states and the BSEC region. The first set of systematic and in-depth assessments showed that consumer food preferences are changing.



Policymakers and technical experts attended the BSEC Conference.

The event was attended by policymakers and representatives of BSEC member states, representatives of international organizations, technical experts, representatives of civil society and stakeholders from the private sector. Together, they reviewed the current state of

food systems in BSEC member states, discussed key findings and lessons from the national studies, deliberated on policy interventions and discussed next steps to move agrifood systems towards sustainability. The participants also explored how various stakeholders could promote innovative approaches and use policy to make agrifood systems more environmentally and economically sustainable and to promote better nutrition. Among the outcomes of the meeting was the decision taken to establish a regional network for key actors operating in the field of sustainable food systems.

Regional vision for sustainable and resilient national food systems builds on successes of food loss and waste project

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), key national stakeholders and partner organizations of the three-year project "Reduction of Food Loss and Waste in Central Asia, Azerbaijan and Türkiye" came together on 17 April 2023 to conclude the project, take stock of its milestones, and set a vision for more sustainable and resilient national food systems in line with the countries' commitment to achieve SDG 12.3.



Food loss and waste is a growing concern.

The project provided support to Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in developing national strategies and action plans for preventing and reducing food loss and waste at the individual, community and national levels. To this end, FAO, in close collaboration with the national governments and food business operators, analysed country-specific contexts, including existing policy and legislative frameworks, and collected data on the causes and impacts of food loss and waste. These findings informed the strategies' formulation, outlining comprehensive programmes for the prevention and reduction of food loss and waste. Specific

operational actions proposed within these strategies are being aligned with national priorities and relevant initiatives in the areas of food loss and waste prevention and food and agriculture development more generally.

To prepare the countries for implementation of the strategies, the project aimed to improve the capacities of relevant stakeholders and food value chain actors, including by assessing food loss and waste and good practices to prevent and reduce wastage.

The national campaign "Save Your Food", launched by FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Türkiye (MoAF), has produced notable results in reducing food loss and waste in the country. In concrete terms, Turkish households saved 664 million Turkish Lira per year by preventing and reducing food waste, as a result of better planning of food shopping, meal portioning and reuse of surplus food. In addition, the number of people saving leftovers for later consumption increased from 45 percent to 55 percent. The campaign also helped to improve comprehension of the difference between "expiry" and "best before" dates by 20 percent, resulting in less safe-to-consume food being discarded past its "best before" date. Composting of food waste increased from 3 percent to 6 percent, and the campaign helped to break a Guinness World Record for the "most pledges made for not wasting food", with 790 000 people taking the pledge on

sofranasahipcik.com. The "Save Your Food" campaign is continuing to raise awareness and promote positive actions to reduce food loss and waste and strengthen sustainable practices in Türkiye.

The meeting continued with presentations by experts on the project outcomes, while Ministry officials shared information about the results of the national "Save Your Food" campaign.

The results and success stories presented during the closing meeting aimed to inspire multidisciplinary and solution-oriented collaborations among national and regional stakeholders, including public sector, private sector and civil society actors, during the implementation of national action plans.

International experts meet in Türkiye to combat the threat of wheat rust diseases

In order to assess the growing threat posed by wheat rust diseases to regional food security, experts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Türkiye, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, gathered in Izmir to attend a ten-day training workshop (1–10 May 2023) to evaluate options for monitoring, cooperation, integrated disease management and information exchange. The participants included representatives from FAO, MoAF, the International Centre for Agricultural Research



The CACRust is combatting the threat of wheat rust diseases.

in Dry Areas (ICARDA), the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) and the Aegean Agricultural Research Institute Directorate.

The workshop was organized as part of "Strengthening regional collaboration and national capacities for the management of wheat rust diseases and resistance breeding in Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC-Rust)", a five-year project implemented by FAO in collaboration with MoAF, ICARDA, CIMMYT and the International Winter Wheat Improvement Programme (IWWIP) and supported by the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programme on Food and Agriculture (FTPP II). The project aims to provide training to experts and producers on rust disease monitoring, the identification of new races and disease management in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Türkiye and Turkmenistan.

During the ten-day workshop, 16 wheat rust researchers from the above countries received hands-on training on rust diseases monitoring, race analysis and management at the Regional Cereal Rust Research Centre in Izmir. Experts also discussed recent developments concerning management of wheat rust diseases and stressed the significance of collaborating among national and international institutions to address the associated challenges. The experts further emphasized that regular monitoring and sharing of information are crucial to respond to the frequent emergence and rapid spread of new races of wheat rust disease agents.

FAO holds workshop and training in Bishkek on the prevention and management of wheat rust diseases in Kyrgyzstan

Wheat is a key strategic crop in Kyrgyzstan and the country's main source of nutrition, accounting for more than half of the total cultivated area. An important factor in obtaining a good wheat harvest is protection from harmful diseases. In recent years, rust diseases (yellow, leaf and stem rust) have begun to pose a major risk to wheat production. Since these diseases are airborne and can spread easily over borders, monitoring and training of farmers is critical for prevention and management.

Due to complexities inherent in the epidemiology of these diseases, there is a need for a comprehensive national strategy and contingency plan. To address this need, FAO organized a workshop in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Public

Association Agrolead to discuss a draft national strategy and contingency plan for the prevention and management of wheat rust diseases in Kyrgyzstan. Entitled "Validation of the national strategy and contingency plan for management of wheat rust diseases in Kyrgyzstan", the workshop was organized on 2 June 2023 as part of the project "Strengthening regional collaboration and national capacities for management of wheat rust diseases (CACRust)" under FPPP II

The workshop was preceded by field visits and practical training to strengthen national capacities in wheat rust disease management. The training was organized in collaboration with the public association Agrolead on 1 June 2023 for the technical personnel of public institutions and farmers. Experts of the Kyrgyz Agricultural Research Institute, the National Academy of Sciences and Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University assembled at the demonstration site of the Kyrgyz Agricultural Research Institute and provided information on the performance of five wheat varieties under rainfed conditions.

During the event, technical officers and farmers participated in practical demonstrations on the biology of the fungi responsible for the diseases and learned how to effect a diagnosis and implement disease management practices.

LANDNET workshop in Istanbul focuses on land banking and land consolidation issues

The fourteenth International LANDNET Workshop took place from 5 to 7 September 2023 in Istanbul. Organized by FAO in collaboration with the General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (DSI) and the General Directorate of Agrarian Reform (GDAR) of MoAF, the workshop brought together approximately 100 participants from around 30 countries, mostly in Europe and Central Asia.



The workshop brought together participants from around 30 countries.

The workshop was organized as part of the project “Enhancing agricultural land market development to address land abandonment and improve land consolidation procedures”, implemented under the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programme on Food and Agriculture (FTPP II). The project supports the development of institutional capacity to implement land banking and land consolidation and to facilitate land market development in Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.

The main objectives of this year’s LANDNET workshop were to:

- present and discuss lessons learned from the implementation of land consolidation in Türkiye and the need for land banking;
- present and discuss new developments on land consolidation, including in relation to the potential for multi-purpose land consolidation in Eastern Europe;
- discuss policy options to address land abandonment and develop agricultural land markets.

During the three-day workshop, technical sessions gave participants a forum to debate issues related to land consolidation, including an FAO initiative on capacity development, the need for land banking in Türkiye and tools to address land abandonment.

A field visit to the Yenişehir land consolidation project area in Bursa Province on 6 September presented the workshop participants with a practical example of land consolidation in Türkiye. The project area covers 16 000 hectares, within which are located 27 villages that have benefited from land consolidation carried out simultaneously with the installation of a modern irrigation system and the construction of access roads. These improvements have enabled farmers to engage more efficiently in agricultural production.

ICFS 2023 in Samarkand highlights FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programmes

The 2023 International Conference on Food Security (ICFS 2023) took place in Samarkand on 7–8 September and was organized by the Government of Uzbekistan with the technical support of FAO. The conference provided a welcome and timely platform for diverse stakeholders to review and discuss the current state of food security in the world, an issue at the top of the global agenda.

In his opening remarks, Qu Dongyu, Director-General of FAO, explained that “the Conference

is an important opportunity to review the state of global food security in the context of agrifood systems transformation, on the path towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”.

The Conference also offered a good opportunity to increase the visibility of the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programmes (FTPP). To this end, two exhibitions were displayed in the congress building where the conference took place. One was dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the FAO-Türkiye Partnership and consisted of photos from FPPP projects, providing visitors with a visual overview of the thematic and geographic diversity of the programmes.



FTPP received a high-level of interest in Samarkand.

The second exhibition entitled “Grown for a bin” consisted of visually striking images created by photographer Klaus Pichler which highlight the issue of food waste and offer an insight into its causes, ranging from geopolitical and cultural factors to individual consumer behaviour.

In addition to these exhibitions, a variety of information supports about the range of FPPP activities were distributed during the Conference. These activities and the active engagement of participants enabled the Samarkand gathering to provide a fertile platform for cooperation, simultaneously promoting the main objectives of the FPPP in line with the fundamental aim of the Conference: working in a harmony to achieve SDG 2: Zero Hunger.

FISHCap’s awareness-raising event introduces kindergarten children to fisheries and aquaculture

As part of the project “Capacity Development for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Management in Central Asia, Azerbaijan and Türkiye – FISHCap”, an awareness-raising event was organized at the kindergarten of MoAF on 28 September 2023 to launch a children’s colouring book. Entitled “Learning about and

colouring fish”, the book aims to familiarize young minds with the region’s common fish species”.



Children at the kindergarten enjoyed the colouring book about fish.

The book is one example of a number of educational visibility materials developed under the FISHCap project by FAO and MoAF to educate children on the importance of sustainable fisheries and the diversity of aquatic life.

FAO Türkiye Partnership Programmes Joint Review Meeting organized in October 2023

A Joint Review Meeting was held in October 2023 with the participation of representatives of FAO and MoAF to provide a regular update on the progress of the FAO Türkiye Partnership Programmes. The meeting provided an opportunity to inform participants about latest developments under the programmes, achievements of the projects to date and upcoming activities. In addition, the meeting served as a platform to discuss obstacles and generate road maps for upcoming steps in the projects.

FAO-Türkiye partnership expands to Nigeria’s Borno state with crop diversification project for drylands

An innovative project launched by FTTP II in Borno State on 6 November is set to transform agriculture in the arid regions of Nigeria. The project “Support to the diversification and sustainable crop production intensification for smallholder farmers in the drylands of Borno State” aims to build the capacity of farmers and agriculturalists to diversify cropping systems, and to promote sustainable crop management techniques for drylands.

This collaborative project, involving Nigeria, FAO-Türkiye and the ministries of agriculture of both countries, will run until July 2025 with a budget of USD 200 000.

The livelihoods of the 5.6 million people of Borno State in Nigeria depend largely on small-scale subsistence agriculture, which takes place in three agroecological zones: the Lake Chad basin and the Sudan and Sahel savannahs. Water shortages, climate change and low productivity are among the major challenges facing crop production systems in these zones. Key potential interventions that can help boost agricultural productivity and address the other two challenges are conservation agriculture and production diversity. The project has therefore been formulated to facilitate the exchange of experiences between Türkiye and Nigeria in these areas.



FAO, Türkiye and Nigeria are partnering for a crop diversification project.

The project inception meeting was held online on 6 November 2023, and was attended by high-level officials and relevant experts from Nigeria and Türkiye.

Combating land degradation goes hand in hand with reforestation

Experts from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan came together in November 2023 to learn from Türkiye’s work on combating land degradation and forest restoration in situ within the scope of the project “Forest Restoration Improvement for Environmental Development and Sustainability in Central Asia” (FRIENDS) implemented under the FTTP.

A study tour was organized to learn about good practices implemented in Konya and Antalya within the scope of the FRIENDS project, which aims to share Türkiye’s experience and expertise in combating land degradation and forest restoration with countries in the subregion.

During the first part of the study tour, nearly 30 participants observed the work of the Gözlü Agricultural Enterprise on combating wind erosion and visited the Konya Soil, Water and Deserting Control Research Institute in

Karapınar, where they received information from institute officials about combating wind erosion.

During the second part of the study tour, participants visited the Manavgat district of Antalya where they were exposed to innovative methods used in the reforestation of forestlands burned in the forest fires of 2008 and 2021.



Forestry experts are participating a field visit.

The project, which will last until 2025, plans to create pilot areas to identify degraded forests and other woodlands in need of restoration in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and to increase gender-sensitive capacity and knowledge for the prevention of degradation and sustainable restoration of forests and other woodlands in these countries. The project also aims to improve national capacities to successfully carry out large-scale forest and other woodland restoration by enhancing technical knowledge on preventing land degradation.

Regional workshop in Ordu highlights the importance of rural women's empowerment in agrifood systems to achieving the SDGs

On 13–14 December 2023, a regional workshop held in Ordu brought together government officials from ministries and state agencies in Tajikistan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan, who work in agriculture, forestry and food security, to discuss and share good practices and experiences related to socially inclusive and gender responsive policies and activities contributing to the achievement of Agenda 2030 and its core principle of "Leaving no one behind". The workshop included visits to a gender unit on the premises of the Provincial Directorate of MoAF and two women's cooperatives operating in the rural areas of Ordu.

The workshop forms part of the project "Leaving no one behind: Greater involvement and empowerment of rural women in Türkiye and Central Asia", funded by the Government of Türkiye under the umbrella of the FTTP. The project aims to improve the livelihoods of rural communities by reducing rural poverty, promoting gender equality and empowering rural women. Launched in October 2021, the project supports rural women in Tajikistan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan in gaining access to technical knowledge and skills, increasing the productivity of their farms, and starting businesses and cooperatives, by creating an enabling environment for their empowerment and reducing gender inequalities.

Policies and action to address such gender inequalities in agriculture and forestry must be based on comprehensive social analysis. A group of researchers led by Professor Ayşe Ayata from Middle East Technical University produced a country assessment of gender issues in the context of agriculture and forestry, summarizing the results of the latest data and studies conducted in pilot provinces of the project in Türkiye. The workshop participants were familiarized with the key findings and recommendations of the assessment, which is currently being finalized for wider publication. Similar work has been undertaken in Tajikistan, where Dr Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh from Science-Po, France, interviewed rural women, policymakers and other stakeholders to provide a comprehensive picture of challenges and barriers faced by rural women.



Participants of the regional workshop.

The workshop emphasized the importance of developing and implementing holistic policy solutions that address this gap, and based on the studies and findings shared, the workshop participants prioritized next steps and actions to be taken to achieve the overall objectives of the project.

MoAF of Türkiye launches webpage dedicated to FTTP

Under the project “Increasing the Visibility of FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programmes”, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry launched a webpage to promote the FTTP. The new webpage offers visitors a more comprehensive and visitor-friendly version of the previous website, while providing the programmes with a new platform to reflect on and strengthen the impact of projects delivered under the FTTP. The webpage will contribute to increasing the visibility of the programme, in addition to other platforms such as the FTTP website and the FAO-Türkiye website.

New website advances sustainable food systems in the Black Sea region

The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Regional Cooperation Centre for Sustainable Food Systems (BSEC-CSFS) has launched a dedicated website to promote food systems transformation agenda in the BSEC region, and to contribute to building a network of food system professionals. The BSEC-CSFS website will serve as a platform for knowledge exchange and information on the Centre’s activities and provide updates on food systems and food security in the region, related reference materials, guidelines and information from member states and partners.

The launch of the BSEC-CSFS website reflects efforts by Türkiye, BSEC and FAO to tackle current challenges in food systems at a regional level. The website will serve as a knowledge hub and facilitate the sharing of information and experience among food systems stakeholders in the Black Sea region and beyond.

The website will also provide important information about food systems frameworks and the current state of food systems in the BSEC region. Visitors will be able to access relevant publications including individual country food systems assessment reports, which provide useful data for decision-makers and agrifood professionals alike. In addition, the website will offer information about training and relevant press releases, among other features.

ECO-RCC project completed

The Economic Cooperation Organization Regional Coordination Centre for Food Security (ECO-RCC) was established in 2012 as a programme-based subsidiary body of the ECO with the aim to facilitate the identification

and prioritization of key impediments to food security at national and regional levels, and the planning of coordinated actions to address those impediments.

Under the framework of the FTTP, the project “Support to strengthen the Economic Cooperation Organization Regional Coordination Centre for Food Security (ECO-RCC)” aimed to strengthen ECO-RCC’s capacity to provide systematic and useful support to member countries, enabling them to acquire the necessary advice, guidance and information to improve their food security and nutrition policies and programmes.

The project supported the development and implementation of ECO’s strategic programme to address the main impediments to food security at national and regional levels, complementing the initiatives and policies of each country.

The online Closure Workshop of the project was organized on 21 June 2023 with the participation of project stakeholders.

Action Against Desertification: the FTTP contributes to the Great Green Wall in Mauritania and Sudan

Desertification has been seriously affecting Sahel countries south of the Sahara for decades. The situation is further exacerbated by climate change and human activities that exert pressure on remaining resources. As most of the population lives in rural areas and relies directly on natural resources, environmental degradation has severely impacted the development of these countries.

The Great Green Wall (GGW) is a mosaic of land management practices and restoration to fight desertification. The BRIDGES project in Mauritania and Sudan, with the support of the Action Against Desertification Programme, is improving the livelihoods of local communities and restoring land productivity along the GGW. To date, total restoration interventions have resulted in the planting and seeding of 5 744 hectares of degraded land by 46 participating village communities, involving over half a million seedlings and 23 tonnes of seeds of native species. In addition, six types of non-wood forest products (NWFPs) have been developed to increase and diversify income. The projects have worked to ensure the high-involvement and participation of women (25 percent) in all activities.

As of 31 December 2023, the project has finalized all field activities, with achievements and highlights being documented for publication of a final report in early 2024.

New projects under the FTFP Portfolio

Project documents produced by the Improving Biodiversity and Sustainable Forestry and International Turkish Forestry Training Centre have been developed with contributions from MoAF and beneficiary countries. The projects are prepared to be delivered to the respective countries for their involvement.

About the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programmes

The objectives of the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programmes are to provide support to ensure food security, rural poverty reduction and sustainable forest management, combat desertification and preserve ecosystems in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and other countries of mutual interest.

Established in 2007, the first phase of the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programme on Food and Agriculture (FTPP) has benefited from trust fund contributions totalling USD 10 million, financed by the Government of Türkiye and represented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

During the first phase of the programme, 28 projects were implemented in 16 countries between 2009 and 2015.

In 2014, Türkiye and FAO commenced the second phase of the FTFP along with the first phase of the FAO-Türkiye Forestry Partnership Programme (FTFP) with additional fund of USD 20 million, bringing Türkiye's total contribution to USD 30 million.

Under this new phase, a range of projects will be implemented in the areas of:

- food security and nutrition
- agricultural and rural development
- protection and management of natural resources
- agricultural policies
- food safety
- sustainable forests, land and natural resource
- management and land degradation neutrality
- institutional reform, training and national
- capacity enhancement.



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Contact information:

FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia
SEC-SRC@fao.org
<https://www.fao.org/in-action/fao-türkiye-partnership/>
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Ankara, Türkiye



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