

Informal Consultation for Europe and Central Asia 4-5 May 2023

Background Note

Session 5

Regional Technical Commissions' Contribution to the Regional Priorities

I. Introduction

The new Strategic Framework of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)¹ seeks to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life*, leaving no one behind.

Considering the 2030 Agenda as the overall framework for action, as well as the core mandate and functions of FAO, the Regional Conference for Europe in 2022 (ERC 22)² endorsed the following four key priorities of importance for FAO's work throughout Europe and Central Asia for 2022–2023 and beyond:

1. formulating effective policies, promoting innovation and digitalization and facilitating rural livelihoods, with emphasis on smallholders, women and youth;
2. food system transformation promoting nutrition-sensitive value chains and healthy diets through the alignment of trade, food safety and sanitary and phytosanitary policies, facilitating One Health;
3. promoting sustainable natural resources management and facilitating resilience in agriculture, forestry and other land use sectors, including mitigating and adapting to climate change; and
4. addressing food insecurity and reducing all forms of malnutrition.

Currently, there are six FAO technical commissions in the Europe and Central Asia Region with a focus on technical issues, established under Articles VI and XIV of the FAO Constitution.

- **Article VI³**: the European Commission on Agriculture⁴ (ECA), the European Forestry Commission⁵ (EFC) and the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission⁶ (EIFAAC).
- **Article XIV⁷**: the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean⁸ (GFCM), the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission⁹ (CACFish) and the European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease¹⁰ (EuFMD).

Although there is significant institutional and operational diversity across these bodies, in addition to being dedicated to sectors as different as agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture,

currently all Article VI bodies, the ECA (since 22nd Session of the ERC in 2000), the EFC and EIFAAC (both since 30th Session of the ERC in 2016) are reporting to the ERC and in this context are further integrated into the work at the regional level. *The commissions review technical aspects and issues of importance to the region and their recommendations complement and inform discussions during the ERC on the Programme of Work, its strategic focus and the Regional Initiatives.*¹¹ CACFish decided at its fifth session on 10–12 October 2016 to report to the ERC. GFCM reports to the ERC with an information item. The only commission so far not reporting to the ERC is EuFMD.

Considering that the majority of the technical commissions formally report to the ERC, the objective of this session is to seek the Members' views on the question: How to better include the results and activities of the Commission in the Regional Priority setting and also facilitate the integration of the work at country level considering a food systems approach?

This document consists of three sections, where:

- Section I provides general background information on FAO's Strategic Framework, regional priorities and technical commissions in the Europe and Central Asia region (REU).
- Section II outlines the commissions' main priorities, their links to the regional priority areas and the food systems approach, as well as their contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Section III provides draft conclusions and follow-up recommendations.

II. Outline of the main priorities of the technical commissions in the region

Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish)

1. The Commission's main priorities of work for 2021–2023^a

The Commission's principal objectives are to promote the development, conservation, rational management and best utilization of living aquatic resources, as well as the sustainable development of aquaculture in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

The Commission's current 2021–2023 work programme focuses on the following prioritized technical thematic areas:

- promotion of sustainable culture-based aquaculture;
- conservation of aquatic biodiversity;
- development of regional guidelines on biosafety at large inland water bodies;
- fish stock assessment in inland fisheries;
- development of regional guidelines on stocking of fish into inland water bodies;
- species diversification in aquaculture; and
- responsible fishing operations (fishing gears and fishing methods in the Central Asian and Caucasus region).

Responding to the Commission's 2021–2023 priorities, the following outputs and results have been achieved:

- promotion of sustainable culture-based aquaculture (CBA) in Issyk-Kul Lake, Kyrgyzstan, through a study on the development of bioeconomic and management approaches to culture-based fisheries development; a study on fish diversity; a Fisheries Management Plan; an training in CBA (May 2023);
- conservation of aquatic biodiversity, i.e. a regional initiative to produce a genetic catalogue of fish from Central Asia and the Caucasus.
- regional guidelines on biosafety at large inland water bodies to be presented to the commission's eighth session scheduled for September 2023 for its consideration and approval;
- a regional training workshop on inland stock assessment in selected large water bodies on 15–17 November 2022 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan;
- regional guidelines on stocking of fish into inland water bodies, being developed in collaboration with the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC);
- an ad-hoc training on the basics of inland aquaculture production systems and biological, environmental and social influences on the development of the Tajik inland fisheries and aquaculture sectors (April–May 2023);

^a CACFish outlined priorities for 2021–2023, considering that its 2023–2025 priorities will be identified at the Eighth Session of CACFish in September 2023.

- on-the-job training on sturgeon aquaculture at the Trabzon Central Research Institute for Fisheries in Turkiye and an assessment report on the sturgeon aquaculture practices and production systems of the institute; and
- a regional synthesis on gender in fisheries and aquaculture in the CACFish members' synthesis to be presented to the Commission's eighth session scheduled for September 2023 for its review and approval.

The results and findings of the above-mentioned prioritized thematic area activities will be technically discussed at the Sixth Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to be held in Astana, Kazakhstan between 21 May and 1 June 2023. The TAC's technical and scientific advice and recommendations will be submitted to the Commission's eighth session scheduled for September 2023. The Commission will identify further priorities at this session in the scope of its Work Programme for 2023–2025.

2. Links between the regional priority areas and the Commission's priorities

While CACFish currently has five members: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkiye, non-members, including Georgia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, actively participate in its work.

CACFish formulates and develops institutional and policy frameworks for sustainable governance, supporting small-scale farmers with an emphasis on empowering women and youth in the development of the inland fisheries and aquaculture sectors, thus contributing to the priority on smallholders, women and youth (P1 SWY), as well as FAO's Programme Priority Area of Blue Transformation.¹² The regional partnership and networking created by the Commission generate synergies for better governance; the promotion of investment in the sector; knowledge, technology and innovation; and small and medium enterprise (SME) development.

The Commission promotes capacity building for better management practices in inland fisheries and aquaculture and supports the development of aquatic food production systems and value chain development, including product quality, food safety and phytosanitary systems and market access, thus addressing the priority on food system transformation (P2 FST) and the blue transformation of aquatic food systems.

CACFish contributes to the implementation FAO's Strategy on Climate Change 2022–2031,¹³ focusing on aquatic ecosystems management and conservation, aquatic biodiversity and the preservation of aquatic genetic resources¹⁴ to support food production systems. It thus contributes to the priority on natural resources management (P3 NRS).

3. Integration of the Commission’s work in the food systems approach, including areas where further attention needs to be given by the members in the region

Aquatic foods represent an important component of resilient food systems and healthy and nutritious diets. The consumption, availability and affordability of these foods need to be promoted, particularly in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Aquatic food production systems and safety and security issues need to be incorporated into national policy, and legislative and regulatory frameworks.

Resilience needs to be developed in agrifood production systems, including the translocation of the spread of aquatic animal diseases, as well as the promotion of transboundary health and safety.

4. Specific achievements or focus on SDGs and what emphasis the Commission’s work will give in 2024–2025

CACFish contributes to the following SDGs:

- SDG 2 (targets 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6.): Inland fisheries and aquaculture are making an essential and growing contribution to global food security and nutrition. Fish accounts for about 17 percent of the world population’s intake of animal proteins. Ensuring effective and sustainable aquafood systems is thus key to achieving many of the SDGs, including SDG 2. However, food security and the nutritional dimension have not been an integral part of policies on sustainable inland fisheries and aquaculture. CACFish promotes (i) sustainable and safe fish consumption; (ii) enhancement of the resilience of aquafood value chains and systems; (iii) maintenance of aquatic genetic resources; and (iv) a better understanding of food security and nutritional aspects in inland fisheries and aquaculture policy development, formulation and implementation.
- SDG 8 (target 8.2): CACFish is supporting aquaculture and fisheries sectors development, rural development and income generation.
- SDG 12 (targets 12.2 and 12.3): CACFish is focusing on improving product quality, market access and fish consumption, and reducing food loss and waste.
- SDG 13 (targets 13.1, 13.2 and 13.3): CACFish is supporting climate action and adaptation and promoting climate-smart fisheries and aquaculture production systems.
- SDG 14 (target 14.9): CACFish is promoting the management and protection of living inland fisheries and aquaculture resources.
- SDG 17 (targets 17.6 and 17.8).

1. The Commission's main priorities of work for 2024–2025

The mandate of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) is to assist Member Governments in cooperating on agricultural issues; encourage and facilitate cooperation between international governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in agriculture; and make recommendations, within its geographical and technical competence, on all matters not covered by the Committee on Commodity Problems.

The ECA's main priorities for the years 2024–25 are determined by the regional priorities adopted by the 33rd Session of the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC 33), and by the ever-changing environment for their implementation, for example by the multiple crises witnessed by the region. The Commission has been actively following and analysing the developments in the region, aiming at developing recommendations for activities to be undertaken by the Members and by FAO, in cooperation with their partners, to address the challenges, including those that expand beyond the region.

In the 2024–2025 biennium, the Commission may continue working on strategic issues for the food sector in the region, such as:

- options to address the multiple crises in the region and beyond;
- effective management of natural resources (land, water);
- supporting smallholder farms;
- innovation and digitalization in agriculture;
- advancing gender equality;
- promoting employment opportunities for rural youth; and
- addressing risks to agriculture from climate change.

2. Links between the regional priority areas and the Commission's priorities

All outputs of the Commission's work projected for 2024–2025 focus on enabling the transformation of Members' food sectors to ensure food security, nutritious food for the societies, improved rural livelihoods and economic development, and protection of disadvantaged groups, taking advantage of new technologies and innovations and respecting the need for sustainable management of natural resources, including the impacts of the climate change.

These areas fall directly under the regional priority areas endorsed by ERC 2022, as listed in para 2. The Commission may support addressing the regional priorities by reviewing and analysing the implementation of selected areas of FAO's work programme in the region, and providing guidance and recommendations, as appropriate.

3. Integration of the Commission's work in the food systems approach, including areas where further attention needs to be given by members in the region

Throughout its work, the Commission has been focusing on approaches or elements related to the support for the transformation of the food systems in the region. Consideration has been given to technical issues relevant to the region, such as transboundary animal diseases (TADs),

antimicrobial resistance, plant health, and different forms of malnutrition. These are tackled from different perspectives to ensure a systematic approach to the issues and to provide technically sound recommendations, following the principles of inclusiveness and leaving no one behind.

In the current biennium, the Commission's 42nd Session¹⁵ focused on addressing malnutrition in the region. It also reviewed the progress on gender equality, as well as FAO's implementation of plant-health-related recommendations from the previous session. The Commission adopted recommendations relating to transforming food systems in Europe and Central Asia for improved nutritional outcomes, improving production to increase access to diverse and nutritious foods and ensuring community development to prevent all forms of malnutrition.

At the upcoming 43rd Session, the Commission will discuss issues relating to the sustainable management of land and water and will review FAO's activities relating to the multiple crises in the region. It will also look at the implementation of gender equality and the recommendations from the previous Session.

4. Specific achievements or focus on SDGs and what emphasis the Commission's work will give in 2024–2025

The Commission's work contributes to achieving a wide range of SDGs. In recent years, the main technical themes of the ECA's Sessions covered several areas important for the region, at the same time contributing to achieving respective SDGs, as follows:

- 40th ECA Session on animal health contributed to SDGs 1, 2, 13 and 17;
- 41st ECA Session on plant health contributed to SDGs 1, 2, 8, 12, 13 and 15;
- 42nd ECA Session on malnutrition contributed to SDGs 2, 3 and 12; and
- 43rd ECA Session on land and water will contribute to SDG 1 (target 1.4), SDG 2 (target 2.4), SDG 6 (targets 6.4 and 6.5), SDG 10 (target 10.3), SDG 13 (target 13.1), and SDG 15 (targets 15.1, 15.2 and 15.3).

The 43rd ECA Session will explore challenges linked to the sustainable use of land and water resources in Europe and Central Asia in an integrated way. Such issues as land degradation, soil salinity, droughts and flash floods show that proper water management and governance must be done in an integrated and transborder way, together with sustainable land and soil management and proper governance of land tenure. A regional approach for policy guidance and governance structures for land and water is necessary to ensure the sustainable use of these resources. It can also contribute to a more resilient food system, promote ecosystem services, and support the conservation of biodiversity, allowing countries to strengthen their production of goods and services sustainably, improve nutrition and livelihoods, and share good practices, experiences, and lessons learned, moving towards achieving SDG 6 and SDG 15 targets, in particular 6.4 and 15.3, respectively.

Moreover, all ECA Sessions contribute to SDG 5 through the monitoring of progress in the implementation of gender equality policies in the region, SDG 16 through its support for the development of national capacities in the countries of the region, as well as SDG 17 through their support for inclusive national systems developed in cooperation and consultation with relevant national and international partners.

European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EuFMD)

1. The Commission's main priorities of work for 2024–2025

EuFMD's vision is to ensure a Europe safe from foot-and-mouth (FMD) disease and similar transboundary diseases (FAST).

The main priorities focus on maintaining, rapidly regaining, or achieving freedom from FAST diseases in Member Nations, ensuring early warning, early detection and quick response, reducing the risk of FAST disease, and sustaining Global FMD Control Strategy and FAST global virus intelligence.

The EuFMD Strategic Plan (Move FAST – GET Prepared 2023–2027) builds on the results of the Three Pillars' activities: improve preparedness, reduce risk and support control. It has three focus objectives – (i) protect livestock from FAST introduction and spread, (ii) ensure adequate response to FAST, (iii) sustain global FMD control – and seven priority areas to ensure a safer Europe from the daily threat of FAST diseases:

1. Risk monitoring
2. Risk mitigation
3. Capacity development
4. Tools and resources
5. Global FMD control
6. FAST controlVaccine security

2. Links between the regional priority areas and the Commission's priorities

The regional priority areas and the Commission's overarching priorities are closely interlinked, with a focus on the priority on food systems transformation, aimed at improving the health and functioning of agrifood systems along with assistance directed to protect human, animal and plant health with a One Health approach. EuFMD's mission is to maintain, rapidly regain, or achieve freedom from FAST diseases in Member Nations, ensuring animal health, livestock production and safe trade.

A consistent part of the EUFMD programme is aimed at improving the resilience of the agrifood system to emergencies and crises connected with the introduction and spread of FAST diseases. The Commission's risk reduction programme in the European neighbourhood contributes to reducing the risk of FAST disease introduction into Europe and ensures a risk-based approach in surveillance and control activities. EuFMD has adopted a digitalization strategy that ensures the development of innovative and digital solutions to improve the efficient use of resources in the monitoring and control FAST diseases. The Commission works with national authorities and stakeholders in each region to develop tailored approaches that address these priorities and support the overall goal of FMD control and eradication.

3. Integration of the Commission’s work in the food systems approach, including areas where further attention needs to be given by the members in the region

The Commission’s work is a significant contribution to the food systems transformation in the region, which aims to promote sustainable and resilient food systems that provide safe, nutritious and affordable food for all while protecting the environment and supporting social and economic development. FMD is a significant threat to food systems, as it can cause severe economic losses by reducing livestock productivity, trade restrictions and market disruptions. The Commission's efforts to control and eradicate FMD contribute to the resilience and sustainability of food systems by reducing the risk of disease outbreaks and ensuring the safety and quality of animal products. By preventing and controlling FMD, the Commission helps to protect livestock health and welfare, promote food security and stability and support the livelihoods of farmers and other stakeholders in the livestock sector.

The EuFMD Constitution was amended in 2022, with a mandate to the Commission to extend the preparedness and risk reduction activities to TADs similar to FMD, which pose a threat to the territories of Member Nations. The prevention and control of FMD remain the Commission’s core objective and the extended mandate allows to build on good principles for FMD prevention and control and extend them (with a cost-effective combination of actions) to similar TADs, which negatively affect agrifood systems.

4. Specific achievements or focus on SDGs and what emphasis the Commission’s work will give in 2024–2025

The Commission contributes to the UN SDGs, particularly SDGs 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 12 and 17 and to the FAO Sustainable Livestock Transformation Initiative to build a more sustainable, efficient, inclusive and resilient livestock sector for all.

- SDG 1 (targets 1.2 and 1.5): By controlling and eradicating FMD, EuFMD contributes to poverty reduction by protecting the livelihoods of farmers and reducing economic losses due to animal disease outbreaks.
- SDG 2 (target 2.4): EuFMD helps to ensure food security by preventing and controlling the spread of FMD and similar TADs in livestock populations, which can reduce the risk of food shortages and increase access to safe and nutritious food.
- SDG 4 (targets 4.3 and 4.4): EuFMD provides training and education on FAST disease control and eradication, which can improve the knowledge and skills of veterinary professionals and livestock keepers through online training programmes, microlearning and mobile learning, which are bandwidth-mindful.
- SDG 9 (target 9.2): EuFMD promotes innovation in animal disease control and eradication and supports the development of infrastructure for animal health and welfare. By controlling and eradicating FMD, EuFMD helps to create a safer and more efficient livestock industry.
- SDG 12 (target 12.1): EuFMD supports responsible consumption and production by promoting sustainable livestock production and preventing the spread of animal diseases that can lead to food waste.
- SDG 17 (targets 17.3, 17.6, 17.9, and 17.17): EuFMD promotes international

partnerships and cooperation to control and eradicate FAST diseases. By working with other countries and organizations, EuFMD helps to strengthen global disease control and promote sustainable development. Partnerships include national veterinary services and animal health authorities in Europe and neighbouring countries; research institutions and academia; private sector stakeholders, such as livestock producers and veterinarians; and NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) involved in animal health and welfare. These partnerships enable EuFMD to coordinate and implement effective strategies for the prevention, control and eradication of FMD, and to promote international cooperation and information sharing in this area.

European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC)

1. The Commission's main priorities of work for 2024–2025

In 2023–2025, EIFAAC aims to generate scientific advice for policymakers and managers of inland fisheries and aquaculture on the following eight subjects:

1. develop solutions for adaptation of the fisheries and aquaculture sector to climate change and assess the impact of climate change on inland aquatic resources;
2. support the innovation, sustainability and resilience of the European aquaculture sector and its transition to a sustainable food system in Europe;
3. facilitate the access of micro- and small aquaculture enterprises to essential inputs, technologies and financial resources, through research, capacity building and policy advice;
4. determine the socioeconomic value of inland commercial fisheries and recreational fisheries in Europe, for better policymaking and targeted rural investments;
5. increase scientific knowledge in Europe on fish welfare and promote best aquaculture practices on fish well-being;
6. develop a European-wide great cormorant management plan to harmonize measures and regulations aiming to reduce the population of cormorants in Europe to a sustainable and manageable level;
7. build capacity for better management to address the threat of aquatic invasive species in European inland waters; and
8. develop (technical) guidelines on responsible stocking of fish in inland waters.

EIFAAC 32 is scheduled to be held in Croatia in 2024 and will include an international symposium. The report from EIFAAC 31¹⁶ and the brochure for EIFAAC 2022¹⁷ provide more details on EIFAAC's work.

EIFAAC membership increased in 2022 to 35 members with the entry of Moldova.¹⁸ EIFAAC invites non-member countries in Europe to also join the Commission.

2. Links between the regional priority areas and the Commission's priorities

EIFAAC has the capacity to assist the REU members with formulating effective policies for inland fisheries and aquaculture innovation and development, management and investment, promoting a Blue Transformation in Europe (P1 SWY).

The Commission contributes to the implementation of FAO's Strategy on Climate Change in Europe by strengthening national capacities to achieve sustainable aquatic resources management, helping the sector to adapt to climate change, restoring aquatic biodiversity, and developing innovative tools and approaches and policy advice for aquatic resources management and conservation (P3 NRM).

EIFAAC's technical and scientific advisory network contributes to the diversification of the rural economy, the transfer of knowledge and technologies, the development of small-scale rural businesses in aquaculture, and the sustainability of SMEs active in inland commercial fisheries and recreational fisheries (P1 SWY).

3. Integration of the Commission's work in the food systems approach, including areas where further attention needs to be given by the members in the region

EIFAAC contributes to the food systems transformation through capacity development and knowledge sharing on best practices and innovations to increase fish production and the quality of inland fisheries and aquaculture products in Europe.

Aquatic food systems encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of aquatic food products that originate from fisheries and aquaculture and parts of the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded (e.g. open oceans, coastal waters, wetlands, lakes, rivers, ponds, raceways, fields and tanks).

Aquatic foods contain nutritional elements, such as vitamins and minerals, Omega-3 fatty acids and essential amino acids that are crucial for healthy diets. While the average fish consumption per capita in Europe is on par with global consumption at around 21 kg/pp/per year, the differences in fish consumption within Europe are large. People in Scandinavian and Mediterranean countries consume much more fish than those in Central and Eastern Europe. The EIFAAC member institutions' network can play a role in supporting freshwater fish production and awareness raising among the population of the health benefits of aquatic foods consumption.

4. Specific achievements or focus on SDGs and what emphasis the Commission's work will give in 2024–2025

At EIFAAC 31 (2022), the Commission adopted four resolutions and one recommendation: (i) on EIFAAC Resolutions, Recommendations and Advisory Notes; (ii) on the Code of Conduct for Recreational Fisheries and Invasive Alien Species; (iii) on the protection of vulnerable and endangered fish species from unsustainable predation from cormorants; (iv) on small-scale fisheries and aquaculture; and (v) on the Code of Practice for Recreational Fisheries.

EIFAAC contributes to the following SDGs:

- SDG 1: EIFAAC institutions, their research and knowledge support small-scale aquatic food producers (fishers and aquaculture farmers) throughout Europe to have access to aquatic and financial resources to grow their businesses, increase their ownership and increase their resilience to crisis, social, economic and environmental disasters.
- SDG 2: EIFAAC contributes to improving aquatic food systems, food security and nutrition through the transfer of technologies and knowledge on aquatic food production, sustainable management of fisheries resources and innovations in aquaculture production systems and species diversification.
- SDG 8: EIFAAC contributes to improving rural livelihoods and generating employment in aquaculture and inland commercial and recreational fisheries, with a focus on SMEs in fisheries and aquaculture.
- SDG 13: EIFAAC contributes to the assessment of the impact of climate change on freshwater aquatic animals in Europe and to climate change adaptation in fisheries and aquaculture.
- SDG 14: FAO is the custodian of five target indicators under this SDG (14.4, 14.6, 14.7, 14.b and 14.c). EIFAAC's mandate is limited to freshwater resources, while SDG 14 largely focuses on seas and oceans.
- SDG 17: EIFAAC promotes joint research, capacity building and collaboration among Member Governments and national research institutions to achieve overarching policy goals of improved management of fisheries and aquaculture resources in Europe.

European Forestry Commission (EFC)

1. The Commission's main priorities of work for 2024–2025

The Commission has following the priorities regarding FAO's operational work in the region:

- ensure sustainable use and management of wood and non-wood forest resources by providing support to Member Nations in assessing and monitoring forest/tree and wildlife resources with due consideration to biodiversity conservation;
- strengthen country capacity to deal with increasing threats posed by the movement of pests and invasive species through expanded international trade coupled with local climatic change and implement the Guide to implementation of phytosanitary standards in forestry and other associated forest health guides; and
- strengthen country capacity to assess and monitor climate change impacts on forests and land resources, restore degraded forests and landscapes and support countries to adapt to climate change and mitigate its impact.

In addition, EFC has an Integrated Program of Work with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Forestry and Forest Industries (COFFI) through the Joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section in Geneva, which includes the following work areas for 2022–2025 period: (i) data collection, monitoring, and assessment (including Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) and forest statistics); (ii) facilitate forest policy dialogue and advice

(including sustainable bio circular economy in forestry sector); (iii) communication and outreach; and (iv) capacity building (including Forest Landscape Restoration).

Regional-level cooperation on forest fires and forest biodiversity mainstreaming are included in the 42nd session of EFC in November 2023, these might come up as additional priorities for the region.

2. Links between the regional priority areas and the Commission's priorities

Forest restoration, integrated land management, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation activities under the EFC's priorities directly contribute to the regional priority on "Promoting sustainable natural resource management and facilitating resilience in agriculture, forestry and other land-use sectors, including mitigating and adapting to climate change".

Data collection and assessment on wood and non-wood forest products (NWFPs), forest health and invasive species works, market review works, and sustainable circular bioeconomy works contribute to the regional priority on "Food system transformation and support in exploring new markets through the alignment of trade, food safety and sanitary and phytosanitary policies to meet WTO commitments and promote value chain development".

The multifunctional management of forest resources and the empowerment of forest governance also contribute to the regional priorities on "Addressing food insecurity and reduction of all forms of malnutrition" and "Formulating effective policies, promoting digital innovation and facilitating rural livelihoods, with emphasis on smallholders, women and youth".

3. Integration of the Commission's work in the food systems approach, including areas where further attention needs to be given by the members in the region

EFC priorities within the scope of forestry and food systems should be considered under the following cross-cutting approach and priorities:

- support the assessment of the institutional, financial and policy requirements to integrate resilience-enhancing dimensions of forests and trees into agricultural and food security and nutrition policies and programs;
- promote biodiversity conservation and enhancement of ecosystem services, regeneration of native forests and restoration of degraded forests, as well as the development of agro-forestry systems;
- increase investments to establish, promote and upscale good practices in agriculture, forestry and agroforestry systems within integrated landscape mosaics;
- promote integrated planning and local adaptive management of landscapes, including community-based systems, acknowledging the multiple functions and uses of forests and trees that contribute to enhancing the resilience of landscapes, communities and livelihoods;
- promote a nutrition-sensitive approach to integrate the multiple goals of food security and nutrition (FSN) into sustainable forest management, land use and biodiversity conservation; and

- improve the capacity of member states to mainstream the “Biodiversity and Nature Positive Production” through a nexus-oriented implementation of a sustainable and circular bioeconomy in the integrated forestry and agriculture systems.

4. Specific achievements or focus on SDGs and what emphasis the Commission’s work will give in 2024–2025

The Commission’s work contributes to the implementation of:

- SDG 15 (targets 15.1, 15.2, and 15.4): regional data collection, assessment, and relevant questionnaires under Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW) and national forest inventory and national forest assessment works by regional and subregional operational work; regional Sustainable Forest Management Criteria and Indicators (SFM C&I) development process, forest monitoring under IPoW and SFM projects by regional and subregional operational work; Working Group on Management of Mountain Watersheds and mountain development projects.
- SDG 2 (target 2.3): NWFPS and forestry-based value chain development and collection of forestry data by regional and subregional operational work.
- SDG 7 (target 7.2): Normative work on wood energy under IPoW and promotion of sustainable firewood production by regional and sub-regional operational work.
- SDG 12 (targets 12.2 and 12.5): Normative work on sustainable bioeconomy in forestry and forest-based industries under IpoW.
- SDG 13 (target 13.2): Operational work by regional and subregional offices including GEF and GCF projects in forest and land management areas.

General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)

1. The Commission’s main priorities of work for 2024–2025

The GFCM 2030 Strategy for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Mediterranean and Black Sea¹⁹ lays out the Commission’s main priorities for the coming years. The strategy is based on five targets: Target 1 emphasizes the importance of maintaining healthy seas and productive fisheries; Target 2 aims to create a fair and equitable environment by eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; Target 3 aims to unlock the potential of a thriving aquaculture industry; Target 4 focuses on creating sustainable livelihoods by promoting decent employment and engaging fishers; and Target 5 aims to foster capacity development through technical cooperation and effective partnerships throughout the region.

These targets address regional priorities while taking into account both local needs and maintaining alignment with the SDGs. To achieve these targets, the Commission relies on the commitment of the GFCM membership to adopt and implement relevant decisions. The Commission’s work plan is adopted at its annual session and as such the 2024 work plan should be available in November 2023 following the annual session of the GFCM.

2. Links between the regional priority areas and the Commission's priorities

There are several links between the regional priority areas and the Commission's priorities. As small-scale fisheries make up the majority of the fishing fleet in the GFCM area of application, P1 SWY is directly linked to the Commission's efforts under all 2030 strategy targets, particularly under Target 4, which stresses the full implementation of the GFCM's Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

P2 FST is most closely linked to Target 3 concerning the enhancement of sustainable aquaculture in the region and to this end, the GFCM has planned actions to continue to promote allocated zones for aquaculture within marine spatial planning tools, through increased technical assistance.

P3 NRM is directly linked to Target 1, which aims to conserve biodiversity and provide maximum sustainable yields through science-based fisheries management plans. Through its recommendations, the Commission has already adopted several multiyear management plans for targeted stocks. These plans provide one of the best tools available to ensure the management and conservation of marine resources.

3. Integration of the Commission's work in the food systems approach, including areas where further attention needs to be given by the members in the region

The GFCM's objective, highlighted in its basic texts, is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use at the biological, social, economic and environmental levels, of living marine resources, as well as the sustainable development of aquaculture. To this end, the Commission takes a holistic approach to fisheries management, ensuring that the broad range of users of marine ecosystems are included in decision-making processes and that environmental and socioeconomic issues are considered in management processes (Target 1 of the GFCM 2030 Strategy).

Furthermore, Target 4 of the GFCM 2030 Strategy aims to tackle various concerns, including employment, socioeconomic awareness, value chains, social protection issues and participatory decision-making, in a coordinated and comprehensive manner as is essential for promoting strong fisheries and aquaculture livelihoods and thriving coastal communities. Reflecting on upcoming priorities, the Commission has recognized the need to give greater attention to strengthening fisheries and aquaculture value chains, as well as better documenting the impacts of livelihoods along these value chains.

4. Specific achievements or focus on SDGs and what emphasis the Commission's work will give in 2024–2025

SDG 14 remains central to the work of the GFCM. The scientific legwork that precedes the formulation of many of the Commission's decisions helps increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and promote the transfer of technology in line with SDG Target 14.a. A specific achievement has been meeting the target of the previous GFCM strategy, which is to revert previous negative trends on fisheries and reduce overfishing by 20 percent (SDG target 14.4). The actions taken under the Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea promote improved access to marine resources and markets for small-scale

fisheries, as foreseen by SDG target 14.b. The multiyear management plans for targeted stocks formulated in the Commission's decision are an example of active efforts to minimize the impacts of ocean degradation, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels, as foreseen by SDG target 14.3.

III. Conclusions

The outline of the priorities and work programmes of the different technical commissions in the region demonstrate the increasing integration of their work in the food systems transformation and their specific contribution to achieving the SDGs.

Further efforts should be undertaken to integrate the commissions' results and advocacy into the national programmes. Joint efforts by the members and FAO should be made to integrate the results into national policies and by FAO to integrate the work into the respective Country Programme Frameworks. Moreover, it is recommended that commissions promote stronger cooperation for better synergies and facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge and innovative tools enabling more effective regional collective action.

The overview has also demonstrated that the work of the technical commissions is contributing to the regional priorities, and commissions are encouraged to further work with national authorities and other local partners to develop more tailored approaches for each country to address challenges and emerging priorities.

In addition, the commissions need to give special attention to results responding to the impact of the multiple crises in the region and propose adjustments to FAO priorities for 2024–2025, as well as provide recommendations for actions for members aiming to address the implications of the crises.

The recent accession of the new members to the commissions is acknowledged and welcomed and it is also recommended for the other countries of the region who are not yet members to join relevant technical commissions.

Finally, as already alerted in previous years, it may be worth if EuFMD considers to also report to the ERC. This would allow further strengthening of synergy and dialogues between priorities of the commissions and the region.

Annex I

Strategic Framework 2022–31 FAO²⁰

 <h3>BETTER PRODUCTION</h3> <p>Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, through inclusive food and agriculture supply chains at local, regional and global level, ensuring resilient and sustainable and agrifood systems in a changing climate and environment</p>	<p>BP1: Innovation for Sustainable Agriculture Production</p> <p>BP2: Blue Transformation</p> <p>BP3: One Health</p> <p>BP4: Small-Scale Producers' Equitable Access to Resources</p> <p>BP5: Digital Agriculture</p>	    
 <h3>BETTER NUTRITION</h3> <p>End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition in all its forms (including promoting nutritious food and increasing access to healthy diets)</p>	<p>BN1: Healthy Diets for All</p> <p>BN2: Nutrition for the Most Vulnerable</p> <p>BN3: Safe Food for Everyone</p> <p>BN4: Reducing Food Loss and Waste</p> <p>BN5: Transparent Markets and Trade</p>	    
 <h3>BETTER ENVIRONMENT</h3> <p>Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial and marine ecosystems and combat climate change (reduce, reuse, recycle, residual management) through more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems</p>	<p>BE1: Climate Change Mitigating and Adapted Agrifood Systems</p> <p>BE2: Bioeconomy for Sustainable Food and Agriculture</p> <p>BE3: Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for Food and Agriculture</p> <p>BE4: Achieving Sustainable Urban Food Systems</p>	   
 <h3>BETTER LIFE</h3> <p>Promote inclusive economic growth by reducing inequalities (urban/rural areas, rich/poor countries, men/women)</p>	<p>BL1: Gender Equality and Rural Women's Empowerment</p> <p>BL2: Inclusive Rural Transformation</p> <p>BL3: Agriculture and Food Emergencies</p> <p>BL4: Resilient Agrifood Systems</p> <p>BL5: Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative</p> <p>BL6: Scaling up Investment</p>	     

Sustainable Development Goals – Agenda 2030²¹

- Goal 1:** End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- Goal 2:** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- Goal 3:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- Goal 6:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- Goal 7:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and clean energy for all.
- Goal 8:** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- Goal 9:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
- Goal 10:** Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- Goal 11:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Goal 12:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- Goal 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- Goal 14:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- Goal 15:** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
- Goal 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- Goal 17:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Annex II

Membership status of the countries in the region

Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish)

Armenia
Azerbaijan
Kyrgyzstan
Tajikistan
Türkiye

European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)

Albania	Latvia
Andorra	Lithuania
Armenia	Luxembourg
Austria	Malta
Azerbaijan	Monaco
Belarus	Montenegro
Belgium	Netherlands
Bosnia and Herzegovina	North Macedonia
Bulgaria	Norway
Croatia	Poland
Cyprus	Portugal
Czechia	Republic of Moldova
Denmark	Romania
Estonia	Russian Federation
European Union (Member Organization)	San Marino
Faroe Islands	Serbia
Finland	Slovakia
France	Slovenia
Georgia	Spain
Germany	Sweden
Greece	Switzerland
Hungary	Tajikistan
Iceland	Türkiye
Ireland	Turkmenistan
Israel	Ukraine
Italy	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan
Kyrgyzstan	

European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EuFMD)	
Albania	Latvia
Austria	Lithuania
Belgium	Luxembourg
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Malta
Bulgaria	Montenegro
Croatia	Netherlands
Cyprus	North Macedonia
Czechia	Norway
Denmark	Poland
Estonia	Portugal
Finland	Romania
France	Serbia
Georgia	Slovakia
Germany	Slovenia
Greece	Spain
Hungary	Sweden
Iceland	Switzerland
Ireland	Türkiye
Israel	United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Italy	Northern Ireland

European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC)	
Albania	Israel
Austria	Italy
Belgium	Latvia
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Lithuania
Bulgaria	Luxembourg
Croatia	Moldova
Cyprus	Netherlands
Czechia	Norway
Denmark	Poland
Estonia	Portugal
European Union (Member Organization)	Romania
Finland	Slovakia
France	Spain
Germany	Sweden
Greece	Switzerland
Hungary	Türkiye
Iceland	United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Ireland	Northern Ireland

European Forestry Commission (EFC)	
Albania	Lithuania
Austria	Luxembourg
Belarus	Malta
Belgium	Netherlands
Bulgaria	North Macedonia
Croatia	Norway
Cyprus	Poland
Czechia	Portugal
Denmark	Romania
Estonia	Russian Federation
European Union (Member Organization)	Slovakia
Finland	Slovenia
France	Spain
Germany	Sweden
Greece	Switzerland
Hungary	Türkiye
Iceland	Ukraine
Ireland	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Israel	Uzbekistan
Italy	
Latvia	

General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)	
Albania	Lebanon
Algeria	Libya
Bulgaria	Malta
Croatia	Monaco
Cyprus	Montenegro
Egypt	Morocco
European Union (Member Organization)	Romania
France	Slovenia
Greece	Spain
Israel	Syrian Arab Republic
Italy	Tunisia
Japan	Türkiye

¹ FAO. 2021. *Strategic Framework 2022–31*. Forty-second Session of the FAO Conference, 14–18 June 2021. <http://www.fao.org/3/ne577en/ne577en.pdf>

² Report, 33rd Session of the Regional Conference for Europe: <https://www.fao.org/3/nj289en/nj289en.pdf>

³ Basic texts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mp046e.pdf#page=11>

⁴ ECA website: <https://www.fao.org/europe/about-us/regional-commissions/european-commission-on-agriculture/en>

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- ⁵ EFC website: <https://www.fao.org/forestry/efc/en/>
- ⁶ EIFAAC website: <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/organization/eifaac/en>
- ⁷ Basic texts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mp046e.pdf#page=11>
- ⁸ GFCM website: <https://www.fao.org/gfcm/about/en/>
- ⁹ CACFish website: <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/organization/cacfish>
- ¹⁰ EuFMD website: <https://www.fao.org/eufmd/en/>
- ¹¹ ERC Multi-Year Plan of Work approved by the ERC at its 30th session in May 2016, <https://www.fao.org/3/mp184e/mp184e.pdf>
- ¹² More information on Blue Transformation is available here: <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0458en/cc0458en.pdf>
- ¹³ FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022–2031: <https://www.fao.org/3/cc2274en/cc2274en.pdf>
- ¹⁴ More information on aquatic biodiversity and aquatic genetic resources are available here: <https://www.fao.org/aquatic-genetic-resources/activities/sow/en/>
- ¹⁵ Report, 42nd Session of European Commission on Agriculture. <https://www.fao.org/3/ni198en/ni198en.pdf>
- ¹⁶ Report of the 31st Session of EIFAAC, Killarney, Ireland, 22–24 June 2022: <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc1986en>
- ¹⁷ The European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission, 2022, <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc1980en>
- ¹⁸ EIFAAC welcomes Moldova as its 35th member, <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/news/41371>
- ¹⁹ FAO. 2021. GFCM 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb7562en>
- ²⁰ FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031: <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7099en/cb7099en.pdf>
- ²¹ FAO website on SDGs <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/en/>