



**UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF PREPARATION OF THE 44TH SESSION OF THE ECA
(BUDAPEST, HUNGARY, 1-2 OCTOBER 2025)**

The 44th Session of the ECA is taking place in Budapest, Hungary, on 1-2 (3¹) October 2025, focusing on the main technical theme, *Safeguarding food security by promoting integrated solutions that balance agricultural productivity with environmental sustainability while building resilience against climate change* as agreed by the ECA Executive Committee (ExCom) on 19 December 2024.

Having considered the suggestions and comments of the ECA ExCom, the Secretariat revised the selected proposal, including its title: ***Balancing Productivity and Sustainability in Driving Agrifood Systems Transformation***, and developed the Annotated Agenda for the ECA, that you will find in Annex I.

As for the suggestions of the ECA ExCom to increase the duration of the Session from two days (so far standard) to three days to allow sufficient time for in-depth discussion on the topic, the Secretariat highlighted that it would require additional funding. Thanks to the generous support from Hungary, two participants from support countries of the Region would be funded. The additional resources required to cover the costs of supporting countries participation if the meeting were extended to three days are 16,000 USD

Next steps:

Adjustments by the Secretariat as needed	March 2025
Final approval by the ExCom if required	April 2025
Drafting of the background documents	April 2025 – July 2025

The ExCom is invited to

- review, discuss and agree on the annotated agenda
- note the additional funding requirements for extending the duration of the ECA from 2 to 3 days.

¹ In case it is decided to expand the meeting by one day.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE
FORTY-FOURTH SESSION
Budapest, Hungary, 1-2 (3) October 2025
PROVISIONAL ANNOTATED AGENDA

I. Introductory items

1. **Adoption of the Agenda and the Timetable**
2. **Election of the Rapporteurs**

II. Main technical theme

The main technical theme of the 44th Session of the ECA is Balancing Productivity and Sustainability in Driving Agrifood Systems Transformation.

Agrifood systems in Europe and Central Asia are under increasing pressure from environmental degradation, geopolitical instability, and climate change.² The region is highly diverse in terms of landscape, climate, and levels of socioeconomic development. This diversity also influences levels of natural resource management, crop production, environmental protection, and vulnerability to climate change. In many countries, the cropping system often rely on monoculture and unsustainable farming practices, which disrupt the ecological balance and contribute to biodiversity loss, soil degradation, water scarcity, chemical pollution and GHG emissions. These issues are further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change.

Without a shift toward more sustainable agricultural production systems, the ability to sustain yields and ensure stable food supplies will be compromised with severe social and economic consequences. In addition, technological, knowledge and resources inequalities in the region disproportionately affect small-scale producers and agri-enterprises.³⁴

Experiencing distinct challenges, women often face increased vulnerability due to limited access to productive resources and opportunities resulting from gender inequality, while youth may encounter significant barriers with restricted employment opportunities in rural areas, compromising their livelihoods.

² Yi Yang *et al.* ,Climate change exacerbates the environmental impacts of agriculture. *Science***385**, eadn3747(2024). DOI:[10.1126/science.adn3747](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adn3747)

³ [https:// www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/humanitarian-development-and-peace-nexus](https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/humanitarian-development-and-peace-nexus)

⁴ FAO (2023). *Transforming Agrifood Systems for Sustainability and Resilience*.

FAO (2022). *Scaling Up Agroecology for Sustainable Food and Agriculture*.



Addressing these challenges require a comprehensive and integrated approach, combining climate-resilient, nature-positive and regenerative practices, with agroecology, sustainable and integrated land and water management, and circular economy principles to enhance resource efficiency and ecosystem health.

Scaling up sustainable agriculture requires targeted financial mechanisms, such as blended finance and public-private partnerships, to facilitate the adoption of green and innovative technologies, such as precision farming, carbon sequestration techniques, and digital solutions. Strengthening extension services and improving access to technology and innovation will equip farmers with adaptive strategies that align with biodiversity preservation, climate action, natural resource management and food security objectives, contributing to a resilient and sustainable agrifood future. Consequently, the issue will be further discussed in the subtopic “Unlocking Inclusive Finance and Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for Agrifood System Resilience”.

The main topic will cover strategies and policies aimed at decoupling⁵ agricultural productivity from environmental degradation by advancing sustainability principles for agrifood systems. FAO advocates for policy frameworks that incentivize sustainable and integrated agricultural approaches, ensuring stakeholders along the value chain, and especially vulnerable groups such as smallholders, have access to finance, knowledge, and technology to implement sustainable and resilient practices.

In this context, the following sub-topics will be discussed:

- 3.1 Strategic policies and approaches towards Climate-Resilient Agriculture to improve crop productivity, natural resource efficiency and sustainability
- 3.2. Harnessing Digital Solutions for Agrifood Systems Transformation
- 3.3 Unlocking Sustainable, Inclusive Finance and Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for Agrifood System Resilience

This approach aims to support sustainable and resilient agrifood systems that safeguard natural resources emphasizing the integration of innovative digital technologies, while enhancing economic development and social equity, hereby reinforcing the Pact for the Future and contributing to achieving the SDGs, in line with FAO four aspirations – Better Production, Better Nutrition, Better Environment, and Better Life, as well as the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.

3.1. Strategic policies and approaches towards Climate-Resilient Agriculture to improve crop productivity, natural resource efficiency and sustainability

The increasing frequency of water scarcity, extreme weather events, and increasing pest and diseases risks, requires systematic, integrated approaches that enhance climate resilience, while reducing environmental impacts. By placing biodiversity for food and agriculture, climate adaptation and land degradation neutrality at the core of the FAO strategies for climate change ⁶, productivity can be boosted, natural resources and ecological balance can be restored.

For instance, climate-smart agriculture can improve soil health, reduce input dependence and enhance water use efficiency, and – through enhancing preparedness for, response to, and recovery from natural

⁵ The term decoupling refers to eco-economic decoupling, an economy that would be able to grow without corresponding increases in environmental pressure. - Authors, Guest; Roser, Max (2018). "Shrink emissions, not the economy". Our World in Data.

⁶ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/f6270800-ee7-498f-9887-6d937c4f575a/content>



disasters - help farmers to increase yields sustainably while adapting to and mitigating climate change. Nature-based solutions further reduce dependence on chemical inputs, improve resource efficiency, and lower emissions. Regenerative agriculture (RA) improves soil health, boosting yields, forage quality, and resilience while reducing chemical soil pollution and capturing carbon⁷. Green agriculture (GA) promotes resource efficiency and biodiversity to build resilient agroecosystems, minimize degradation, and support livelihoods⁸.

This subtopic will focus on analysing holistic, integrated agricultural approaches and policies as a cornerstone for bridging agricultural productivity with sustainability. In this context, supporting member countries in their efforts to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change through their NDCs following decisions from UNFCCC COP 29 (Climate Change), CBD COP 16.2 (Biodiversity) and UNCCD COP 16 (Desertification) is key.

Climate-resilient agriculture (CRA) should be the baseline for such approaches as it plays a crucial role by sustainably increasing productivity and incomes while improving adaptability and reducing greenhouse gas emissions⁹, among others through the promotion of resilient and sustainable agrifood systems in NAPs¹⁰. Furthermore, integrating traditional knowledge with modern methods, CRA fosters productivity, resilience, and carbon sequestration¹¹. Conservation agriculture, integrated soil fertility management (ISFM), integrated pest management (IPM), post-harvest management, integrated livestock and aquaculture systems, agroecology, integrated crop-livestock systems, to enhance productivity without harming the environment¹² will also be discussed.

This session will explore the role of agricultural approaches and innovative technologies such as breeding of drought-resistant and climate adaptive crops, frugal innovation¹³ which can facilitate adaptation to climate change, reducing inequality and promoting women and youth empowerment in resource-scarce environments.

3.2. Harnessing Digital Solutions for Agrifood Systems Transformation

Digital solutions can provide a powerful means to enhance agricultural productivity, improve sustainability, and strengthen resilience to climate shocks. Overall, by integrating digital innovations into agrifood systems, they can become more efficient and resilient, contributing to sustainable food security and economic growth.

Precision agriculture¹⁴ technologies, typically powered by internet of things (IoT), satellite imagery, artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics, enable farmers to monitor weather conditions, soil health,

⁷ <https://www.cbf.org/issues/agriculture/regenerative-agriculture.html>

⁸ <https://www.fao.org/platforms/green-agriculture/about/en>

⁹ (Reddy, 2015)

¹⁰ <https://www.fao.org/climate-change/action-areas/policy-support/national-adaptation-plans/en>

¹¹ Birthal et al., 2021; Singha et al., 2024; Angom and Viswanathan, 2023; Goswami et al., 2023; Shiiba, 2022 as cited in Sahoo et al., 2025)

¹² <https://www.ifad.org/documents/d/new-ifad.org/sai-practices-esa-pdf>

¹³ <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-017-0106-3>

¹⁴ Precision Agriculture is a management strategy that gathers, processes and analyzes temporal, spatial and individual plant and animal data and combines it with other information to support management decisions according to estimated variability for improved resource use efficiency, productivity, quality, profitability and sustainability of agricultural production (International Society of Precision Agriculture, 2024). Link:

<https://www.ispag.org/about/definition>



water usage, pest infestations, and crop growth, allowing for data-driven decisions that improve yields while reducing input costs, thereby improving productivity while minimizing environmental impact.

Mobile technology can bridge the knowledge gap for farmers, providing information and advisory services. E-commerce and digital marketplaces can connect farmers with buyers, ensuring fairer prices and market access. Digital financial services, including mobile banking, insurance services and microloans, can improve access to credit for farmers, while technologies such as blockchain can enhance supply chain transparency and efficiency.

However, smallholder farmers, rural women, and other vulnerable groups often face significant barriers to adopting digital technologies. Limited access to digital devices and low internet connectivity in rural areas can exclude them from the benefits of digital innovations. In addition, scarce digital literacy and the cost of digital solutions can further exacerbate the digital divide. Addressing these challenges requires targeted policies, inclusive financing mechanisms, and digital capacity building programmes to ensure no one is left behind in the digital transformation.

FAO recognizes the importance of innovation and digitalization in advancing its mission to achieve food security for all and to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as outlined in the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31¹⁵ and reiterated in the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy¹⁶, as well as through initiatives like the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture¹⁷ and the FAO Digital Villages Initiative¹⁸.

This sub-topic will explore how digital technologies can be harnessed to support all farmers in Europe and Central Asia. This discussion will explore the key barriers and drivers that influence the adoption of these technologies across the region, as well as strategies to sustainably mainstream digitalization in agrifood systems to close the digital rural divide, ensuring that all actors—especially smallholders and rural women—can benefit from digital technologies.

3.3. Unlocking Sustainable, Inclusive Finance and Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for Agrifood System Resilience

This session will highlight scalable financial solutions, including de-risking tools, insurance mechanisms, impact investment, and innovative policy frameworks that redirect financial flows towards sustainable and nature-positive agriculture.

Access to affordable and appropriate finance and investment remains one of the biggest barriers to sustainable agricultural transformation. Smallholders and agri-SMEs, who are pivotal to food production in Europe and Central Asia, face particular constraints for implementing innovative practices that are climate-smart, biodiversity -supportive, economically sustainable, financially viable, technically efficient and productive. Women, youth, and other vulnerable groups experience additional challenges to access finance, deepening inequalities and limiting the resilience of rural communities at large. As the urgency to

¹⁵ FAO's Strategic Framework 2022–31 is available online at <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7099en/cb7099en.pdf>

¹⁶ The FAO Science and Innovation Strategy is available online at <https://www.fao.org/3/cc2273en/cc2273en.pdf>

¹⁷ More information on the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture is available online at <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/4588db12-e440-4a22-b7ef-e11d611ac7da/content>

¹⁸ More information on the FAO Digital Villages Initiative in Europe and Central Asia is available at <https://www.fao.org/digital-villages-initiative/europe/>



meet global commitments such as the SDGs intensifies, scaling up inclusive financial solutions across the region becomes indispensable.

The background document explores how strategic public investment and inclusive financing models can drive the adoption of sustainable practices in the ECA region, in particular through improved policy frameworks, de-risking instruments like guarantee schemes, insurance products, and blended finance, and the redirection of nature-negative financial flows and policy incentives. *Inter-alia*, Public-private partnerships (PPPs) offer a powerful mechanism to address these financing gaps, by leveraging the strengths of multiple stakeholders. By aligning public sector priorities with private sector expertise and resources, PPPs can enable investments in climate-smart agriculture, promote biodiversity, and ensure equitable benefits.

Drawing on findings from a regional diagnostic study that is being carried out by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, this session will aim to highlight actionable pathways for enhancing rural livelihoods, building resilience, and supporting the ecological foundations of agri-food systems.

III. Other matters

4. Advancing gender equality in the region: update on the progress made

This is a standing agenda item for all sessions of the European Commission on Agriculture. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia Gender Team will provide an update on the work of the Regional Office in meeting its commitments in mainstreaming gender equality concerns in its development interventions, as well as in specific activities aimed at advancing rural gender equality and women's empowerment in the region through knowledge building, dialogue and policy advice.

Considering the recommendations outlined in the report of the Forty-third Session of the European Commission on Agriculture, a background paper will summarize key issues at the intersection of gender and agrifood systems. The paper will also share the findings of a review of country gender assessments conducted in the region over the past two years, reflecting regional trends and the situation of rural women in light of multiple challenges including conflict and climate events. Members will be invited to review FAO's efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the region. present their views and share country practices and cases regarding gender mainstreaming in agrifood systems, food security and nutrition in their respective countries.

5. Progress made by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia on the main recommendations of the Forty-third Session of the ECA

Following the recommendations on sustainable use of land and water resources in Europe and Central Asia, which were adopted by the Forty-third Session of the European Commission on Agriculture in November 2023, the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia will present an update on recent activities carried out by the Organization in Europe and Central Asia related to the implementation of the recommendations. The Commission will be invited to note the report and provide comments as deemed appropriate.

6. Election of the ECA Chairperson, the first and second Vice-Chairpersons and the other members of the Executive Committee

7. Any other business



8. Date and place of the Forty-fifth Session of the ECA

9. Review and adoption of the report of the Session

Closing of the Session