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ENHANCING POLICY-MAKING ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SMALLHOLDER SUPPORT THROUGH THE UN DECADE OF FAMILY FARMING 2019-2028

September 2024

SDGs:



Countries:

Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia, and the Republic of Moldova

Project Code:

TCP/RER/3804

FAO Contribution:

USD 485 000

Duration:

1 February 2020–31 December 2023

Contact Info:

FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
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Implementing Partners

Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Beneficiaries

Governments and rural communities in Europe and Central Asia (ECA), including small family farms, local state and non-state actors. The project aims to enhance their resilience, capacities, and development paths. It also benefits international organizations, civil society, academic institutions, and the private sector through capacity development and knowledge sharing, ultimately improving livelihoods in rural areas.

Country Programming Framework (CPF) Outputs

Albania: CPF Output 1.2 “Innovation: Policies and programme measures are developed to promote digital economy, entrepreneurship, and growth of competitive SMEs/SMAEs, and increased spending on R&D in rural and agri-food sector”.

Belarus: UN Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028.

Georgia: CPF Output 1.2 “Sustainable and inclusive agricultural and rural development, strengthened food systems and improved livelihoods”.

Moldova: UN Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028.



BACKGROUND

The project addressed the critical need for sustainable development in rural communities across Europe and Central Asia (ECA), aligning with SDGs 1 (No Poverty) and 2 (Zero Hunger). In the ECA region, nearly one-third of the population resided in rural areas, where small family farms dominated the agricultural sector. Despite some progress, these areas continued to suffer from significantly lower income levels compared to urban areas. Challenges included limited access to resources such as land, finances, and technology, as well as a lack of entities capable of providing training on sustainable agricultural practices and disseminating knowledge to communities and governments. The COVID-19 crisis further highlighted the need for stronger local production systems, shorter value chains, and enhanced resilience of smallholders through nature-based solutions and agroecology.

The project aimed to enhance the resilience and capacities of rural communities, facilitate investment, and empower local actors. By promoting community development, local production, and short value chains, it sought to improve food security and livelihoods in rural areas. The project also supported the development of national policies for rural development and fostered regional collaboration through networks and partnerships. This initiative aligned with the UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028) and incorporated specific measures related to the UN Declaration of Rights of Peasants (UNDROP) and agroecology to comprehensively address the region's needs.

IMPACT

The project has improved the resilience and capacities of smallholders and family farms in the ECA region, leading to better-quality livelihoods. By promoting sustainable agricultural practices and supporting the formulation of robust national rural development policies, the project strengthens local production systems and short value chains. Additionally, it fosters regional collaboration and partnerships, ensuring a cohesive approach to rural development. This initiative aligns with the UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028), addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and advancing the region's sustainable development goals.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

The project has successfully achieved its expected outcomes, with the core objectives and expected outputs largely fulfilled. While some small deviations were encountered during the implementation process, these did not significantly impact the overall success of the project. The strategic initiatives to enhance the resilience and capacities of smallholders and family farms have resulted in improved livelihoods and strengthened national rural development policies.



IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

Some delays were encountered in the project, primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The work plan was revised and properly implemented, while the budget remained unchanged throughout the project. Risks to the project were regularly reviewed, discussed, and agreed upon during the project task force meetings.

FOLLOW-UP FOR GOVERNMENT ATTENTION

As a follow-up for government attention, it is recommended to incorporate the knowledge and experiences gained during the Community Development Workshops, the UNDROP and Agroecology trainings, and the UNDF events. Additionally, it is important to consider the policy recommendations included in two key publications: "FAO. 2023. Integrated Community Development and Other Territorial Approaches in Europe and Central Asia: Background Paper for the Third Regional Workshop on Integrated Community Development, 6-8 June 2023. Budapest. (14 pages)" and "FAO. 2024. Territorial Approaches to Development in Europe and Central Asia - FAO Study and Recommendations. Budapest." Moreover, partnerships with organizations like SWG and collaboration with CSOs were key to achieving project goals and enhancing regional capacities.

SUSTAINABILITY

1. Capacity development

In the project, various government bodies, as well as academia, regional and local level organizations, were involved in the trainings and workshops. These stakeholders will continue their work by raising awareness about community development approaches and the importance of supporting family farming and of implementing UNDROP. The UNDROP Manual, designed for governments, public servants, peasant and small-scale family farmer associations, international organizations, donors, civil society, and academic institutions, serves as an educational tool for all stakeholders.

Additionally, the manual has been translated into Ukrainian, Romanian, and Czech.

The regional workshops served as networking platforms, establishing strong technical partnerships among stakeholders on topics related to rural development, community development and small-scale farming.

Supporting smallholders, family farms, and rural youth remains a major priority for the REU programme countries. Thus, FAO continues to participate in and contribute to policy dialogues and programme development at both the country and regional levels on these technical areas. Additionally, there is an objective to engage ministry representatives from selected countries in the Global Family Farming Forum, which will take place in October 2024. Furthermore, a specific technical consultation workshop is planned for 2025, focusing on local rural development approaches, including the EU LEADER approach. Due to the high interest in rural youth topics, a second Regional Rural Youth Forum is also planned for 2025.

2. Gender equality

Throughout the project implementation women and men were provided with the same opportunities and benefits. All the training sessions and materials prepared were gender inclusive.

3. Environmental sustainability

The project has promoted agroecology, which is a framework for sustainable farming practices based on bottom-up and territorial processes.

4. Human Rights-based Approach (HRBA) – in particular Right to Food and Decent Work

The project focused on the promotion and implementation of UNDROP in the ECA region. UNDROP is a UN declaration that internationally recognizes peasants' rights as political subjects, as well as peasants' struggles. The core of the Declaration centres on the right to land, seeds and biodiversity, as well as several 'collective rights' anchored in Food Sovereignty.

5. Technological sustainability

The overall aim of the project is capacity development, conducted at various levels and covering topics such as local rural development and territorial approaches to development, gender and socially inclusive community development, development of short food supply chains and Community-supported Agriculture schemes, implementation of the UN Decade of Family Farming and youth inclusion, and more. The stakeholders and beneficiaries can use the knowledge gained during the workshops and trainings, but further assistance and knowledge refreshment may be necessary.

6. Economic sustainability

The National Action Plan for the Development of Family Farming in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2023-2028, adopted in 2022, underscores the commitment to economic sustainability by promoting agricultural practices that bolster rural economies. Similar initiatives are underway in Albania and Moldova, where further National Action Plans are being drafted. In Georgia, the approval and implementation of a new GCP project funded by the Austrian Development Agency aims to foster Inclusive Rural Development and Sustainable Agriculture, enhancing economic resilience and growth in rural areas. Also, Georgia has approved a new TCP project focused on supporting youth inclusion and empowerment in agrifood systems, further contributing to the economic sustainability and vitality of its rural communities.



DOCUMENTS AND OUTREACH PRODUCTS

- ❑ **Eco Ruralis (LoA).** (2022) *UNDROP training agenda.*
- ❑ **Eco Ruralis (LoA).** (2023) *UNDROP training power point presentation.*
- ❑ **Eco Ruralis (LoA).** (2023) *Three case studies (two in Romania, one in Ukraine):*
 - *Cutia Taranului*
 - *Seminte Vii*
 - *Ukrainian Resistance through Gardening: Gardens of Victory*
- ❑ **Eco Ruralis (LoA).** (2023)
 - *UNDROP Manual in English*
 - *UNDROP Manual in Russian*
- ❑ **Eco Ruralis (LoA).** (2023) *A presentation of Agroecology from peasants' perspective and how it can support the UNDROP implementation in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.*
- ❑ **Eco Ruralis (LoA).** (2023) *UNDROP Handout.*
- ❑ **Agroecology training material.** (2023) *Curriculum and case studies.*
- ❑ **Eco Ruralis (LoA).** (2023). *Curriculum of Agroecology training.*
- ❑ **FAO.** 2023. *Integrated community development and other territorial approaches in Europe and Central Asia: Background paper for the Third Regional Workshop on Integrated Community Development, 6-8 June 2023.* Budapest.
- ❑ **FAO.** 2024. *Territorial approaches to development in Europe and Central Asia - FAO study and recommendations.* Budapest.



ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Expected Impact	Increasing resilience of smallholders and family farms in the context of the UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028) in response to the COVID-19 crisis		
Outcome	Community development approaches and/or support to smallholders integrated into national policies of the supported Governments		
	Indicator	Number of countries, where community development approaches or support to smallholders is integrated into the national policies.	
	Baseline	0	
	End Target	6	
	Comments and follow-up action to be taken	Throughout the project's duration, a participatory and inclusive approach was employed by involving relevant stakeholders in various regional and national workshops. These stakeholders included staff from pertinent departments of the Ministries of Agriculture (MoAs) and other public institutions at the national level related to agriculture and rural development, representatives from academic institutions, civil society, and the private sector as part of the RTN on Integrated Community Development. Additionally, rural communities, including smallholders, family farmers, rural institutions, cooperatives, and producers' organizations, were actively engaged in the process. The regional-level community development workshops served to strengthen the participants' capacities and renew the network of these stakeholders and experts involved. The integration of community development approaches and support for smallholders into the national policies and strategic documents of the participating countries should be reassessed in the coming years, considering the varying pace of processes in each country.	
Output 1	Strengthened capacities of national stakeholders for integrating community development approaches and good practices for integration into national policy framework under the UNDF		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of trainees who pass the final assessment at the end of training sessions.	200	Yes
Baseline	0		
Comments	Through two regional workshops on community development and an additional one focusing on rural youth, participants' capacities to integrate community development approaches and good practices with a focus on rural youth into national policy frameworks under the UNDF were strengthened. More than 200 people participated in these events. A study on good practices across the region for integrated community development approaches has been prepared, serving as a guiding document for countries in the region to integrate community development and local rural development approaches into national policy frameworks. The activity of collecting good practices on grant schemes was replaced by a regional-level event focusing on rural youth, called the Regional Rural Youth Forum for Europe and Central Asia. This Forum served as a foundational event for further rural youth-related work by the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.		
Activity 1.1	Community development - collecting good practices		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	The collection of good practices across the region for integrated community development and territorial development approaches was conducted.	
Activity 1.2	Community development - training materials preparation		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	The collected materials were used to prepare community development capacity-building resources and a study titled "Territorial Approaches to Development in Europe and Central Asia - FAO Study and Recommendations." Additionally, an intermediate product, a background document titled "Integrated Community Development and Other Territorial Approaches in Europe and Central Asia," was prepared for the 3rd Community Development Workshop organized in 2023	
Activity 1.3	Community development - regional workshop		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	From June 22 to 24, 2022, the 2nd Regional Workshop on Integrated Community Development (the first regional workshop organized under the project) was held in Budapest, Hungary. More than 80 stakeholders participated in this event, which aimed to provide a platform for knowledge transfer on community development approaches and to share good practices from the region. More information is available at: https://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail/regional-workshop-on-integrated-community-development-2nd/en .	

Activity 1.4	Grant schemes - collecting good practices	
	Achieved	Yes
Activity 1.5	Comments	<p>Originally, activity 1.4 was planned to focus on collecting good practices on grant schemes; however, it has been replaced by a new activity focusing on rural youth.</p> <p>In November 2023, the Regional Office in Budapest organized the Regional Rural Youth Forum for Europe and Central Asia, with the participation of 70 stakeholders from the project countries in the ECA region. These stakeholders included representatives from governments, ministries, policymakers, international, national, and local-level youth organizations, as well as young agricultural and rural entrepreneurs and various experts. The Regional Rural Youth Forum for Europe and Central Asia emerged as a proactive initiative in response to the diverse challenges faced by rural youth in the region, including limited access to essential resources such as knowledge, training, financial support, and job opportunities.</p> <p>The Forum was the first in-person event on rural youth organized by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, following a series of online consultations. The main objectives of the Forum were to establish a platform for stakeholders to learn about the diverse realities of youth and work together to find insights and policy solutions addressing the needs of rural communities. Participants were encouraged to learn from each other and engage in policy discussions to strengthen partnerships for sustainable rural development. Furthermore, the Forum aimed to highlight the significant role young men and women can play in agricultural transformation. The need for further opportunities for knowledge transfer and networking was expressed during the event.</p> <p>A report summarizing the event has been prepared by the rural development team in REU. More information can be found at: https://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail/regional-rural-youth-forum-for-europe-and-central-asia/en.</p>
	Comments	<p>From June 6 to 8, 2023, the 3rd Regional Workshop on Integrated Community Development (the second regional workshop organized under the project) took place in Budapest, Hungary. The event saw the participation of 70 experts and stakeholders from the ECA region. During the workshop, the main findings of the FAO study titled “Territorial Approaches to Development in Europe and Central Asia - FAO Study and Recommendations” were presented. The recommendations from this study were discussed and validated. Various approaches, practical experiences, and lessons learned in local rural development were shared. Policy options for supporting the development of rural communities, with a special focus on rural youth, as well as country needs and policy-level support for local rural development, were also discussed.</p> <p>The event raised awareness about the resilience of family farming and the situation of rural youth in the region. Country experiences on local rural development, including the EU LEADER approach for non-EU countries, were showcased. The workshop continued the development of the technical network on community development and contributed to establishing new partnerships. A dedicated paper summarizing the main outcomes of the study on good practices for integrated community development and territorial development approaches across the region was prepared for this workshop. For more information, visit: https://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail/3rd-Regional-Workshop-on-integrated-community-development/en.</p>
Activity 1.6	LEADER – regional training	
	Achieved	Partially
Activity 1.6	Comments	<p>Due to the COVID-19 situation, this activity was scaled down to a smaller event focusing on the LEADER initiative in the Western Balkans. In partnership with the FAO, the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group organized a session on the “LEADER Approach in the Western Balkans” during the Agricultural Policy Forum 2021. The Forum was held on October 20-21, 2021, in Vrnjačka Banja, Serbia, under the title: Green Agenda for the Western Balkans: Commitments and Reality Check.</p> <p>The session brought together representatives from ministries, Local Action Groups (LAGs), and civil society from the Western Balkan countries. During the session, recent developments of the LEADER approach under IPARD III were presented, and a discussion took place regarding the LEADER situation in the Western Balkans. Participants emphasized the need to support LEADER-like measures through national schemes, improve networking among LAGs, and follow the LEADER roadmaps. These recommendations contributed to the final document of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2021.</p>

Activity 1.7	UNDF – awareness raising events		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	<p>With the support of the project, the association of farmers and peasants "Asociația Eco Ruralis" (through LoA) organized seven awareness-raising events on the UNDF at the regional level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 June 2021: "The Implementation of the UNDROP: What is Next?" - 14 June 2021: "International Public Open Conference - UN Decade for Family Farming and Peasants Rights - Looking Beyond the European Common Agricultural Policy." - 29 June 2021: "Webinar on the Land Reform in Ukraine and the Opportunity to Use the UNDROP and the UNDF." - 22 November 2021, Republic of Moldova: "Conference on Agroecology: An Opportunity for Agriculture and Resilient Food Systems." - 10 December 2021, Belarus: "Conference on Agriculture in Harmony with Nature." - 26 February 2022, Kyrgyzstan: "International Meeting Dyikan Muras - Seeds Savers Network in Kyrgyzstan." - 8-9 May 2022, Poland: "Civil Society Consultation for Europe and Central Asia." 	
Output 2	Capacities of MoAs' staff and other relevant agencies enhanced at regional and national level, on the implementation of the UN Declaration of Rights of Peasants (UNDROP)		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of trainees who pass the final assessment at the end of training sessions.	75	Yes
Baseline	0		
Comments	<p>During the project period, several activities were carried out to strengthen capacities, facilitate knowledge transfer, build a network, and support the implementation of a series of trainings on UNDROP. These activities included both online and physical trainings involving the MoA and relevant agencies, who expressed a need for support in implementing UNDROP.</p> <p>Further activities are necessary to engage more countries in the region in the implementation process and to disseminate the UNDROP handout.</p>		
Activity 2.1	UNDROP - training material		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	The training material was prepared, and the results were presented in the available project documents and the LoA report.	
Activity 2.2	UNDROP - training		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Three training sessions were conducted, and the results were presented in the available project documents and the LoA report. Additionally, a presentation on the implementation of UNDROP was delivered during the 2nd Regional Workshop on Integrated Community Development, held from June 22-24, 2022, in Budapest, Hungary.	
Output 3	Stakeholders trained on agroecology to enhance resilience of local food production, resulting in sustainable community development in response to the COVID-19 crisis		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of trainees who pass the final assessment at the end of training sessions.	75	Yes
Baseline	0		
Comments	Stakeholders were trained successfully in agroecology during the sub-regional training workshops on its application. These events were conducted back-to-back with Activity 2.2.		
Activity 3.1	Agroecology - training material		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	The training materials and curriculum were appropriately developed.	
Activity 3.2	Agroecology - training workshop		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Three sub-regional training workshops were conducted together with the training on the implementation of UNDROP.	

Partnerships and Outreach

For more information, please contact: Reporting@fao.org

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