

## ***34th Session of the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC 34)***

***14-17 May 2024***

### **Concept Note**

#### **Side Event – Foresight drivers and triggers relevant to the Europe and Central Asia region**

Thursday, 16 May 2024, 9.00–10.30 hours (CEST/UTC +2)

Rome, Italy

#### **Background**

FAO is systematically engaging in foresight activities at corporate, regional, subregional and country levels for the transformation of agrifood systems, based on the methodology of the recent FAO flagship report *The future of food and agriculture – Drivers and triggers for transformation*.<sup>1</sup>

Within that global framework, Regional Foresight Exercises are being undertaken in all five regions to provide a granular assessment of regional dynamic relationships occurring among agrifood, socioeconomic and environmental systems that considers: key drivers (driving forces) of agrifood systems; “weak signals” of possible futures; narrative scenarios for alternative futures based on these weak signals; regional challenges that have impeded progress for some time; “triggers for transformation” (priority focus areas with high transformative potential of agrifood systems); and strategic options and policies to activate the key triggers for transformation.

In this context, this Ministerial Side Event has been organized as a strategic policy simulation in which participants engage with short- and long-term challenges that governments in the region are facing, and simulate a set of events, actions and reactions, basing their decisions on internal strategies and the behaviour of the other participants.

#### **Objectives**

- To stimulate strategic thinking within national governments and FAO Management for enhanced strategic decision-making, to evaluate different strategies and pathways, and to increase awareness of the links between current and short-term pressures and their impacts on future trends.
- To understand the nature of current and persistent challenges in the political economy and anticipate potential geoeconomic and geopolitical competition among governments in a specific region before they escalate in cost or complexity.
- To gain deeper knowledge and insights beyond what typical ministerial events provide and to identify and assess risks.
- To help ensure that long-term considerations are reflected in FAO’s Medium Term Plan 2026–2029 and the revision of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31.

#### **Guiding questions**

- What options (or lack thereof) do countries in the region have in dealing with difficult trade-offs and policy priorities? Will the region witness a “more of the same” or “race to the bottom” path that achieves “four worsers” (rather than four betters)?
- What specific and particular obstacles do decision makers in the region face that have incentivized them to push for short-termism policies instead of long-termism strategic thinking that enables sustainability and resilience?
- What intersectoral negotiations are needed among ministries and governments to collectively increase those policy options and escape perceived limitations imposed by present-day and short-term pressures, emergencies and power-imbalance challenges?

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<sup>1</sup> This report is available online at <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0959en>.

## Key messages and expected outcomes

- Encourage and facilitate strategic, long-term thinking and policymaking concerning the future of food and agriculture.
- Provide a unified framework that emphasizes the need for cooperation, strategic thinking and the trade-offs that policymakers encounter in their efforts to design and deliver policies consistent with FAO's *four betters* and more sustainable and resilient agrifood systems.
- Share innovative and direct insights with policymakers about the work carried out by FAO, in an easily digestible format.

## Participants

- Representatives of national governments

Moderator: Matter Group, an external service provider.

Group facilitators: Matter Group.

## Agenda of the event

Time	Details
09.00–09.15	<p><b>Welcome and introduction</b></p> <p><i>In plenary.</i></p> <p><b>Mr Raimund Jehle, Regional Programme Leader, FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, provides the opening moderation.</b></p> <p><b>Dr QU Dongyu, Director-General, FAO, provides the opening speech.</b></p> <p><b>Mr Viorel Gutu, Assistant Director-General and FAO Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia, gives his introductory remarks to the session.</b></p>
09.15–09.17	<p><b>Promotional video</b></p> <p><i>In plenary.</i></p> <p><i>A captivating video highlighting the benefits and value of strategic foresight for development and policymaking.</i></p>
09.17–09.27	<p><b>Content framing</b></p> <p><i>In plenary</i></p> <p><b>Mr Lorenzo Giovanni Bellù, Senior Economist and Head of Policy Intelligence Branch-Global Perspectives and Strategic Foresight at FAO, frames the policy simulation session.</b></p>
09.27–09.30	<p><b>Introduction to the strategic policy simulation</b></p> <p><i>In plenary.</i></p> <p><i>The Matter Group facilitator quickly introduces the simulation and invites people to form groups based on language affiliation.</i></p> <p><i>Each country should have an FAO or Matter Group facilitator.</i></p>
09.30–09.50	<p><b>Round 1 – Cabinet Meeting – Policy for impact</b></p> <p><i>In four groups, with all ministries represented in each group.</i></p> <p><i>The teams represent the special advisers to the four ministries represented in the cabinet. The facilitator will provide further information.</i></p>
09.50–09.55	<p><b>Reflection on short-term graph after round 1</b></p> <p><b>Mr Lorenzo Giovanni Bellù</b> briefly shares and reflects on the short-term graph based on the policy measures selected by the countries in the first part of the simulation.</p>

09.55–10.15

***Round 2 – Sudden shocks***

*Each group is randomly assigned an unforeseen event that forces team members to rethink their policy advice going forward. The facilitator will provide further information.*

10.15–10.30

***Debrief***

*In plenary.*

**Languages**

Interpretation will be provided for the side event in English, French, Russian and Spanish.