



# Empowering Smallholders and Strengthening Family Farms in Europe and Central Asia

**Overall goal:** Empower smallholders in countries within the region to strengthen their livelihoods, thereby reducing rural poverty.

## ■ *About the Regional Initiative*

After the land reforms of the 1990s, transition countries of Europe and Central Asia became an area of smallholder farmers. Smallholders and family farms are an important factor for regional food security.

However, a large number of them are not economically viable and, in most countries, rural people remain the most vulnerable section of the population. Smallholders can achieve higher levels of productivity and income through sustainable intensification of production, better organization, adequate services and integration into agri-food value chains. Getting family farming right is key to enhancing food security, achieving sustainable growth in rural areas, and making inroads against rural poverty.

The Regional Initiative follows a multidisciplinary and area-based development approach. It comprises of technical, social, economic and environmental aspects. Inclusiveness of women, youth and vulnerable groups is also a key principle of the Initiative.

The Initiative tackles two main focus areas: (i) policy, institution and governance, and (ii) farms and communities.

The main expected results include:

- Dissemination of sustainable agricultural best practices
- Strengthened governance to support producers and resource managers
- Enhanced and equitable access by smallholders to productive resources, services, organizations and markets
- Development of inclusive and efficient agribusinesses and agri-food chains

The Initiative is linked with regional and global integration processes, such as:

- The European Union's Eastern Neighbourhood Policy Rural Development Initiative (ENPARD).
- The Post 2015 Millennium Development Goals, (Goal 1: Fight against Poverty)
- The United Nations International Year of Family Farming in 2014.
- The "Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security"



## ■ Making a difference

**The initiative will be developed at country and regional level in cooperation with different institutions such as:**

- the European Union
- the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group for South Eastern Europe (SWG)
- LANDNET, an informal network dealing with land tenure issues

**Seven focus countries have been identified:**

Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, FYR Macedonia, Moldova, and Tajikistan

**The Initiative is implementing activities in the following areas:**

- Sustainable management of agricultural land and water resources
- Intensification of smallholders' production in a sustainable manner
- Strengthening the organizations of small producers and family farms
- Enhancing rural services – such as advisory services and micro-loans.



### CONTACTS

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## ■ In practice

**Specific activities include:**

- Promotion of aquaculture and culture led fisheries in Tajikistan and alternative use of water resources in Armenia.
- Farmers Field Schools being developed in Kyrgyzstan to promote modern crop management techniques.
- Support to the rehabilitation of seed production systems in Georgia, and organization of expert consultations on diseases, pests and weed monitoring in support of Integrated Pest Management practices for smallholders
- Strengthening the organizations of small producers and family farms - the work will be undertaken both at the community level and at policy level, in several countries.
- In Georgia, cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture on the national Strategy for Agricultural Development. FAO will provide assistance on effective policy making, preparation of programmes, monitoring and implementation processes, and building of national capacities. The project also aims to strengthen cooperation among farmers, and build capacities for improving agricultural extension services.
- Enhancing rural services – such as advisory services and micro-loans.
- Ensure exchange of best practices at regional level, such as via workshops to discuss regional experiences in agri-food chains development

## ■ Scope for Doing More and Better

Inequalities in global food markets, coupled with neglect to the agricultural sector, have alarmingly contributed to the decline of family farming as a means for income generation and growth. In addition, society as a whole has tended to undervalue the potential of family farming to produce quality goods and services, and the contribution it makes to economic, environmental and social sustainability.

With its expertise, FAO can play a critical role in supporting family farmers achieve higher levels of productivity and income by facilitating better organization, the provision of adequate services and integration into agri-food value chains. These key interventions will support the sustainable intensification of production and reduce rural poverty.

**More information, related news and publications are available at the Initiative's website:**

<http://www.fao.org/europe/regional-perspectives/agri-food-trade/en/>