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Results and Priorities for FAO in the Region

Executive Summary

This document provides information on the follow-up to decisions and priorities agreed on at the Thirtieth Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) held in 2016. It brings to the attention of Members results achieved as well as the lessons learned from the implementation of the 2016–2017 programme of work and budget delivered through two Regional Initiatives and other major areas of work.

The document sets out the priorities for FAO's work in the region during 2018–2019 and beyond through Regional Initiatives and other key areas of work in light of country priorities.

Matters to be brought to the attention of the Regional Conference

The Regional Conference is invited to:

- recognize the importance of the Strategic Framework in providing direction for FAO's technical work to address priorities in the region and ensure effective delivery of results at the country level;
- recognize the work completed through the Strategic Programmes (SP) and the results achieved under the Regional Initiatives and other main areas of work in 2016–2017, in responding to the main priorities adjusted in the Thirtieth Session of the ERC;
- take note of the alignment of FAO's Strategic Objectives (SOs) with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

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- note the key role of the SPs in integrating the Organization’s technical work at regional and country levels to address multi-faceted development challenges and provide efficient and adequate support to countries on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Support the important contribution of the SPs to the delivery of normative products and services, such as standards, voluntary guidelines and legal instruments, at country and regional levels;
- provide guidance on areas of regional priority for FAO’s work in 2018–2019 and beyond, based on major trends and challenges in the region – including the SDGs and climate change – and experience with the Regional Initiatives in 2016–2017;
- reconfirm the regional priorities for 2018–2021 as endorsed at the Thirtieth Session of the ERC;
- agree on the concept of Regional Initiative 3 on Sustainable natural resource management under a changing climate;
- agree on using the Regional Initiatives as a programmatic approach to ensure more coherent and integrated support to the implementation of the country programmes and to nationalization of the SDGs. Look forward to the implementation of planned technical work under the three Regional Initiatives.¹

I. Introduction

1. FAO’s reviewed Strategic Framework,² its Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2018–2021 and its Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2018–2019 (MTP-PWB)³ were approved by the FAO Conference at its fortieth session in July 2017 in Rome. The Conference appreciated the close alignment of FAO’s Strategic Objectives (SO) with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2. The reviewed Strategic Framework was developed through a consultative strategic-thinking process during 2016, taking into account the strong and consistent support expressed by the FAO governing bodies for progress in the strategic direction of the Organization. This process involved the identification of the global trends that are expected to frame agricultural development over the medium term⁴ and sectoral and regional trends arising from regional strategic reviews and deliberations of the FAO regional conferences⁵ and technical committees,⁶ and the derivation of the main challenges expected to be faced by countries and development actors in food and agriculture in the coming years; analysis of main global developments setting the overall context in which FAO operates; and the implications of these challenges and developments for FAO’s SOs in the context of FAO’s basic attributes and core functions. The review took into account the major global developments that occurred in 2015–2016 (most importantly, the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the entry into force of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change), which will provide the context in which FAO will operate and adapt for enhanced delivery and impact of the Organization’s work.

3. The reviewed Strategic Framework provided the basis for fine-tuning the conceptual framework and theory of change of FAO’s five SOs within the context of the Organization’s vision, attributes and

¹ ERC/16/7 <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mp179e.pdf>

² C 2017/7 (www.fao.org/pwb)

³ C 2017/3 (www.fao.org/pwb)

⁴ FAO 2016. *The future of food and agriculture – Trends and challenges*. Rome.

⁵ C 2017/14, C 2017/15, C 2017/16, C 2017/17, C 2017/18, C 2017/LIM/1

⁶ C 2017/21, C 2017/22, C 2017/23, C 2017/24

core functions, as summarized in Figure 1. The MTP-PWB set out the programmatic framework and resources for planning, implementing and monitoring results through indicators and targets, including the contribution of FAO's work towards 40 SDG targets. Web Annex 1 provides an overview of FAO's Strategic Programmes, including alignment with the SDGs.

4. FAO Regional Initiatives serve as a mechanism to guide effective delivery and impact of FAO's work on the key priorities of each region that contribute to the SOs. The 2016 ERC considered FAO achievements in the region and identified priority areas to be considered for the two Regional Initiatives in 2016–2017: empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihood and poverty reduction (RI-1 – Family Farms), and improving agrifood trade and market integration (RI-2 – Agrifood Trade).

5. The two Regional Initiatives will be maintained, with some adjustments, and a third initiative will be developed. The initiative on empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihood and poverty reduction will aim to scale up ongoing country programmes and better incorporate cross-cutting issues of gender, nutrition, governance and climate change. The initiative on improving agrifood trade and market integration will target capacity-building related to SDGs 1 and 2 while scaling up activities. A new Regional Initiative will focus on sustainable natural resource management under a changing climate, aiming to mobilize climate finance in the region.

6. The ERC provides an opportunity for Members to advise on results and priorities for FAO's work in the region. The document is divided into two main sections:

- Section II describes how the Strategic Programmes during 2016–2017 helped countries achieve results in the context of agreed-upon priorities for FAO's work in the region. Web Annex 2 provides an overview of the reported contribution of results in the region to SO output targets in 2016–2017;
- Section III gives an overview of trends and developments in the region going forward, along with the regional priorities for FAO's work and how they can be addressed by the SPs through the Regional Initiatives, including a regional view of output targets for 2018–2019. Web Annex 3 provides an overview of the planned contribution of results in the region to SO output targets in 2018–2019.

II. Achievements in the region

7. FAO's SPs addressed regional challenges through Regional Initiatives and other priority areas of work. The Thirtieth Session of the ERC in 2016⁷ supported adjustments to the regional priorities in order to bring greater focus to FAO's work in the region, as follows:

- Regional Initiative on empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihood and poverty reduction;
- Regional Initiative on improving agrifood trade and market integration;
- Sustainable natural resource management, including climate change mitigation and adaptation; and
- Strengthening food security and increasing resilience of livelihoods to threats and crisis.

8. The first two priorities were addressed by the two ongoing Regional Initiatives. For all four priorities, main achievements made during 2016–2017 are summarized below.⁸

⁷ ERC/16/6: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mp178e.pdf>

⁸ References to the Strategic Framework are made at outcome and output levels (SO outcome/output) under the Regional Initiatives and main areas of work.

9. Following the recommendations of the Thirtieth Session of the ERC,⁹ the work programme in the region integrated follow-up actions on global developments, including the SDGs and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Detailed descriptions of support to the achievement of SDGs are contained in ERC/18/INF/11.

A. Presentation of results during 2016–2017 under the main areas of work

Regional Initiative on empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihood and poverty reduction (RI-1)

10. In order to address the challenges faced by smallholders and family farmers, RI-1 has two components. The first is to increase capacities of farmers on sustainable agricultural production by enhancing their access to services such as farmer field schools or extension services (SO3.1) so that they can acquire good agricultural practices in such areas as forestry, fisheries and livestock production while increasing adaptation and resilience to climate change (SO2.1, SO2.2). The second component aims to ensure inclusive growth through improved rural livelihoods, with emphasis on gender equality and economic empowerment. The initiative supported multisectoral rural development policies, the development of community and short value chains, statistics, and the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT), including addressing land fragmentation through land consolidation instruments (SO3.1).

11. In the context of the SDGs, RI-1 addressed particularly SDG 1¹⁰ by supporting the implementation of the VGGT and the promotion of national land consolidation programmes. It addressed SDG 2¹¹ through support for the adoption of best practices to improve the competitiveness of smallholder farms.

12. Highlights of achievements:

- Adoption of innovative practices were supported (SO2.1); Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) for greenhouse vegetable production were promoted by a publication and international conference. The Regional Symposium on Agroecology facilitated exchange of experiences on agroecology approaches with participants from 41 countries. Innovative practices for sustainable livestock production and experience on animal gene conservation technologies have been shared at an international conference among stakeholders from 27 countries. In Azerbaijan, technical support was provided to develop cattle breeding and artificial insemination services. In Tajikistan, small-scale fish producers were trained on restarting and modernizing fish seed production, while in Ukraine a complete review of the fishery and aquaculture sector was prepared, resulting in a recently launched follow-up programme to boost production.
- Governance frameworks were strengthened (SO2.2); in Armenia, Belarus and the Republic of Moldova, the National Programmes for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) and National Programmes for Integrated Pest Management (IPM) were elaborated and capacities strengthened.
- Policies and programmes were promoted to improve access to natural resources (SO3.1.2); implementation of VGGT has been promoted through support to land consolidation projects in Azerbaijan, Kosovo,¹² The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine, and roadmaps were prepared for VGGT implementation in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. At the

⁹ ERC/16/REP <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mq752e.pdf>

¹⁰ End poverty in all its forms everywhere

¹¹ End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

¹² References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)

regional level international LANDNET Workshops were organized under the umbrella of VGGT, with around 80 government officials and land-tenure experts from over 28 countries.

- Cross-sectoral policy advice was provided for the development of gender-equitable and sustainable rural development (SO3.1.5); institutional capacity was enhanced on rural development policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and the Republic of Moldova, including pilot projects in rural tourism and modernization of agricultural infrastructure. The Area Based Development approach was promoted in the cross-border areas of the Western Balkan region to facilitate investments. A multisectoral regional dialogue was held on social protection for food security, nutrition and rural development, with participation from eight countries and international organizations, to promote opportunities for collaboration on social protection in the region.

13. RI-1 builds strongly on collaboration with various key partners. Cooperation continued with the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in Southeast Europe on rural policy, while collaboration with the European Commission resulted in successful programmes on policy support, land consolidation and food security issues. Other key resource partners include Austria, Hungary, Norway and Turkey. As part of the South-South Cooperation, the Ministry of Agriculture of Turkey supported an exchange of experience among farmers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on land consolidation instruments with partners from Azerbaijan. Gender partnership with UN Women and Rome-based agencies (RBAs) including both the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), is pursued in Kyrgyzstan under the UN Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment. Cooperation is initiated with IFAD in the Republic of Moldova, and the dialogue on VGGT in the region intensified with Civil Society Organizations. New partnerships were built with the European Institute on Gender Equality, based in Lithuania, and with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's (UNECE) Working Party on Land Administration (WPLA) on land consolidation issues.

14. Cross-cutting issues such as gender mainstreaming are important areas of the RI with major highlights ranging from production of gender assessments, methodological tools and studies, and capacity development. Enhancement of governance through participatory approaches is an important component of policy dialogues and community development. Assistance was provided to national statistics offices in processing agricultural census results for improving evidence bases and current surveys of agricultural holdings.

Regional Initiative on improving agrifood trade and market integration (RI-2)

15. Agricultural systems in the region are still deeply affected by economic transition, which coincides with further global market and trade integration. Azerbaijan, Belarus and Serbia are currently in the process of negotiating accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), and a number of countries require continuing post-accession support, such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan Russian Federation and Tajikistan. The region is in the process of modifying national sanitary and phytosanitary regulation systems and updating related standards to assure food safety and protect the health of animals and plants. Other relevant trends include: (i) increased interest in geographical indications and organic production; (ii) development of sustainable value chains in the context of national agricultural policies that foster sustainable rural development; (iii) increased trade opportunities; (iv) enhanced quality of food and diversification of the on/off farm income opportunities for rural communities, and (v) reductions in food losses and waste across the food chains. The purpose of the initiative is to support member countries in enhancing the agrifood trade policy environment for small- and medium-sized enterprises through (i) the building of capacity to implement trade agreements and increase access to new markets (SO4.1); (ii) the building of capacity to implement global food safety and quality standards (SO4.1); and (iii) the provision of supportive policy environments for export diversification (SO4.2).

16. The main SDGs addressed by RI-2 included SDG 2¹³ and SDG 17¹⁴ by strengthening national capacities at regional workshops and e-learning courses, and supporting the collaboration of Members through the Agricultural Trade Expert Network in Europe and Central Asia (ATEN).¹⁵

17. Highlights of achievements:

- Capacities were enhanced and dialogues promoted on trade-related agreements (SO4.1.2) through regional workshops on (i) resolving contentious trade issues using WTO procedures; and (ii) the impact of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement on agrifood trade and through supporting and further development of ATEN in the region. Furthermore, capacities were strengthened on WTO principles and rules through conducting the e-learning courses "WTO accession and implications for agriculture in the post-Soviet countries" and "Ensuring Agricultural Trade Policy Transparency in the Post-Soviet countries."
- Public- and private-sector institutions were supported in plant and animal health, food safety and quality domains (SO4.1.4); Phytosanitary control services were strengthened in Armenia, Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. New, improved legislation for preparedness on transboundary animal diseases was developed, and an information system was designed to support decision-making in the Republic of Moldova. The "One Health" approach was promoted through the work of the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and FAO on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) risk reduction, e.g. a joint subregional workshop supported development and implementation of national action plans on AMR. Capacities in modern food safety risk-management systems for food-processing enterprises and national authorities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were developed in order to reduce the food safety risks for processed food that enters domestic and foreign markets. Technical assistance was provided to strengthen the official food-control system, including risk assessment in Armenia, for example.
- Development of agribusinesses and agrifood chains (SO4.2) as well as financial and investment instruments (SO4.3) were supported; value chain gap analyses were conducted in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, and baseline data were collected on agro-industry, value chains, post-harvest management and food waste and loss in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Capacities were strengthened and experiences shared on the introduction and application of geographical indication schemes in different countries of the region. Public-private platforms were built in the meat, dairy and grain sectors in Ukraine, on dairy policy in Georgia, and in the meat sector in Serbia.

18. Collaboration under the Regional Initiative involved partners such as the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) on e-learning platforms, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), OIE, and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Collaboration was explored with the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). Collaboration as part of the ATEN included academia (e.g. the Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies [IAMO] and the Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy), and the private sector (e.g. the Russian National Union of Food Exporters, the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of Kazakhstan, the Ukrainian Grain Association). Stronger cooperation in terms of professional information exchange was achieved with IFAD, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the German Development Agency (GIZ) and the World Bank (WB). Activities for the reduction of food waste and loss in the region refer to SAVE FOOD, the Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction, led by FAO and Messe Düsseldorf.

19. The Regional Initiative enhanced its efforts to address cross-cutting issues, in particular gender, governance, food security and nutrition. It ensured gender mainstreaming across its activities – in

¹³ End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

¹⁴ Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

¹⁵ www.fao.org/europe/regional-perspectives/iatmi/ten/about/en/

trainings and workshops, particularly – to raise the understanding of the importance of achieving the SDGs. Examples include income-diversification activities that help rural women in remote areas increase their market linkages, and the sharing of good practices for gender-sensitive interventions.

Sustainable natural resource management, including climate change mitigation and adaptation

20. Efforts under this priority focused on the nexus of climate change and sustainable natural resource management, focusing in particular on degraded natural resources. This nexus of climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk management, and energy under the Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) approach has been promoted particularly in Central Asia and in the Western Balkans, offering an integrated approach to address the interrelated challenges of food security, development and climate change (SO2.1, SO5.3). FAO supported the implementation and adaptation of international and regional instruments, particularly the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement commitments of Members, and the Sendai Framework (SO2.2, SO2.3). Evidence-based decision-making was supported by producing various assessments and statistical and analytical products (SO2.4).

21. This area of work focused on SDG 2,¹⁶ ensuring sustainable and resilient production systems that increase production, maintain the ecosystem, and strengthen climate change adaptation by supporting good practices and access to climate financing instruments. Other SDGs that are key for sustainable natural resources and climate change, in particular SDG 13¹⁷ and SDG 15,¹⁸ were also involved.

22. Highlights of results:

- Innovative practices and integrated multisectoral approaches on climate change adaptation and mitigation, e.g. climate-smart agriculture (SO2.1), were supported in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and in the Western Balkans to determine collective priority interventions. Accessing climate financing, such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the seventh replenishment of resources of the Global Environment Facility Trust Fund (GEF-7), was supported by organizing regional and national workshops in collaboration with the GCF National Designated Authorities (NDAs). In Kyrgyzstan, FAO supported the National Designated Authorities in Green Climate Fund readiness as well as in the development of a project proposal.
- International and regional mechanisms on the management of sustainable natural resources have been promoted (SO2.3) through sessions of the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish)¹⁹ and the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC),²⁰ including an EIFAAC International Symposium on adaptation of European inland fisheries and aquaculture to climate change and a CACFish regional workshop on cage aquaculture in lakes. The Fortieth Session of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) was devoted to discussing the effect of climate change on transboundary animal diseases (TADs) in the region.²¹
- Evidence-based decisions in agriculture sectors and natural resources were promoted (SO2.4); the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CISSTAT) was supported in the methodology and organization of structural surveys in agriculture within the framework of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

¹⁶ End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

¹⁷ Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

¹⁸ Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

¹⁹ ERC/18/9

²⁰ ERC/18/10

²¹ ERC/18/7

23. Partners related to this regional priority involved various organizations, depending on their technical areas. Key partners in supporting climate-smart agriculture included the global research partnership CGIAR, the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), and members of the Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture (GACSA). Cooperation has been strong in the GCF field among other UN agencies, such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and development agencies such as GIZ.

24. Cross-cutting issues, especially climate change, were addressed under this priority area, with significant results in the field of statistics through FAO's support to national agricultural censuses and through capacity-building in the nationalization and monitoring of SDG indicators in the member countries. Gender mainstreaming also plays an important role, being central in different climate-financing instruments and programming architectures, such as the GCF.

Strengthening food security and increasing resilience of livelihoods to threats and crisis

25. Following decades of progress, the reduction of food insecurity in the region now appears to be stagnant, and the prevalence of undernourishment remained almost unchanged in the Caucasus and Central Asian countries. Populations in both higher- and medium/low-income countries suffer from the triple burden of malnutrition, to varying degrees.²² FAO has been addressing these challenges by supporting advocacy and awareness-raising, the development of appropriate policies and programmes (SO1.1). and coordination mechanisms (SO1.2). FAO also has been producing evidence to support decision-makers, including the monitoring of countries' status in relation to SDG 2 (Targets 2.1, 2.2).

26. Work in the region on increasing the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crisis has been focusing on supporting policy development (SO5.1), the provision of information and early warning against potential emerging threats (SO5.2), reducing risks and vulnerabilities at the household level (SO5.3), and preparing and managing effective responses to disasters and crises (SO5.4). FAO's work in this field includes support to recover livelihoods and income-generation in the conflict-affected areas of Eastern Ukraine and support to address the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey.

27. Efforts under this priority area focused mainly on SDG 2,²³ which calls for ending all forms of malnutrition. In this context, FAO supported following up the implementation of the Rome Declaration on Nutrition adopted at the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2); FAO also promoted multi-sectoral cooperation to address malnutrition.

28. Highlights of results:

- Policy processes and programmes with enhanced incorporation of food security and nutrition objectives (SO1.1) were promoted. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (FAO/REU) supported countries operationalizing their Framework for Action under ICN2. In this context, FAO/REU organized a regional symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets in Europe and Central Asia.²⁴ School food and nutrition programmes have been strengthened in Albania and Kyrgyzstan. FAO supported the improvement of food security and nutrition policies in Kyrgyzstan by providing technical inputs to review and monitor the executive performance of the Food Security and Nutrition Programme.
- Inclusive coordination mechanisms related to food security and nutrition were supported (SO1.2) by strengthening the capacity of the Economic Cooperation Organization - Regional Coordination Centre (ECO-RCC) to undertake its role in coordinating food security and nutrition policies among member countries. The FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia

²² Regional Overview of Food Insecurity 2016: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6877e.pdf>; The State of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia 2017: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i8194e.pdf>

²³ End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

²⁴ The meeting was jointly organized by FAO, WHO, UNICEF and WFP. More details in ERC/18/INF/10

(FAO/SEC) provided support to its Steering Committee by jointly reviewing the food security status in the region and the progress of the ECO-RCC work plan;

- Capacities of national authorities and stakeholders were strengthened on prevention measures for crises and threats (SO5.3) and emergency preparedness (SO5.4); In the Western Balkan countries, FAO/REU supported capacity development to undertake a Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) and to understand risks and hazards. The regional office also developed disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation methodologies for landscapes and agriculture. Furthermore, Syrian refugees and host communities received agricultural skills training to improve their employment opportunities in five provinces of southern Turkey. The programme, implemented with partners, aims at improving social cohesion between Syrian refugees and their host communities by creating employment for both groups and increasing their household incomes. Food security assessments were carried out, and food security/livelihood cluster and sectoral coordination were supported with partners in Ukraine and Turkey.

29. In Kyrgyzstan, the elaboration of the Food Security and Nutrition Programme involved interministerial and stakeholder consultations, facilitated with partners such as WFP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), WB and WHO. The European Union-FAO FIRST Partnership Programme²⁵ provides an important contribution to FAO's food security and nutrition work in the region. Work on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the Western Balkan region involved collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

30. Among cross-cutting issues, nutrition played a central role in the follow-up to ICN-2, such as through the support to school food and nutrition programmes. Support to statistics and capacity development was key towards enhancing countries' capacities in monitoring policies and programmes related to SDGs 1 and 2. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia report monitors progress against SDG 2 food security and nutrition targets, for which FAO acts as custodian (as it also does for other related SDG targets).

31. Lessons learned:

- Strong commitment of countries to respond to the 2030 Agenda as well as the UNFCCC Paris Agreement and increasing demand for support on climate change adaptation and mitigation and climate finance triggered the foundation of a clear programme and results framework under a third Regional Initiative on Sustainable natural resource management under a changing climate;
- Countries consider the two ongoing and newly proposed third Regional Initiative to be a high priority for their country programmes;
- Regional Initiatives should serve as programmatic umbrellas across the SOs, thereby addressing regional priorities and achieving greater impact at the country level;
- Although Regional Initiatives increased collaboration with different partners, as described above, more advocacy and outreach are needed, both externally and internally. This will increase synergies and demonstrate how Regional Initiative activities benefit or complement the implementation of country programmes.

32. Overview and assessment of results in the region at the level of Outputs are provided in Web Annex 2: Reported contribution of results in the region to Strategic Objective Output targets – 2016-17.

²⁵ Partnership Programme on Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation (FIRST) implemented by FAO and financed by the European Union. <http://www.fao.org/europeanunion/eu-projects/first/en/>

III. Priority areas of work, 2018–2019 and beyond

32. Current and emerging trends in the agricultural and rural sectors of Europe and Central Asia countries were identified through a Regional Strategic Thinking process²⁶ and presented at the regional conference in 2016.²⁷ Main trends and challenges are highlighted below.

33. The **rural-urban difference in poverty**, income, educational and professional opportunities, with a strong gender dimension²⁸, remains a persistent challenge. The agricultural sector in many countries is undergoing transformation, including transition to market-driven systems associated with greater reliance on input and output markets, increase in farm sizes, replacement of labour through capital,²⁹ and release of the agriculture labour force.³⁰ Patterns and scales of **migration** in Europe and Central Asia became more diverse with the increasing number of refugees (Turkey alone hosts 3.5 million refugees and asylum seekers³¹), besides regular and irregular labour migrants and internally displaced persons. Agriculture was recognized as the single important area to absorb the refugees' labour supply. Migration can be influenced by increasing demand for high-skilled workers along with technological advancement and further cross-border connectivity.³²

34. **Family farms** remain, in parts of the region, the dominant farm structure. The lack of access to modern (including climate smart) practices and technologies, reliable and stable markets, financing, infrastructure and extension services makes family farms uncompetitive in international supply chains and, when combined with a lack of income diversification options in rural areas, prevents them from improving their livelihoods in a sustainable way.

35. In the Europe and Central Asia region, there is a shift in addressing the interlinked challenges of climate change and sustainable natural resource management towards transitioning to more climate-resilient and **sustainable agriculture and food systems**.³³ At the same time, food systems in several countries suffer from the consequences of recently increasing pest and transboundary disease pressures, correlated to changes in climate, which require the establishment of an institutional framework for supporting risk modelling, early warning and early response.³⁴ Among other measures, the adoption of e-agriculture in Europe and Central Asia countries can contribute to further integrating the food systems both along the value chain and with other economic sectors.³⁵

36. The Europe and Central Asia region still faces the triple burden of **malnutrition**, with noticeable differences among and within countries. Considering that its causes are multidimensional, addressing malnutrition requires the integrated and coordinated action of agriculture, public health, education, social protection and, in broader policy domains, the promotion of more nutrition-sensitive food systems.³⁶

²⁶ Regional Strategic Review Paper: <http://www.fao.org/3/b-i6102e.pdf>

²⁷ ERC/16/7: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mp179e.pdf>

²⁸ World Bank and FAO (2014): Gender Disaggregated Data - Western Balkans. Statistical Reports 2005 – 2013, p. 45.

²⁹ Ward, N. & Brown, D. L. (2009). Placing the Rural in Regional Development. Regional Studies volume 43, issue 10, pp. 1237–1244.

³⁰ FAO (2016) Gender and rural development: Key issues. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5497e.pdf>

³¹ <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>

³² World Bank, 2017 Migration and Mobility, Europe and Central Asia Economic Update <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/28534/9781464812194.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>

³³ ERC/18/2

³⁴ Fortieth Session of the European Commission on Agriculture: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mv133e.pdf>

³⁵ ERC/18/3

³⁶ State of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i8194e.pdf>

37. **Agricultural trade policy** in the region is driven by integration processes and an increasing number of bilateral trade agreements. The agrifood trade policy of some countries in Central Asia shifted from protection measures to more liberal measures in foreign trade, which may allow an increase in agricultural exports. Post-Soviet countries develop their state strategies and programmes with greater focus on agrifood export promotion. The assurance of safety for foods traded and the management and control of animal and plant diseases are essential for trade policies and the potential to increase market access.

38. The Thirtieth Session of ERC in Turkey in 2016 endorsed priorities³⁷ for the medium-term period 2018–2021 within the corporate Medium Term Plan 2018–2021 as follows:

- formulating effective policies for sustainable and inclusive growth for farmers and the rural population;
- enhancing the reach towards new markets through alignment of trade, food safety and sanitary and phytosanitary policies;
- promoting sustainable natural resource management, combating land degradation and desertification; and
- addressing food insecurity and reduction of all forms of malnutrition.

39. In order to address the agreed regional priorities in the 2018–2019 biennium, the ongoing work has been reviewed, taking into account the shift in trends and developments, as well as the lessons learned in 2016–2017.

40. Key issues in this context are:

- the universality of the SDGs and thus the shift to policy advice, institutional capacity development, monitoring of progress and evaluating policies, as well as the strong commitment of countries to respond to the commitments taken for the SDGs, the Paris Agreement³⁸ and the Sendai Framework. This requires a set of focused programmatic initiatives for the region, connected to regional processes with coherent interventions at the country level;
- the increasingly interlinked challenge of declining agricultural production levels, due to a degraded natural resource base and changes in climate, requires a paradigm shift at the regional level and in multicountry cooperation, which includes integrated, cross-sectoral approaches combined with effective measures at territorial, subnational and national levels;
- increasing need for partnership with non-state actors, South-South Cooperation and triangular cooperation to support the achievement of the SDGs;
- increasing need to mobilize investments and align budgets towards more comprehensive management approaches for sustainable natural resources, as required in the context of a changing climate;
- increasing need to create enabling environments for innovation and the upscaling of more sustainable practices.

41. To this end, the ongoing two Regional Initiatives have been revised, and the third Regional Initiative on Sustainable natural resource management has been conceptualized for 2018–2019. Food security and nutrition have been embedded in the three initiatives as a cross-cutting issue, e.g. through nutrition-sensitive agriculture and social protection.

42. The Regional Initiatives have further evolved, providing platforms for a programmatic approach to address regional priority issues and to support the implementation of country programmes. The initiatives aim to mobilize the Organization's technical work in an integrated way to better respond to

³⁷ ERC/16/7 <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mp179e.pdf>

³⁸ http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

country demand for coordinated support on the interlinked development processes and on the nationalization of SDG under the regional United Nations Development Group (UNDG) framework.

43. **Regional Initiative 1 – Empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihood and poverty reduction** continues to support smallholders and family farmers, at both policy and community levels, in order to improve rural livelihoods and contribute to reducing rural poverty. The initiative contributes primarily to SO2 and SO3, but also to SO 1 and SO 4. RI1 focuses on SDG 1 (Target 1.4.; 1.b.), SDG 2 (Target 2.3, 2.4), SDG 5 (Target 5.A), SDG 8 (Target 8.6), and SDG 10, among others.

44. A main challenge remains to support policy development and innovative practices for increased sustainable and climate-smart agricultural production, in line with the principles for sustainable food and agriculture³⁹ (SO2.2). The initiative responds to the need for increasing farmers' capacities in terms of sustainable agricultural production using pilot projects and farmer field schools (SO2.1, SDG 2.3) and strengthening extension services (SO3.1).

45. The initiative promotes inclusive growth through improved rural livelihoods and enhanced access to natural resources, including support on multisectoral rural development policies, integrated community development (SO3.1, SO3.4, SDG 1.4.), improved access to value chains (SO4.3), implementation of the VGGT (SO3.1), statistics (SO3.4), decent rural employment (SO3.2) and social protection (SO3.3).

46. Enhanced support is provided to improve capacity related to school food and nutrition programmes, investments in small-scale agriculture (SO1.4), as well as nutrition-sensitive social protection. The initiative ensures that vulnerable groups benefit from economic growth (SO3.3) and gender equality and that rural women's economic empowerment is accelerated (SO3.1). Other cross-cutting issues, such as governance, statistics and climate change, will be systematically integrated in the initiative.

47. Regional Initiative 1 continues partnering with international organizations, NGOs, civil society, academia, and the private sector, as outlined in paragraph 13. It serves as a solid platform for creating synergies with partners with a focus on strategic partnerships, such as the cooperation with IFAD on local community development in the Republic of Moldova.

48. **Regional Initiative 2 - Improving agrifood trade and market integration** aims at supporting member countries in enhancing the agrifood trade policy environment for small- and medium-sized agricultural and food producers. The initiative contributes primarily to SO 4 but also contributes to SO1, SO2 and SO3. The initiative contributes to SDG 2 (Target 2.B.2), SDG 8 (8.a.1), SDG 12 (Target 12.3), SDG 15 and SDG 17 (Target 17.11).

49. FAO provides capacity development on WTO trade agreements and WTO procedures, including global trade issues; application of actual methods of analysis of the impacts of trade, food, and agriculture policies; and the design of strategies for national agrifood systems development. The Agricultural Trade Expert Network continues to provide a platform for dialogue on trade agreements (SO4.1, SO4.4. SDG 2.B.2).

50. The initiative aims at supporting countries to adopt food safety and quality standards through the development of robust national food control systems and to contribute to the setting of standards in the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC). It addresses plant-health issues through supporting the implementation of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC); strengthens animal health by building capacities on AMR, TADs and National Animal Identification and Traceability Systems

³⁹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3940e.pdf>

(NAITS), and strengthens regional biosafety networks for compliance with WTO agreements (SO4.2, SDG 8.a.1).

51. The initiative widens its scope to enable more sustainable, inclusive and efficient food systems and contributes to creating a supportive environment for trade – both for domestic markets and export diversification and promotion – and for the development of sustainable value chains, geographical indications, organic production, and reductions in food loss and waste. It continues focusing on increasing public and private investments for inclusive agrifood systems, supporting and addressing increased interest in the area of inland commercial fisheries and aquaculture development (SO4.2, SO4.3), and considering cross-cutting issues such as nutrition, gender, policy, statistics and climate change.

52. In order to address cross-cutting issues, Regional Initiative 2 aims to improve the capacity of governments and stakeholders to use financial resources to address food insecurity and malnutrition (SO1.3) and continues supporting income diversification activities that target rural women in remote areas to link them with the markets. An e-learning course on trade, food security and nutrition is developed under the initiative to provide information on the implications of trade measures for malnutrition.

53. Cooperation with governments, international organizations, NGOs, civil society, academia, and the private sector will be strengthened (see paragraph 18). Partnerships are established with the Black Sea Biotechnology Association (BSBA) on capacity development in biosafety and agrifood trade development and with Eurofish for the FAO GLOBEFISH project. The initiative supports the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Europe (CCEURO) in ensuring inclusive food standards and policy dialogue. Partnerships for sustainable food systems are further developed under the SAVE FOOD Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction.

54. **Regional Initiative 3 – Sustainable natural resource management under a changing climate** aims at strengthening national capacities to achieve Sustainable Natural Resource Management (SNRM) including climate change adaptation and mitigation and disaster risk reduction, and scaling up agroecology through transitioning to more climate-resilient and sustainable food systems. The initiative should provide a regional mechanism to support Members to access climate financing mechanisms such as the GCF and GEF-7. It contributes primarily to SO 2 but also to SO1, SO3, SO4 and SO5. The initiative contributes to SDG 2 (Target 2.4), SDG 6 (Target 6.4), SDG 13 (Target 13.1., 13.2., 13.3), SDG 14 and SDG 15 (15.1., 15.2., 15.3), among others.

55. The initiative aims at improving policy alignment, data collection and capacity development. Support is provided to policy coordination for the sustainable use of natural resources and the integration of climate change into national legislation (SO1.3, SO2.2, SO2.3, SDG 2.4.), as well as strengthening national capacities in promoting policies for disaster risk reduction and crisis management (SO5.1). The initiative ensures effective integration of sustainable agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries into national governance mechanisms, especially in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs nationalization (SO2.2, SO2.3), and promotes more integrated and cross-sectoral policies in countries (SO2.1).

56. Support for the provision and collection of data, tools and services for effective decision-making on sustainable natural resource management is also in the focus of the initiative. Emphasis will be placed on supporting the implementation of the SDG indicators under FAO custodianship and improving agrometeorology services, early warning and hazard mapping, and climate change modelling (SO2.4, SO4.3). Emphasis will also be placed on mechanisms for identifying and monitoring threats, assessing risks, and delivering integrated early warning (SO5.2).

57. The initiative strengthens national capacities to address sustainable approaches for sustainable natural resource management, such as climate-smart agriculture. The initiative also addresses water scarcity, pest diseases and natural-hazard-induced impacts (SO4.2), disaster risk reduction practices

(SO5.3), assessment of vulnerability and resilience measurement (SO5.2, SDG 13.1), and emergency preparedness and emergency response in countries affected by crisis (SO5.4).

58. Regional Initiative 3 focuses on developing and improving policies and governance mechanisms, in a coherent and integrated way, to address sustainable production, climate change and environmental degradation by enhancing synergies amongst social protection, nutrition, governance, gender equality and statistics. Promotion of higher-profile impacts of climate change on food security and nutrition in financing decisions is supported in order to make sure that these perspectives are appropriately prioritized in relevant funding opportunities. The initiative supports political dialogue between countries and encourages better coordination through the collection and exchange of statistical information on threats caused by climate change and natural disasters.

59. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) is one of the strategic partners on climate, agrometeorological and climate change modelling and monitoring interventions. GIZ is key for GCF readiness-readiness-support mechanisms and ecosystem-based climate-change adaptation work. Climate-smart agriculture interventions in drylands will be developed with the global research partnership CGIAR and ICARDA and will work closely with national and regional research and capacity-building institutions and the private sector.

60. **The main focus of the collaboration among the three Regional Initiatives** is to support countries in achieving the SDGs, with special attention to SDGs 1 and 2 and to sustainable food and agriculture. Regional Initiatives 1 and 3 complement each other, ensuring that smallholders and family farmers share equitably the benefits of such things as climate financing mechanisms, for example, that enable them to improve their productivity and resilience and that support them in sustainably managing natural-resource landscapes. In addition, policy support, data collection and capacity development support smallholder development. Regional Initiatives 2 and 3 complement each other in creating an enabling environment by supporting the implementation of sustainable production policies, organic farming and geographical indications. The initiatives include developing investment programmes for climate-smart agriculture (SO2.3) and sustainable agrifood production, reducing food losses and waste (SO4.3), and using financial resources to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition (SO1.3).

61. The programmatic approach of the three Regional Initiatives, as well as their complementarity and synergies, promote more inclusive and sustainable agrifood systems to improve food security and reduce rural poverty in the region and to ensure coordinated support to countries to respond to their commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UNFCCC Paris Agreement.

62. The preparation of the FAO results framework for 2018–2021 aimed to sharpen the focus on the Strategic Objectives, Outcomes and Outputs through their contributions to relevant SDG targets and indicators and to improve the quality of result chains so as to address the main challenges expected to be faced by countries. This will provide a clear, coherent and concrete view of FAO's contribution to the support of country-level implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. Taking account of the focus of FAO's work in regional priorities through the Regional Initiatives, the planned contribution of results in the region to Strategic Objective Output targets is presented in Web Annex 3.

Figure 1: FAO Results Framework – Main Components

<p>FAO's vision A world free from hunger and malnutrition where food and agriculture contributes to improving the living standards of all, especially the poorest, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner.</p> <p>The three Global Goals of Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, progressively ensuring a world in which people at all times have sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life; • elimination of poverty and the driving forward of economic and social progress for all, with increased food production, enhanced rural development and sustainable livelihoods; and • sustainable management and utilization of natural resources, including land, water, air, climate and genetic resources for the benefit of present and future generations. <p>Strategic Objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition 2) Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable 3) Reduce rural poverty 4) Enable more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems 5) Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises <p>Additional objective</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6) Technical quality, statistics and cross-cutting themes (climate change, gender, governance, nutrition) <p>Core Functions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Facilitate and support countries in the development and implementation of normative and standard-setting instruments, such as international agreements, codes of conduct, technical standards and others 2) Assemble, analyse, monitor and improve access to data and information, in areas related to FAO's mandate 3) Facilitate, promote and support policy dialogue at global, regional and country levels 4) Advise and support capacity development at country and regional level to prepare, implement, monitor and evaluate evidence-based policies, investments and programmes 5) Advise and support activities that assemble, disseminate and improve the uptake of knowledge, technologies and good practices in the areas of FAO's mandate 6) Facilitate partnerships for food security and nutrition, agriculture and rural development, between governments, development partners, civil society and the private sector 7) Advocate and communicate at national, regional and global levels, in areas of FAO's mandate <p>Functional Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach • Information Technology • FAO governance, oversight and direction • Efficient and effective administration
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