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Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الأغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE

FORTY-THIRD SESSION

Budapest, Hungary, 27–28 September 2023

Progress made by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia on the main recommendations of the Forty-second Session of the European Commission on Agriculture

Executive Summary

The main technical theme of the Forty-second Session of the European Commission on Agriculture was “Transforming food systems to address all forms of malnutrition in Europe and Central Asia.” The commission discussed issues related to food systems transformation for improved nutritional outcomes in the Europe and Central Asia region and adopted a number of recommendations.

This document presents a brief update on the food systems-related activities and results achieved by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia on the recommendations directed to FAO.

Selected examples from regional and country initiatives and projects are highlighted. Further feedback, direction and indication of ongoing or emerging priorities are welcomed from members of the European Commission on Agriculture.

I. Background

1. The Forty-second Session of the European Commission on Agriculture was held online 19–21 January 2022. The main technical theme of the session was “Transforming food systems to address all forms of malnutrition in Europe and Central Asia.”
2. At the session, the commission adopted a set of recommendations¹ for members of the region and for FAO. For ease of reporting, the recommendations are grouped below.
3. It was requested that FAO:
 - Advocate for and maintain political will to work coherently and holistically on food systems transformation, engaging stakeholders and increasing awareness on concepts such as circular economy and true cost accounting to drive policy change (recommendations a, j and l).

¹ The report of the Forty-second Session of the European Commission on Agriculture is available online at <https://www.fao.org/3/ni198en/ni198en.pdf>.

- Improve nutritional status by promoting policies for healthy diets, improving the enabling environment for consumers, improving food literacy, investing in agrifood systems, supporting value addition and school feeding initiatives, and making nutrient-rich foods more available and affordable (recommendations b, h and k).
- Build capacities on food systems transformation processes to increase participatory, intersectoral and multidisciplinary efforts; address equitability; and leverage such accelerators as technology, innovation, data, governance, human capital and institutions (recommendations c, d and f).
- Support people's livelihoods and community development through territorial and local approaches and recognize the importance of smallholders and family farmers in producing healthy food (recommendations e and n).
- Support monitoring, data collection and analysis for up-to-date information on the food system context, taking account of the impacts of regional and global dynamics, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (recommendation g).
- Facilitate regional cooperation and build partnerships on issues that affect food security and nutrition and that are integral to sustainable food systems (recommendations i and m).
- Support sustainable natural resources management, fisheries and aquaculture; promote the One Health approach; and emphasize food safety as part of a healthy diet (recommendations n and o).

4. This document outlines the key results of the activities undertaken by FAO related to food systems transformation for improved nutritional outcomes, considering the recommendations of the Forty-second Session of the European Commission on Agriculture. FAO's support takes account of regional priorities established by the Thirty-third Session of the Regional Conference for Europe,² the May 2023 Informal Consultation in Budapest,³ and the national priorities of the members outlined in their Country Programming Frameworks.

II. Results of activities implemented in the area of food systems transformation for improved nutritional outcomes carried out by FAO in Europe and Central Asia

5. In line with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031 and its aspirational principles of the four pillars, helping countries transform food systems by addressing economic, social and environmental sustainability is a central focus of work for the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.

6. Food systems are acknowledged as important for development and for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have further highlighted both the fragility and the many interconnections in the food system, stressing the importance of holistic, cross-policy, intersectoral and collaborative approaches at local, country and regional levels.

7. FAO works with governments and other stakeholders through a range of initiatives, projects and activities to support food systems transformation in the Europe and Central Asia region by i) building capacities and skills; ii) promoting new concepts and approaches; iii) facilitating the sharing of information, good practice and experiences; and iv) enabling national and regional issues to be part of global discussions on food systems transformation.

8. In delivering the FAO programme of work, many core elements essential to transforming food systems are supported through the four regional priority work streams, including improved nutrition, strengthened value chains, livestock development, trade and market access, natural resources management, the prevention of food loss and waste, and support to smallholders and rural development. People-centred

² The report of the Thirty-third Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe, held 10–13 May 2022 in Łódź, Poland, is available online at <https://www.fao.org/3/nj289en/nj289en.pdf>.

³ The minutes of the Informal Consultation for Europe and Central Asia, held 4–5 May 2023 in Budapest, Hungary, are available online at <https://www.fao.org/3/cc6350en/cc6350en.pdf>.

approaches, cross-ministerial cooperation and the application of a holistic lens are promoted in these activities and through the Country Programming Frameworks and the new generation of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. FAO collaborates with other sectors and disciplines through the United Nations Country Teams.

9. Key results related to food systems transformation for improved nutritional outcomes are outlined below, with each chapter corresponding to one group of the commission's recommendations.

Recommendations a, j and l: Advocate for and maintain political will to work coherently and holistically on food systems transformation, engaging stakeholders and increasing awareness on such concepts as circular economy and true cost accounting to drive policy change.

10. FAO is committed to aiding countries in the application of a holistic food systems lens, building upon the achievements and drive stemming from the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) and the UNFSS+2 Stocktaking Moment.⁴ This includes actively collaborating with regional mechanisms, including the United Nations Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems in Europe and Central Asia.

11. FAO's commitment goes beyond advocacy to encompass capacity building and technical support to countries, through projects, webinars, briefs, information notes and in-depth policy assessments, empowering countries across the region to understand the interconnections among agriculture, nutrition, environment and social equity and catalysing policy changes that align with the transformation goals.

12. FAO serves as a platform that brings together diverse stakeholders from governments, civil society, academia and the private sector. An example is the Regional Conference on Food Systems Sustainability held in Istanbul in March 2023,⁵ organized in collaboration with the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Regional Cooperation Centre for Sustainable Food Systems. The conference facilitated the review of 13 food system assessments,⁶ and a website to build a network of food system professionals has been launched.

13. In Armenia and Tajikistan, multistakeholder workshops were implemented on holistic transformation and resilience to the impacts of regional shocks, including climate change. Experiences from other countries were shared.

14. Furthermore, FAO leverages its position to increase awareness and drive mindset changes regarding the significance of food systems transformation. Collaborations with Chatham House and Johns Hopkins University resulted in knowledge products outlining regional priorities,⁷ and practical guidance on how to transform food systems will be published this year.

15. More detailed information on FAO's work on food systems transformation is available in the document ECA/43/23/INF/6.

16. The transformation of food systems also needs to consider the urban context. Assessments of the urban food systems in at least five cities in the region are planned to identify the most tangible entry points and practical examples for better nutrition and sustainable food systems. Examples from Albania and the Republic of Moldova were showcased at the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in March

⁴ More information on the United Nations Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment is available online at <https://www.unfoodsystemshub.org/fs-stocktaking-moment/en>.

⁵ To learn more about the results of this conference, please visit <https://www.bseccsfs.org/en/news/conference-spotlights-regional-food-system-sustainability/cdf39e1a-ecf8-4cff-88b4-da648fa32c68/48ac6446-4056-4c81-9e6f-5909a758080e>.

⁶ Additional information on the food systems assessments is available online at <https://www.bseccsfs.org/en/food-systems-assessments/7ebb6f9f-e96d-4393-8240-fa1261103df7>.

⁷ The report *Outcomes of the United Nations Food Systems Summit in Europe and Central Asia* is available online at <https://www.fao.org/3/cc5319en/cc5319en.pdf>.

2023.^{8,9} A regional webinar¹⁰ was conducted on the potential of FAO's urban work, including the Green Cities Initiative for further territorial and local approaches.

17. Further regional exchange will take place in 2023 and 2024 within the framework of a Regional Technical Cooperation Programme on transforming agrifood systems in Europe and Central Asia, including the use of Committee on World Food Security (CFS) guidelines and policy recommendations such as the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition and true cost accounting.

18. The results of UNFSS+2, including the voluntary progress reports,¹¹ the United Nations Secretary-General's report¹² and call to action¹³ will serve as pivotal references.

19. To enhance understanding and raise awareness on the circular economy, bioeconomy and sustainable economy as complementary concepts, FAO is preparing a document "Promoting bioeconomy through agriculture practice in Eastern Europe and Central Asia" and a booklet on circular bioeconomy for agriculture, including the status in the region.

20. A recent episode of the Food Systems Talks¹⁴ focused on the circular economy of food, published by the Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems.

Recommendations b, h and k: Improve nutritional status by promoting policies for healthy diets, improving the enabling environment for consumers, improving food literacy, investing in agrifood systems, supporting value addition and school feeding initiatives, and making nutrient-rich foods more available and affordable.

Healthy diets and support to consumers

21. Food systems policies can increase the availability of nutritious foods, make healthy diets more affordable, and empower consumers to make healthy food choices. A number of initiatives are ongoing in the Europe and Central Asia region to generate and analyse evidence on nutrition, food security and the food environment for consumers to support policy development for improved nutrition.

22. The yearly flagship publication of the *Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition* provides updates on food security and nutrition, including the cost and affordability of diets at the country level. In 2022, the publication¹⁵ contained an in-depth analysis of the repurposing of food and agricultural policies to achieve food security and nutrition for better health, increase the affordability of a healthy diet, reduce environmental footprint, and provide livelihoods to farmers and others engaged in the sector.

23. The Economic Cooperation Organization Regional Coordination Centre for Food Security, supported by FAO, published an overview of food security in the countries of the Economic Cooperation Organization.¹⁶ Among its recommendations, the report highlighted the need for improved agrifood trade

⁸ Information on the round-table event *Cities leading the transformation: SDGs in action and the new multilateralism*, including a recording of the discussion, is available online at <https://unece.org/housing-and-land-management/events/2023-rfsd-roundtable-sdg-11-cities-leading-transformation-sdgs>.

⁹ Information from the side event on localizing the SDGs is available at <https://regionalforum.unece.org/events/side-event-localizing-sdgs-agrifood-systems-transformation-key-accelerator>.

¹⁰ To read more about this webinar, please visit <https://www.fao.org/europe/news/detail/agricultural-heritage-benefits-today-s-urban-agrifood-systems/en>.

¹¹ From the Europe and Central Asia region, voluntary progress reports were submitted by Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan.

¹² The United Nations Secretary-General's report from the United Nations Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment is available online at https://www.unfoodsystemshub.org/docs/unfoodsystemslibraries/stocktaking-moment/un-secretary-general/unfss2-secretary-general-report.pdf?sfvrsn=560b6fa6_19.

¹³ The United Nations Secretary-General's call to action for accelerated food systems transformation, delivered 26 July 2023, is available online at <https://www.unfoodsystemshub.org/fs-stocktaking-moment/documentation/un-secretary-general-call-to-action/en>.

¹⁴ This episode, along with the other Food Systems Talks, is available online at <https://www.youtube.com/@issuebasedcoalitiononsusta2508/videos>.

¹⁵ The *Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2022* report is available online at <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc4196en>.

¹⁶ This study is available online at <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/ft/c/CC2032EN>. The Economic Cooperation Organization Regional Coordination Centre for Food Security countries are Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

related capacities. Based on the analysis, the Regional Programme for Food Security in Economic Cooperation Organization Countries was officially adopted in July 2022.

24. FAO supported Armenia, North Macedonia and Uzbekistan in developing and revising national food security policies.

25. An international conference on food security was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan,¹⁷ in early September 2023 to review the state of food security in the world, with a special focus on Central Asia, and to deliberate on (and seek solutions to) key agrifood system challenges hindering progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2.

26. The development of food system-based dietary guidelines is another important policy tool to address nutritional challenges by providing country-specific guidance on healthy diets. FAO, in collaboration with the Capacity Development Network in Nutrition in Central and Eastern Europe, is supporting Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro and Serbia in developing food system-based dietary guidelines. Data collection and analysis is ongoing on food availability, nutritional status, food policies and programmes, priority nutrition and health issues, changing dietary patterns, and food production and supply. In Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, evidence on the nature and underlying causes of changing dietary patterns and malnutrition is being reviewed to identify nutrition priorities.

27. Improving consumers' food literacy is a priority in the region. In Türkiye, FAO supported the development of a food literacy strategy and action plan for 2022 to 2028¹⁸ that includes actions to enhance food literacy skills appropriate to the needs of various age groups, genders and socioeconomic groups. Actions include improving consumer access to accurate information on food and nutrition and improving food systems policies on nutritional quality in order to prevent diet-related diseases. A consumer guide is being prepared on health-conscious food choices when shopping, including understanding food labels, nutritional content, food waste prevention and safe food handling.

28. To equip consumers with skills to reduce the large amount of food being wasted at the household level across the region, FAO has supported the use of materials – including the “Do Good: Save Food!” education package¹⁹ – addressing the causes of and solutions to food waste, seeking to engage children as agents of change. Additionally, FAO developed a Food Waste Guide²⁰ that provides easy-to-implement tips for preventing food waste.

29. Countries in the ECA region recognize school feeding programmes as an important means to improve children's diets, tackle the high prevalence of different forms of malnutrition²¹ and foster healthy eating habits. Building on past and ongoing efforts, FAO – with UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the World Food Programme – is conducting a landscape analysis of school feeding programmes across countries in Europe and Central Asia to provide comprehensive information on establishing school feeding programmes.

30. Furthermore, a project is under formulation in Uzbekistan to work with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture to pilot a school feeding initiative.

¹⁷ More information on the International Conference on Food Security, held 7–8 September in Uzbekistan, is available online at <https://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail/international-conference-on-food-security/en>.

¹⁸ The *Türkiye food literacy strategy and action plan 2022–2028* is available online at <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc4294en>.

¹⁹ These educational materials are available online at <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CA1170en>.

²⁰ The document *Your guide to living free of food waste* is available online at <https://www.fao.org/3/cb6601en/cb6601en.pdf>.

²¹ The UNICEF report *A review of the school age children & adolescent nutrition in Europe and Central Asia region* is available online at <https://www.unicef.org/eca/reports/review-school-age-children-and-adolescent-nutrition-europe-and-central-asia-region>.

Making nutrient-rich foods more available

31. FAO supports countries in policy and systems development for value addition and food quality certification to increase the availability of safe, nutritious foods from diverse sources, in line with the guiding principles of sustainable healthy diets.

32. Many countries in the region have been supported in the promotion of foods with a protected indication, such as specific origin or quality characteristics, and an increase in the number of registered geographical indications products has been observed. In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, national legal frameworks have been strengthened. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, food safety authorities and ministries have learned how to register and certify these products, while agencies and food producer groups have received training on promotion. Furthermore, FAO supported the raising of awareness among consumers on the benefits to farming communities. Each biennium, FAO organizes a regional consultation on geographical indications; the third regional consultation was organized in collaboration with oriGIIn,²² and the fourth regional consultation will be held in 2023. Synthesis reports are available.²³

33. In cooperation with research institutions, a biodiversity impact assessment of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)²⁴ was performed to demonstrate that GIAHS can be a strategic tool for biodiversity preservation and resilience to climate change.

34. FAO is accelerating the implementation in the region of The Global Action on Green Development of Special Agricultural Products: One Country One Priority Product. Nine countries have officially requested to participate, each choosing a different special agricultural product. The launch of One Country One Priority Product implementation was held in May 2023 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, with participation from national focal points from Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Türkiye. Implementation is currently under way in Uzbekistan (cherries), Albania (wild chestnuts) and Tajikistan (apricots), and advanced discussions are taking place in Georgia (traditional wines) and Republic of Moldova (table grapes).

Recommendations c, d and f: Build capacities on food systems transformation processes to increase participatory, intersectoral and multidisciplinary efforts; address equitability; and leverage such accelerators as technology, innovation, data, governance, human capital and institutions.

35. FAO champions inclusivity, advocating for dialogues at local and national tiers to amplify diverse voices and promote participatory, multidisciplinary, and interministerial work. As countries embarked on implementing their UNFSS national pathways, examples of support are described here.

36. Under the framework of the project SFS-MED – a multistakeholder initiative for sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean – support has been provided to Albania on the sustainable development of the agritourism sector. Dialogues took place in Tirana, Shkodra, Permet and Belsh to further engage sectoral policymakers, local communities and municipalities to establish a shared comprehension of the policy and strategy gaps and the necessary enhancements required for fostering agritourism as a contributor to rural and green economies.

37. In Serbia, two projects are ongoing to support the implementation of national pathways for sustainable food systems transformation and to support sustainable food systems transformation to advance

²² More information on the third consultation is available online at <https://www.origin-gi.com/20-12-2021-third-regional-consultation-on-geographical-indications-in-europe-and-central-asia-virtual/>.

²³ The first synthesis report, *An overview of legal and institutional frameworks and opportunities, challenges and recommendations for geographical indication products in Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation*, is available online at <https://www.fao.org/3/ca1002en/CA1002EN.pdf>. The second report, *Geographical indication schemes in Croatia, Hungary and Poland*, is available online at <https://www.fao.org/3/CA0938EN/ca0938en.pdf>. The third synthesis report is forthcoming.

²⁴ More information about Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems is available online at <https://www.fao.org/giahs/en/>.

environmental protection and rural development, reduce poverty and implement the 2030 Agenda. A series of subnational dialogues was held with various stakeholders and institutions and an interinstitutional mechanism was created in February 2023. Capacities have been strengthened in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management and various institutions and small-scale producers. Support was provided for the development of a web-based portal for tracking phytosanitary and veterinary certificates issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management.

38. A further example of a multidisciplinary approach is the greening of agricultural policy. FAO supports dialogues and the collection of new evidence on the impact of budget support on farm productivity and competitiveness to find ways to improve efficiency while considering environmental, climate and sustainability objectives, i.e. repurposing of budget support. Examples include the establishment of farm accountancy data networks for policy analysis in Albania and Montenegro, analysis of the efficiency of agricultural budget support in Albania and Republic of Moldova, and cooperation with the Central European Free Trade Agreement secretariat on subsidies reporting. A regional policy monitoring workshop was implemented with the Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies (IAMO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on the repurposing and greening of agricultural policy.

39. Addressing equitability in food systems, FAO, in collaboration with the International Institute for Sustainable Development, developed guidelines on integrating the leave no one behind principle into development planning in Europe and Central Asia.²⁵ The paper presents a methodological guide for policymakers, planners and other experts; outlines the relevance of the leave no one behind principle for agrifood systems and rural development; and proposes ways to identify those left behind and solutions to address their needs.

40. In the current biennium, FAO has increased youth-related activities, including a series of youth consultations covering topics such as the needs and constraints of rural youth in the region, digitalization, and agrifood value chains. These were in line with the mission of the World Food Forum and its global flagship event, which will take place again this year with the slogan “Food action accelerates climate action.” A study on the situation and needs of rural youth in the Western Balkan countries and territories in collaboration with the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe will be finalized in early 2024, and two more studies on the situation of youth in Georgia and Central Asia have been initiated.

Recommendations e and n: Support people’s livelihoods and community development through territorial and local approaches and recognize the importance of smallholders and family farmers in producing healthy food.

41. For more than a decade FAO, has supported various initiatives and projects related to local rural development and integrated community development in the region, including the informal regional technical network on community development established by FAO in 2019. Annual regional workshops are organized, with the most recent held 6–8 June 2023 in Budapest.

42. FAO continues to support initiatives related to the recognition of the role and importance of smallholders and family farmers, in particular, under the United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028, with the participation of farmer organizations, civil society and national and regional authorities. A national action plan for the development of family farms in Kyrgyzstan in 2023 to 2028 has been developed, and similar action plans are under preparation in Albania and Republic of Moldova.

²⁵ These guidelines are available online at <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc6050en>.

43. FAO, in collaboration with several grassroots organizations in the region, has established a community of practice on agroecology to promote the sharing of knowledge and the identification of solutions to common problems.

44. Responding to requests from countries in Europe and Central Asia, FAO, in collaboration with the International Institute for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Development Programme Regional Hub, has developed a toolkit for local authorities and relevant stakeholders on SDG localization in Europe and Central Asia to support subnational development planning and budgeting. The goal is to improve well-being through strengthening SDG localization processes. A checklist to facilitate implementation is included.

Recommendation g: Support monitoring, data collection and analysis for up-to-date information on the food system context, taking account of the impacts of regional and global dynamics, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

45. In recent years, the Europe and Central Asia region has experienced multiple overlapping shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and adverse weather events (floods, earthquakes and droughts), all of which impact the food system. The shocks have led to increased food and energy prices, inflation, tightened financial conditions and supply chain disruptions.

46. FAO supports countries in monitoring the situation and implementing interventions to mitigate the adverse consequences and bolster the resilience of agrifood systems. Information on FAO's responses to the multiple crises in Europe and Central Asia is available in the document ECA/43/23/8.

47. An FAO project has supported countries in better understanding price inflation and its causes and in being better prepared for future shocks. Agricultural market information system (AMIS) assessments were completed in Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, with recommendations provided on how to improve food price monitoring systems and policy monitoring. In North Macedonia and Uzbekistan, data were connected with the FAO price monitoring tool and improved food balance sheets. A regional workshop with IAMO and OECD on AMIS and agricultural policy monitoring was organized in 2022 to exchange experiences in monitoring agricultural policies and producer prices on agricultural markets. Researchers, agricultural ministries and regional institutions (the European Union, OECD and the Eurasian Economic Commission) and representatives from Germany, Türkiye, the Western Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia took part.

48. Technical reports on and regular reviews of agrifood trade policies and the possible implications of the war in Ukraine were supported by FAO in collaboration with the World Bank, with participation from Agricultural Trade Expert Network experts.²⁶ A biennial publication, *Review of agrifood trade policies in the Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia countries*,²⁷ reviews all the trade policies in 12 countries of the region, country by country. The *Agricultural policy monitoring for eight countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia study*²⁸ reviews the agricultural policy environment and provides quantitative indicators for policy incentives and disincentives to agricultural producers for key commodity value chains in the eight study countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan).

²⁶ The report *Agrifood trade and food security in Central Asia : Possible Implications of the war in Ukraine* is available online at <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099614301182328659/IDU099aa8f43031360476b0ba0e0c5517feb727f>.

²⁷ This report is available online at <https://www.fao.org/markets-and-trade/publications/detail/en/c/1617872/>.

²⁸ This report is available online at <https://www.fao.org/markets-and-trade/publications/detail/en/c/1619119/>.

Recommendations i and m: Facilitate regional cooperation and build partnerships on issues that affect food security and nutrition and that are integral to sustainable food systems.

49. FAO facilitates regional cooperation and partnerships on topics central to sustainable food systems. Cooperation on land and water management, specifically mentioned in the recommendations of the Forty-second Session of the European Commission on Agriculture, is provided in the documents ECA/43/23/3, ECA/43/23/4, ECA/43/23/5, ECA 43/23/6 and ECA/43/23/7.

50. In brief, FAO supports the regional informal technical network of land professionals, LANDNET, established in 2022. Building on the FAO *Legal guide on land consolidation*,²⁹ emphasis is given to issues related to land policy, such as land market development, access to land and tenure security, land banking and land abandonment, with an overall focus on smallholders and family farms.

51. Content for a new Master of Science degree programme on land consolidation and land banking is under development by FAO in cooperation with 14 universities, and it will be available for use as indicative material by universities in Europe and Central Asia.

52. Acknowledging water-related challenges and the need for transboundary cooperation, FAO launched a project for Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. With agriculture playing a pivotal role in regional livelihoods, the project's focus is on refining water governance for effective water management for improved livelihood resilience against water scarcity and climate change adversities. Many facets are covered, including integrated water resources management, policy reforms, transboundary water issues, enhancing gender equity in water management, and fostering resilient agrifood systems.

53. Further examples of strategic partnerships and regional cooperation supported by FAO:

- a. The Agricultural Trade Expert Network in Europe and Central Asia conducted its eighth annual meeting in November 2022³⁰ and provided an overview of the drivers in global and regional markets and their implications for agrifood exports and imports in Central Asia. ATEN also analysed key changes in trade policies and agricultural support policies in the Central Asian countries in 2022 as a result of the increasing uncertainty in the global food markets and discussed the possible ways to address the risks and challenges posed by the war in Ukraine for agrifood markets and trade in Central Asia.
- b. The Central Asian Animal Health Network held its third meeting in June 2023 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, organized by FAO in collaboration with the World Organization for Animal Health, WHO-EURO and invited partners, including the United States Agency for International Development and the World Bank.
- c. FAO established a Regional Technical Platform on Green Agriculture³¹ to promote best practices, foster knowledge exchange and partnerships. Further work through the project "Scaling-up green agriculture in Europe and Central Asia" will increase understanding of greening agrifood systems and support evidence-based decisions and green policies, with a focus on Armenia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

²⁹ The guide is available online at <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en?details=CA9520EN>.

³⁰ The report on the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Agricultural Trade Expert Network in Europe and Central Asia is available in Russian (<https://www.fao.org/3/cc4282ru/cc4282ru.pdf>) and English (<https://www.fao.org/3/cc4282en/cc4282en.pdf>).

³¹ For more information, please see <https://www.fao.org/platforms/green-agriculture/en>.

54. In addition to the Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems in Europe and Central Asia, FAO partners with United Nations agencies through the regional United Nations Issue-based Coalitions on health, environment and gender.

Recommendations n and o: Support sustainable natural resources management, fisheries and aquaculture; promote the One Health approach; and emphasize food safety as part of a healthy diet.

55. FAO supports the sustainable management of natural resources, providing specific focus on agriculture-related soil and water management, land degradation neutrality, reducing the use of pesticides, managing pesticide-contaminated soil, and promoting bioremediation technology.

56. Many countries in the region have made significant progress in revising legal frameworks for pesticide registration systems and controls. The development of capacities and the raising of awareness among producers and consumers on the benefits of reducing pesticide application is supported. Demonstration trials are under implementation in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Türkiye, and a reduction of pesticide use by 50–68 percent compared to conventional practices has been observed in selected regions and crops. Besides the environmental and economic analysis, FAO has considered human health risks and supported pesticide residue analysis to demonstrate the results and benefits of integrated pest management and trained farmers on the proper use of personal protective equipment during pesticide application.

57. In Serbia, guidelines were developed to safeguard sensitive natural areas from agriculture-related pollution and to remediate already-contaminated land.

58. FAO supports countries in transforming aquatic systems and promoting the responsible and sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture resources. This includes updating national policies and legal and regulatory frameworks – for example, the Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Programme in Kyrgyzstan and the national fishery marketing strategy in Tajikistan. The development of aquatic animal health management frameworks in Central Asia is supported. Warm-water aquaculture, aquaponics and recirculating aquaculture systems are increasingly receiving attention, and FAO has been providing capacity building.

59. FAO strongly advocates for and promotes the One Health approach to prevent and mitigate transboundary zoonoses and antimicrobial resistance. Work is coordinated among Quadripartite partners (the World Health Organization, the World Organisation for Animal Health, the United Nations Environment Programme and FAO) through the Regional One Health Coordination Mechanism established in April 2021. FAO will deliver an online tutored course introducing One Health through the regional FAO Virtual Learning Centre, in coordination with WOA and WHO. On the occasion of the World Food Safety Day 2023, FAO and the WHO Regional Office for Europe organized a regional webinar³² on One Health and food safety. A briefing note on One Health and food safety targeting practitioners and policymakers is under preparation.

60. FAO supports Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in their efforts to control antimicrobial resistance, including reducing antimicrobial use, strengthening laboratory diagnosis and surveillance systems, implementing hands-on trainings and external quality assurance schemes, establishing antimicrobial resistance baselines in the livestock sector, and supporting the development of national antimicrobial resistance action plans. FAO established a regional network for antimicrobial resistance laboratories in Central Asia, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. In Kyrgyzstan, FAO is supporting

³² More information on this webinar is available at <https://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail/world-food-safety-day-webinar--one-health-and-food-safety/en>.

the use of a new tool to assess the level of implementation of the Codex Alimentarius texts on foodborne antimicrobial resistance.³³

61. To support country action, FAO submitted multiple proposals to the Pandemic Fund on One Health, coordinating with international agencies and national agencies, including a regional proposal for Central Asia and proposals in Albania, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

62. Food safety is a key element of food and nutrition security. FAO supports countries in strengthening food safety control systems, including public policy, legal and institutional frameworks, as well as supporting risk and science-based programmes. In Azerbaijan, Belarus and Georgia, the competent authorities in the area of food safety are being supported in assessing the national food control system. Preparedness and response capacities to deal with food safety emergencies and responses are being strengthened in Azerbaijan, Republic of Moldova and Türkiye. A series of best practices developed with the University of Helsinki are being published, and a guide for food safety regulators on appropriate policies for small food businesses is under finalization.

63. In Kyrgyzstan, the fruit and vegetable sector is being supported to improve the uptake of food safety management systems, and master trainers have been trained. In Georgia, a matching grant scheme to support food businesses with infrastructure improvements, combined with capacity development on food safety, is being delivered.

³³ For more information, please see the compendium of standards on foodborne antimicrobial resistance at <https://www.fao.org/3/cb8554en/cb8554en.pdf>.