



FAO 41st Conference Concept Note for a Side Event

Zero Hunger in Europe and Central Asia Progress on food security and nutrition stagnates in Europe and Central Asia

Date: Wednesday, 26 June 2019

Time: 12.30 – 13.30 hrs

Venue: Sheikh Zayed Center, FAO, Rome

1. Main objectives

Take advantage of the Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia (Regional Panorama 2018) to present key accomplishments and challenges in achieving food security and nutrition in the ECA region.

2. Key Messages of the Panel

- **Malnutrition in one or more of its three main forms - undernutrition, overweight and obesity, and micronutrient deficiencies - is present to varying degrees in all countries of the region in Europe and Central Asia. Often all three forms coexist, creating what is called the “triple burden of malnutrition”**

FAO’s Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia (Regional Panorama 2018) focussed on specific features of this region, the food insecurity transition over the past 20 years – indicating a substantial progress achieved by countries in the region. However, more than 14 million adults, and some 4.7 million children in Europe and Central Asia still suffer from severe food insecurity – as defined by the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES).

Millions still suffer from micronutrient deficiencies – in particular anaemia, which occurs at significant levels in many countries, including in high-income countries. Anaemia in women of childbearing age is on the rise, constituting an important public health problem.

Since the year 2000, there has been a continuous increase in overweight among children and in the prevalence of obesity among adults across the ECA region. Some 200 million people, corresponding to one quarter of adults are currently obese. The growing levels of overweight and obesity in the region are cause for serious concern, particularly the risks of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and associated social and economic costs. This trend is strongly associated with a transition in diets with increased intake of fat, sugar, meat, dairy, and processed foods, often accompanied by a more sedentary lifestyle in the region.

The evidence of persisting food insecurity and the recent increase in various forms of malnutrition in Europe and Central Asia prompt an exploration of their relationship with other development issues such as rural poverty, migration and gender. An understanding of the integral links among these elements will be critical in progressing towards meeting the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in achieving Agenda 2030.



- **Governments, public and private institutions, and other concerned parties across sectors need to collaborate to increase their impact of reducing all types of food insecurity and malnutrition. Various types of partnerships are forming in the region to strengthen food security and nutrition, as well as agricultural and rural development.**

Cross-sectoral partnership with regional and national organizations needs to be strengthened to support countries in achieving food security for all and addressing all types of food insecurity and malnutrition, including rising overweight and obesity. Cross-sectoral partnerships are key for raising political commitment and increasing the capacity of governments and stakeholders. In the Central Asia and Caucasus region, the Regional Nutrition Capacity Development and Partnership Platform was established in 2018, with support of FAO, UNICEF, WHO and WFP, to provide an opportunity for multi-sectoral stakeholders of 8 member states, including ministries, research institutions, universities and civil societies to come together towards a collective call for action on nutrition challenges.

- **Inequality between women and men in the prevalence of severe food security varies by subregions and thus signals more fundamental gender inequalities in societies, reflected in access to food, as well as food utilization.**

Findings of the Regional Panorama Report 2018 show adult women were found with a higher rate of severe food insecurity than men in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and European CIS subregion in 2015-17. This signals more fundamental gender inequalities in societies, reflected in the access to food, as well as food utilization. To ensure that all people, regardless of gender, have adequate food and nutrition, immediate measures are needed at all levels and in different policy areas.

- **Remittances have become an important source of income, in particular for the population of Central Asia, lifting millions of families out of poverty in recent years. Remittance flows in 2017 were estimated at USD 44 billion within the ECA region.**

The impact of remittances on agriculture is mixed, and developing tailored support programmes can promote the positive effects of migration on agricultural and rural development. Case studies from the Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan show that management of financial flows can turn remittances into investments, support agriculture, improve rural livelihoods, and even provide employment opportunities for youth in their home countries.