

Social Protection for Food Security, Nutrition and Rural Development in Southern Europe

Concept Note

Draft

Context

Social protection is widely recognized as an important strategy instrumental in accelerating progress in the fight against hunger, malnutrition and rural poverty. The 2015 State of Food and Agriculture shows clearly the consistent contribution of social protection in access to food security and nutrition (FSN), its availability, stability and utilization at household level. In addition, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has made a fundamental contribution to generating global evidence on how social protection can transform rural women and men's lives by improving their well-being and livelihoods.

This evidence also makes an economic case for investing in social protection: in the areas where livelihoods depend on agriculture and rural labour markets, social protection has the potential to influence the productive dimension directly: cash transfers, for example, have been shown to increase the use of agricultural inputs and ownership of livestock, amongst other economic impacts.¹

Worldwide, the majority of the food insecure and poor living in rural areas lack social protection: according to the latest World Social Protection Report, 73 percent of population do not have access to comprehensive social protection.

FAO is therefore committed to supporting governments and partners in addressing the main challenges of agricultural development and rural poverty reduction by incorporating social protection into regional and national strategies and actions, and expanding coverage of social protection systems to the poor, most food insecure and vulnerable living in rural areas, in line with the Agenda 2030 that commits countries to expand coverage of nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all to achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable by 2030.

The Balkan countries, particularly the former Yugoslav Republics, have a strong legacy of a well-developed social protection infrastructure and practices which, however, have been destabilised by the transition, conflicts and instability. The possibility of EU membership for prospective candidate countries poses the need to meet the necessary conditions but it is widely recognised that progress has been slow in this regard, and equitable access to social protection remains not adequate.

FAO's particular role can in ensuring that social protection programmes in the region are: (1) expanded to better reach the poorest and most vulnerable living in rural areas; (2) linked to agricultural and rural development programmes that further support rural populations where relevant; and (3) made more

¹ FAO (2014). From Protection to Production: The Role of Cash Transfer Programmes in Fostering Broad-Based Economic Development in sub-Saharan Africa

nutrition-sensitive, in line with the recommendations of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2).

In the region of Europe and Central Asia, FAO has been bringing together its expertise on FSN and social protection interventions, through research to build knowledge and understanding of the benefits of social protection programmes for poor women and men living in rural areas, and development interventions (e.g. school food and nutrition). While a research was conducted in the post-soviet countries² and awareness built among the relevant stakeholders on FAO's role in social protection for sustainable agriculture and rural development, less has been achieved in this regard in the Balkan countries.

Rationale and Objectives

The proposed intervention is seen as a part of the FAO overall work in social protection in the region of Europe and Central Asia. Throughout 2015-2017, will be aim to build knowledge on social protection and rural development in the sub-region of the composed of two parts: research and awareness raising.

At the first stage of this initiative, a research will be conducted to explore social protection in rural development setting in the selected Balkan countries, namely: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo under United Nations Security Council resolution 1244, Montenegro and Serbia.

The research will be conducted by country-based national experts, who will collect country-relevant information according to the agreed format. Based on the country-level research, an international consultant will produce a summary report which will address key political, economic and demographic trends, including the functioning of labour markets and education systems; the financing of, eligibility for and access to social protection; general living conditions of rural population and rural groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion; their access to pensions and other social benefits.

At the second stage, a sub-regional consultative/awareness raising meeting dedicated to the issues of social protection for rural population will be held (proposed location – Belgrade). The meeting will be organized by FAO's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU), in collaboration with FAO country office and respective Ministry of Agriculture.

The main objective of the meeting will be to:

- validate the sub-regional report;
- exchange the country level experiences on the current status of the social protection reforms and their impact on rural women and men within the context of the SDGs;
- raise awareness among the different government stakeholders on social protection for rural populations along with FAO's contribution to the agenda;
- present and discuss examples of existing work in social protection in Southern Europe that showcase the linkages between social protection, food security and nutrition and rural development;
- Identify priorities on social protection of participating governments and development partners and potential areas of work in the Balkans.

The sub-regional meeting therefore will assist to adequately position FAO in the context of social protection and rural development in the sub-region and tailor its technical assistance to the needs of the different countries.

² FAO REU (forthcoming). Social protection and rural population: the case of the post-soviet countries.

Expected outcomes

- Country and regional stakeholders are aware of the role that social protection for rural populations can play in achieving the SDGs (especially SDG1 and SDG2).
- Potential areas for collaboration in social protection with Governments and development partners are identified.

Participants

Participants - FAO staff, including technical officers from the Regional office and the organising team (REU, ESP, SP3); government officials representing the different relevant sectors, experts and academia from Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo under United Nations Security Council resolution 1244, FYRoM, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey; main development partners involved in social protection agendas such as the EU, UNICEF, UNDP, ILO, World Bank, etc. Funding will be provided to the national participants,

Estimate budget (in USD): 15,000 USD

1. Research and study: 4,000
2. Sub-regional awareness raising meeting: 11,000

TOTAL: 15,000 USD