

EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE

38/5 MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

9 December 2020

(Online meeting)

MEETING MINUTES

1. Opening of the meeting

The Chairperson of ECA (Mr Paul KIERNAN) opened the meeting and welcomed the Members of the Executive Committee to the fifth meeting after the 41st Session of the ECA. Furthermore, the Chairperson thanked the Members for their flexibility and availability, and the Secretariat and REU staff for their support.

The participants' list is presented in Annex 1.

Adoption of the agenda

The meeting agenda was adopted without any changes.

The adopted meeting agenda is presented in Annex 2.

2. Review of the outcomes of the 32nd Regional Conference for Europe

Mr Nabil GANGI, Secretary of the ERC, summarized the main recommendations and outcomes of the 32nd Session of the Regional Conference for Europe, held from 2 to 4 November. Mr Gangi highlighted that the first virtual ERC session recorded historic numbers of participation - 51 FAO Members, three observer FAO Member Countries, 15 ministers and 16 vice ministers, over 300 delegates and observers, in addition to more than 1 500 following the proceedings on webcast and 15 000 impressions on Twitter. Furthermore, the Conference was preceded by the Consultation of the Civil Society Organizations and, for the first time ever, a Consultation of the Private Sector, whose representatives delivered their views during the ERC sessions.

Members expressed their strong appreciation to the Regional Office and the ERC Secretariat for their professionalism, innovative approach and hard work done in organizing a successful ERC, even in these difficult times. Members highlighted the importance of the selection of interesting topics for such events, which would result in fruitful discussions, as they did in the case of the 32nd ERC.

Responding to questions of the Members, the ERC Secretariat ensured, that private sector consultations and involvement are planned to remain – and further evolve – as key elements of the future ERCs.

Action:

N/A

3. Preparation of the 42nd Session of ECA (2021), including strategic thinking on improving modalities, impact and strategic engagement

Mr Piotr WŁODARCZYK, Secretary of the ECA a.i., presented the background document. Members expressed their appreciation for the document, and supported the current arrangements for ECA sessions.

Action:

Secretariat to prepare a timeline in relation to the organizational process of the 42nd Session of the ECA, including the specific steps of developing the session Agenda.

4. Identification of topics for the 42nd Session of ECA (2021)

Mr WLODARCZYK summarized the three proposals for the main technical theme of the next session of ECA, as outlined in the meeting document.

Members thanked for the meeting document and highlighted the importance of choosing a theme that will be equally relevant to all Members of the Europe and Central Asia region. Members made an additional proposal for the main technical theme of the 42nd Session of ECA: Malnutrition in Europe and Central Asia. The justification for this proposal is that malnutrition is likely to be of interest of all ECA Members, as its different forms exist across the whole region and it is aligned with the FAO biennial theme (*"Promoting healthy diets and preventing all forms of malnutrition"*). Moreover, it would fit well at the regional level into the context of the UN Food Systems Summit (September/October 2021), continue and expand discussions undertaken at the 32nd ERC (November 2020) on the topic *"Sustainable food systems and healthy diets in Europe and Central Asia"*, and include issues relevant for the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables (2021). The proposal received strong support from the ExCom Members.

After discussing the four proposals, the ExCom agreed on the following prioritization of the proposals for the main technical theme of the 42nd Session of ECA:

- Priority 1 - Malnutrition in Europe and Central Asia
- Priority 2 - Water for food and agriculture in the Europe and Central Asia region
- Priority 3 - Harnessing innovation and digitalization for food systems
- Priority 4 - Short value chains in an integrated rural development approach and as a key element of sustainable food systems

Action:

The Secretariat to present the recommended proposal, along with other proposals for the main technical theme and their priorities, to the Director-General (ADG-RR) for confirmation.

Secretariat to prepare the draft Annotated Agenda with proposals of sub-topics under the identified main theme, once the Director-General (ADG-RR) confirms the proposed main theme.

5. Review and recommendations on the REU Work Programme 2020-2021: Regional Initiative 3: Mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services in the agriculture sector

Ms Tania SANTIVANEZ presented the topic and responded to questions from Members. She explained that the Regional Initiative 3 "Managing natural resources sustainably and preserving biodiversity in a changing climate" is functioning as a programmatic umbrella for translating global instruments and specific regional challenges into actions at the country level to better address biodiversity loss and climate change. Ms SANTIVANEZ also explained the work, which is ongoing in the region emphasizing the importance of generating analytic evidence on the status of biodiversity; mainstreaming biodiversity across agricultural sectors at national and regional levels. In this regard, among others, a draft report on monitoring schemes and data collection on biodiversity linked to food systems in Eastern Europe and Central Asia has been developed and a data collection methodology to measure and evaluate the resilience indicators in Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems and data collection on the performance of the agroecology conducted. She also highlighted the work, which is

done in the region related to the promotion of Nature-Based Solutions in agriculture and food systems and the sustainable management of plant genetic resources and resilient seed systems.

Ms SANTIVANEZ also provided a short summary on the work ahead to change the current status of biodiversity and contributing to food system transformation in the region in the framework of the Sustainable Development Agenda.

ExCom Members thanked Ms SANTIVANEZ for the informative presentation and expressed their interest in obtaining the action plan on mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services in the agriculture sector including indicators to measure the impact, when it is developed.

Action:

Secretariat to inform ExCom, when the action plan on mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services in the agriculture sector becomes available.

6. Roles and responsibilities of the ExCom in relation to ECA and ERC

The ExCom discussed answers to questions and issues on roles and responsibilities of ExCom in relation to ECA and ERC, provided by the Secretariat in reply to comments made by Cyprus and Ireland.

The ExCom revisited the position taken at their 38/3 meeting on the publication of the meeting minutes, and requested the Secretariat to notify all Members of the region about posting the minutes on the ExCom website, as a standing procedure. The Secretariat would send the message on behalf of the ECA Chairperson, addressing it to ECA Members, through their Permanent Representatives, as well as to the Members not having Permanent Representations. The message should contain the summary of topics discussed at the ExCom meeting and the link to the minutes. ExCom expected that this would help increase the number of visits on the website, and improve the visibility of the Committee's work. The ExCom requested the Secretariat to apply this procedure starting from the minutes of the current meeting.

The Secretariat reiterated their availability to support all official communication between the ECA Chairperson and the Members of the region. The content of the messages would be agreed with the Chairperson and would be shared with the ECA Members on Chairperson's behalf. The ExCom agreed that the Permanent Representations should be the addressees of the communication.

The ECA Chairperson declared his support to efforts aiming at the clarification of the meaning of the ECA ToR-used terms "governance" (question 1), "particular problems" and "decision making responsibilities" (question 8), as well as on the issue of working contacts of the ExCom with ERG, through individual consultations with relevant officers, and will update the ExCom at a meeting.

Due to the limited time, the ExCom had no possibility to discuss other comments made by Cyprus and Ireland, and the Secretariat's replies. For time-efficiency and in order to avoid the deferral of the discussions to the next meeting, the ExCom agreed that the Secretariat would share their comments by e-mail with the ExCom Members, and they be discussed in a written procedure.

Action:

Secretariat to notify all ECA Members, through their Permanent Representatives, on the publishing of the ExCom meeting minutes.

Secretariat to share with the ExCom, in a written procedure, the outstanding comments and discussion points on ExCom's roles and responsibilities.

7. Any other business

N/A

8. Closing of the meeting

The Chairperson thanked the ExCom Members for their participation and contribution, as well as the ECA Secretariat for good preparation of background documents, their support throughout the meeting and wished everyone a healthy and relaxing holiday season, and closed the meeting.

Annex 1**EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE****38/5 MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

9 December 2020

10.00-12.00 hrs (Rome time)

Online meeting

PARTICIPANTS LIST

	Role	Country/Organization	Name	Present/Absent
1.	ECA Chairperson	Ireland	Mr Paul KIERNAN	Present
2.	ECA 1st Vice-Chairperson	Slovak Republic	Ms Zora WEBEROVA	Present
3.	ECA 2nd Vice-Chairperson	Cyprus	Mr Marios GEORGIADES	Present
4.	ExCom Member	Albania	Ms Lorena PULLUMBI	Absent
5.	ExCom Member	Czechia	Mr Jiří JÍLEK	Present
6.	ExCom Member	Georgia	Ms Ekaterine ZDIADADZE	Present
7.	ExCom Member	Hungary	Ms Lilla EGRI	Present
8.	ExCom Member	Italy	Ms Graziella ROMITO	Absent
9.	ExCom Member	Serbia	Ms Daria JANJIĆ	Absent
10.	Deputy Regional Representative, Secretary of the ERC	FAO REU	Mr Nabil GANGI	Present
11.	Senior Field Programme Officer, ERC Secretariat	FAO REU	Mr Goran STAVRIK	Present
12.	Agricultural Officer, RI3	FAO REU	Ms Tania SANTIVAÑEZ	Present
13.	Specialist on IPM and Climate Resilient Agricultural Practices	FAO REU	Ms Zsuzsanna KERESZTES	Present
14.	Acting Secretary of ECA	FAO REU	Mr Piotr WŁODARCZYK	Present
15.	ERC-ECA Secretariat	FAO REU	Ms Zsofia HORVÁTH	Present

Annex 2**EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE****38/5 MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

9 December 2020

10.00-12.00 hrs (Rome time)

Online meeting

AGENDA

No.	Agenda Item Title	Document No./Link	Presenter
	Opening of the meeting	-	KIERNAN
1.	Adoption of the agenda	ECA_ExCom/38/5-1	PARTICIPANTS
2.	Review of the outcomes of the 32nd Regional Conference for Europe	ECA_ExCom/38/5-2	GANGI / STAVRIK
3.	Preparation of the 42nd Session of ECA (2021), including strategic thinking on improving modalities, impact and strategic engagement	ECA_ExCom/38/5-3	WŁODARCZYK
4.	Identification of topics for the 42nd Session of ECA (2021)	ECA_ExCom/38/5-4	WŁODARCZYK
5.	Review and recommendations on the REU Work Programme 2020-2021: Regional Initiative 3: Mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services in the agriculture sector	ECA_ExCom/38/5-5	SANTIVAÑEZ
6.	Roles and responsibilities of the ExCom in relation to ECA and ERC	ECA_ExCom/38/4-3_CY ECA_ExCom/38/4-3_IE ECA_ExCom/38/5-6	WŁODARCZYK
7.	Any other business	-	PARTICIPANTS
	Close of the meeting	-	KIERNAN