



PREPARATION OF THE 42ND SESSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE (2021), INCLUDING STRATEGIC THINKING ON IMPROVING MODALITIES, IMPACT AND STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT

(prepared by the ECA Secretariat)

I. Introduction

The ECA Executive Committee (ExCom), at its meeting in December 2020, discussed the preparation of the 42nd Session of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA). After considering several proposals for the main technical theme of the Session, the ExCom recommended that malnutrition in Europe and Central Asia be the main technical theme for the Session.

II. The main technical theme for the 42nd Session of ECA

At the meeting in December 2020, the ExCom recommended that the theme be “Malnutrition in Europe and Central Asia”. The recommendation was reviewed by REU. In order to formulate the theme so that it drives a process of good transformation, a proposal was made that the theme be re-worded to read “Transforming food systems to prevent all forms of malnutrition in Europe and Central Asia”. It was also suggested that the ExCom discuss the possibility to postpone the ECA Session to October 2021, so that it is held after the UN Food Systems Summit, which could allow to focus the ECA Session on the main conclusions of global discussions on food systems’ transformation.

In a written procedure, the Secretariat requested the ExCom members to confirm the specific wording of the main technical theme for the 42nd ECA Session. The members generally supported the wording. Two suggestions were made on slight amendment of the theme - one suggested replacing “prevent” with “address”, the other suggested adding the word “address” to the wording. Thus, the following proposals are presented to the ExCom for making the final decision on the wording of the main technical theme for the 42nd ECA Session:

- 1) “Transforming food systems to address all forms of malnutrition in Europe and Central Asia”
- 2) “Transforming food systems to address and prevent all forms of malnutrition in Europe and Central Asia”.

III. The date, modality and agenda for the 42nd Session of ECA

The date for the 42nd Session of ECA has not been decided yet. As there are numerous FAO meetings in September 2021, in order to avoid conflicting dates, the Session may need to be held in October.

Due to continuing pandemic and restrictions on travel and meetings still in place, virtual modality is being considered as an option for the ECA Session. The final decision has not been taken yet, and it will be made taking into consideration the turn of events in the coming months. If the virtual modality is accepted, the arrangement of discussions in individual days of the Session will need to be agreed upon. ExCom members are invited to present their views on the modality and arrangements for the discussions at the Session.

Following the general agreement on the main technical theme for the 42nd Session of ECA, the ECA Secretariat has drafted the preliminary agenda for the Session. The draft annotated agenda is presented in Annex 1.

IV. Key operational issues for the 42nd Session of ECA

The Secretariat would like to bring to the attention of the ExCom the following issues relevant for the key items on the agenda of the 42nd ECA Session.

1. Appointment of the rapporteur

The Commission may elect one or more rapporteurs from among the representatives. Usually, the Commission appoints two rapporteurs. In practice, it may be difficult to appoint rapporteurs if Members consider nominations only during the Session. In order to facilitate the process, the Secretariat kindly requests the ExCom to consider whether there would be a possibility to pre-announce the issue at an ERG meeting and request Members to consider nominations for this role in advance.

2. Technical agenda items

Aspects relevant for the discussions on the main technical theme of the ECA Session will be presented to the Members of ECA in technical background papers. The papers will be developed by REU, drawing on relevant technical expertise and cleared by the HQ divisions to ensure corporate policy and guidance. These papers are not presented to the Members prior to the ECA Session.

3. Report on progress made by REU on the recommendations of the 41st Session of ECA

Progress made by REU on the implementation of recommendations of the 41st Session of ECA, both on plant health and gender, will be presented to the ExCom during its current meeting (document ExCom/38/6-4). Information contained in this paper is planned to serve as the basis for the preparation of relevant papers for the 42nd ECA Session.

4. Elections

The Commission will be invited to elect the Chairperson of ECA, two Vice-Chairpersons of ECA (the first and the second Vice-Chairperson), and six other members of the Executive Committee.

The term of office of the elected members is for two years. After the first term served, ExCom members may be eligible for re-election for up to two additional two-year terms.

In order to ensure both rotation of members and continuity of service, when electing members of the Executive Committee, due consideration shall be given to the desirability of replacing no more than four members at the same time. That means that some of the current members may be invited to continue their service in the ExCom for another two-year term. ExCom members are kindly requested to consider their availability in that respect. The ExCom members available to serve for the next term will still need to be duly nominated, and elected by the Commission.

The ECA Secretariat is ready to support the ECA Chairperson in the management of nominations for the functions of the ECA Chairperson, the Vice-Chairpersons and the other members of the ExCom, with the following activities. In order to ensure openness, inclusiveness and transparency of the process, the ECA Secretariat is ready to invite all Members of ECA to submit nominations of candidates. The invitation would be shared with the Members of the region on 30 April 2021, and the deadline for the submissions would be 30 June 2021. The Secretariat would collect the nominations, check the eligibility of the nominees to be

elected and confirm it to respective submitters, with the information that elected nominees will be invited to participate in the first meeting of ExCom, which will be convened after the closure of the Session.

The Secretariat will make the list of eligible nominees available to the Members of ECA prior to the Session.

5. Meeting of the new ExCom

After the closure of the Session, a meeting of the newly elected ExCom will be convened. The agenda for the meeting will be approved by the outgoing ExCom, at the last meeting before the ECA Session.

The ExCom is invited to:

- agree the final wording of the main technical theme for the 42nd ECA Session;
- review the modality and the draft agenda for the 42nd Session of ECA and provide comments, as appropriate;
- confirm the role of the ECA Secretariat in the collection of nominations for the ExCom elections and in their presentation to the Members of ECA;
- agree that the draft agenda of the first meeting of the newly elected ExCom be drafted by the Secretariat and presented for approval at the last ExCom meeting before the 42nd ECA Session.

Annex 1

Draft annotated agenda for the 42nd Session of ECA

EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE
FORTY-SECOND SESSION
XX-XX September / October 2021 (Budapest / online)
PROVISIONAL ANNOTATED AGENDA

I. Introductory Items

1. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable
2. Appointment of the Rapporteur(s)

According to Rule II.3 of the Rules of Procedure of ECA, the Commission may elect one or more rapporteurs from among the representatives. Members are kindly invited to consider nominations for the function of the Rapporteur.

II. Main technical theme: Transforming food systems to (address and) prevent all forms of malnutrition in Europe and Central Asia

3. A critical thinking on transforming food systems in Europe and Central Asia to (address and) prevent all forms of malnutrition

The background paper will highlight specific aspects of food systems in Europe and Central Asia, where action is needed in order to attain better nutrition and ensure food security for all. Demonstrating the linkages between food systems and nutrition, a discussion will be facilitated on how to adopt a holistic food systems approach to provide more diverse diets, and at the same time, improve livelihoods, and protect the planet's natural resources. Members will be invited to discuss how food systems can be sustainably transformed to balance economic, environmental, and social dimensions, what needs to be done differently, by whom and how it can be done sustainably.

In the context of addressing all forms of malnutrition, attention will be given to consumers, including their role in driving sustainability, "access" by consumers to healthy diverse diets, and the role of policy measures e.g. subsidies, food prices, education, and social norms, in dietary changes.

4. How do you increase access to diverse, nutritious foods through better agricultural production?

Better agricultural production means investing in primary agriculture for sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems. The entry point on nutrition is inclusiveness, and actions that strengthen it. At the farm level, support may need to be diversified, with an angle on smallholders/family farms, who are mostly net food buyers. Connecting small-holders/family farms to markets should come into the picture (in-country and export markets, direct to consumer, or to value-addition processing sector, rural urban linkages), but the

emphasis should remain in primary production, to increase diversification at farm level. Protecting the environment and natural resources is central, through climate-smart agriculture and agroecology for example, in addition to policy decisions on biodiversity management, and greenhouse gas emissions. There is also a need to refer to better production at the national level (room for commercial farmers) and the importance of trade.

5. Territorial approaches and community development to drive local change and prevent all forms of malnutrition

Community-based territorial approaches are important drivers of change from local rural development to regional level within a country. Input from multiple stakeholder groups is central to shape local food systems, including aspects of production, markets and agri-business opportunities. The different development pathways outlined in the ERC paper on family farming and youth (<http://www.fao.org/3/nc486en/nc486en.pdf>) will be further discussed. The background paper will put a spotlight on addressing inequalities and leaving no one behind, and will emphasize the importance of collective action at community level building on local needs and constraints but also opportunities. This also includes the need for support to off-farm diversification (e.g. extension services targeting the needs of small rural business, starts-ups, etc.). The paper will discuss what is possible and how people can be enabled and heard.

III. Other matters

6. Advancing gender equality in the region: update on progress made, with special focus on FAO support to rural women in income diversification

The agenda item is a standing item for the Sessions of ECA. REU Gender Officer will introduce the report on progress made by the Regional Office in advancing gender equality in the region. The Members will be invited to review the document and present their views regarding the work on gender mainstreaming in the region.

7. Progress made by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia on the main recommendations of the Forty-first Session of ECA

Following the recommendations on plant health adopted by the 41st Session of ECA (1-2 October 2019), a REU Agricultural Officer will present an update on recent plant health-related activities carried out by FAO REU in the region. The Commission will be invited to note the report and provide comments, as deemed appropriate.

8. Election of the ECA Chairperson, the Vice-Chairpersons and the other Members of the Executive Committee

According to Rule II and Rule III.1 of the Rules of Procedure of ECA, the Commission will be invited to elect the Chairperson of ECA, two Vice-Chairpersons of ECA (the first Vice-Chairperson and the second Vice-Chairperson), and six other members of the Executive Committee, for a term of two years.

9. Any other business

10. Date and place of the forty-third Session of ECA

11. Review and adoption of the Report of the Session

Closing of the Session