

Report on the Capacity Building Workshop for the Turkmen IFAS Chairmanship

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, 24 – 26 August 2016

Introduction

Venue: the conference room of the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, Ashgabat

Participants: **20 experts** and decision-makers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources and the Ministry of Nature Protection, including Ambassador Akmuradov of the Turkmen MFA, who is in charge of preparing the Turkmen IFAS Chairmanship

The workshop was prepared, organised and led by Mr. Marton Krasznai, Regional Adviser of the UNECE and Mr. Saghit Ibatullin, former Chairperson of the Executive Committee of IFAS (EC IFAS) during the Kazakh Chairmanship. Ms. Inessa Vezhnovets, the former Chief Accountant of EC IFAS delivered training on financial and administrative matters. Funding for the workshop was provided by GIZ and UNECE.

Summary of the workshop:

The Turkmen MFA had several times signalled its interest in a capacity building workshop / training course for the Turkmen IFAS team. In consultation with the MFA (Ambassador Akmuradov) it was decided to organize the workshop back to back with the planning and coordination meeting for the Turkmen IFAS Chairmanship held in Ashgabat on 23 August.

The workshop consisted of two main parts. The first part, Information on organisational and operational matters and ASBP-3 was delivered by Mr. Saghit Ibatullin, the former Chairman of the Executive Committee of IFAS during the Kazakh Chairmanship. The second part, Information on cooperation with the donor community and partner organisations, and institutional and legal strengthening was introduced by Mr. Marton Krasznai.

The composition of the Turkmen team revealed that the Government was at that moment not fully prepared for the Chairmanship: while a few representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, State Committee for Environmental Protection and Land Resources and the MFA had a broad idea about IFAS, several participants did not even know why they had been selected to participate in the workshop. At the same time all participants welcomed the workshop and displayed serious interest in the programme.

The programme of the workshop followed the chronological order of preparations for the chairmanship: it started with a broad overview of strategic and political issues on the IFAS agenda and the elaboration of the outline programme document that served as overall guidance for the Kazakh Chairmanship. It continued with an explanation of the role of the 2009 IFAS summit and efforts to translate its Declaration into a plan of activities.

Participants showed great interest in the detailed description of the preparation and elaboration of ASBP-3 by the EC IFAS team during the Kazakh Chairmanship, supported by international experts funded by the European Union. In the course of a questions and answers session they realized that accepting / confirming the declaration by the Uzbek IFAS Chairmanship that ASBP-3 had been fully implemented and announcing that the Turkmen Chairmanship would start the elaboration of ASBP-4 would in fact mean that the Turkmen Chairmanship would have no projects to implement at least during its first two years in office. This warning caused serious concern among participants as the top

leadership had already approved the idea of elaboration of a new Aral Sea Basin Programme. Participants agreed that the proposal (in fact decision) to elaborate ASBP-4 should be combined with a decision to continue the implementation of ASBP-3 or ASBP-3bis, the more so as the absolute majority of regional projects in that Programme have not been implemented. The training programme devoted considerable time to explaining the importance of regular donor coordination and the role of donor conferences.

Participants showed great interest in the subject of institutional and legal strengthening of IFAS as they were aware that progress in this area was a precondition of the full return of Kyrgyzstan to the Fund. A detailed explanation of the process of elaboration of proposals on institutional and legal strengthening was given, including the preparation of the Discussion Paper (a diagnostic study on legal and institutional problems of the Fund) and the drafting of the Conceptual Elements (a draft institutional treaty that could replace the present legal basis composed of almost thirty loosely connected, obsolete and often contradicting documents, many of them lacking any legal force).

The need to strengthen cooperation with international organisations was repeatedly emphasized during the workshop. The workshop dealt in great detail with organisational and operational issues, like the planning, organisation and control of the work of the Executive Committee, the optimal structure of the Committee, public outreach and the role of the research community in supporting the work of IFAS.

Ms. Inessa Vezhnovets, the Chief Accountant of EC IFAS during the Kazakh Chairmanship participated in the general part of the workshop and in addition held a one day specialized course for those members of the Turkmen team who were likely to work on financial and administrative issues.

The workshop was very well received by the participants and during the concluding session Ambassador Akmuradov requested to repeat it (if possible in the form of a one-week training course) once the full team of the Turkmen IFAS Chairmanship is officially appointed.

Proposed follow-up action: to organise in Ashgabat a one-week training course with a similar programme but with the inclusion of practical exercises, so participants have an opportunity to resolve concrete problems that may come up in the course of the Chairmanship.

Annex:

Programme of the Capacity Building Workshop for Turkmen Experts on Organising the Work of the Executive Committee of IFAS in Turkmenistan

24 August

10.00 Opening of the Workshop

10.15 1. Strategic and political issues

1.1. Analysis of the situation and elaboration of the outline of the programme document

1.2. Involvement of the European Economic Commission of the UN (UNECE) in the process of supporting IFAS

11.30 Coffee break

11.45 2. Declaration of the Heads of State of Central Asia (2009, Almaty)

2.1. Setting the strategic objectives and tasks – the Kazakh experience

2.2. Plan of activities for the implementation of the tasks set by the Declaration

13.00 Lunch

14.00 3. Preparation and elaboration of ASBP-3

3.1. Main directions of ASBP-3

3.2. Framework document – technical requirements (project templates)

3.3. Participation of donors and partners

15.30 Coffee break

15.45 4. Expert support to the preparation of ASBP-3

4.1. National consultations

4.2. Donors conferences

4.3. Meeting of the IFAS Board

18.00 Conclusion of the first day

25 August

10.00 5. Institutional and legal strengthening of IFAS

5.1. Discussion paper – conceptual elements

5.2. Discussions in the working group

11.30 Coffee break

11.45 6. Strengthening cooperation with international organisations

13.00 Lunch

14.00 7. Organisation of the work of the Executive Committee of IFAS

7.1. Planning

7.2. Coordination and organisation

7.3. Control

16.00 Coffee break

16.15 8. Structure of the Executive Committee

8.1. Public outreach, the website

8.2. Support of research projects

18.00 Conclusion of the work

26. August

10. 00 – 18. 00 – Administrative and financial issues (a separate programme was prepared)