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**FAO European Forestry Commission matters: Presentation of
forestry activities of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and
Central Asia**

Food and Agriculture Organization European Forestry Commission

Forty-first session

Rome, 22-25 November 2021

Forestry activities of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The purpose of this paper is to summarise the on-going and planned forestry activities of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, together with regional work planning and priorities. Members may wish to review ongoing and planned work and provide guidance.



I. Introduction

1. The European and Central Asian countries represent very diverse characteristics in terms of climatic, social and economic conditions. These have an important impact on forest and other wooded lands. In REU region, in particular in Eastern and Southeast Europe, as well as Southeast Asia rural areas are still agriculturally important and under human influence for millennia. Fuelwood harvesting and logging at unsustainable levels, grazing, fires, mining and urban development have, in certain degrees, impacted forest ecosystems' integrity. Moreover, impacts of climate change, such as increased frequency of droughts and sinking of groundwater levels are predicted to further accelerate, and changes in species and their composition may further threaten the stability of forest ecosystems in the region. Central Asia and Caucasus have low forest cover and low forest growth. Fuelwood gathering and grazing lead to deforestation and continued forest degradation in particular in Central Asia but also in Eastern and Southeast Europe. Land degradation and desertification exacerbated by climate change are serious issues, mainly because of inappropriate agricultural practices.
2. Stemming from the regional priorities as approved by the 31st Regional Conference for Europe¹, the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) and the Sub-regional Office for Central Asia (SEC) have been supporting countries in their efforts to manage forest resources sustainably in the region through relevant forestry programmes and operational work under the FAO Strategic Objectives, the REU Regional Initiatives and the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

II. Regional work programme in FAO's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia for the biennium 2020-2021

3. FAO's Medium-Term Plan 2018-2021 and the Programme of Work and Budget 2020 – 21 of the Organization with its five Strategic Programmes contribute to 40 SDG targets measured by 52 SDG indicators, with a focus on SDG 2 (“zero hunger”) as well as SDGs 1 (“no poverty”), 8 (“decent work and economic growth”), 13 (“climate action”), 14 (“life below water”) and 15 (“life on land”).
4. At the regional level, the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) formulates regional positions on global policy and regulatory issues, advises on and identifies specific problems of the European and Central Asia region as well as agrees on priorities of FAO's work in agriculture, fisheries and forestry in the Europe and Central Asia region. These agreed regional priorities should be considered in the preparation of planning, programme and budget documents of the Organization. The ERC at its 31st Session in 2020 endorsed the following our priorities for the Region:
 - (a) Formulating effective policies, promoting digital innovation and facilitating rural livelihoods, with emphasis on smallholders, women and youth
 - (b) Food system transformation and support in exploring new markets through the alignment of trade, food safety and sanitary and phytosanitary policies to meet WTO commitments and promote value chain development
 - (c) Promoting sustainable natural resource management and facilitating resilience in agriculture, forestry and other land-use sectors, including mitigating and adapting to climate change, and
 - (d) Addressing food insecurity and reduction of all forms of malnutrition.
5. To implement these priorities, the Region has developed three regional initiatives focusing on small holders and family farm development; on agri-food trade and market integration; as well as on sustainable natural resource management in a changing climate. The latter responds to the urgent need to cope with the challenges of climate change as part of the Paris Agreement and emphasizes the cross-cutting nature of climate change. These regional priorities and initiatives are reflected in the FAO Programme of Work and Budget

¹ Report of the 31st Regional Conference for Europe <http://www.fao.org/3/mw908en/mw908en.pdf>.

for the Region and ensure a programmatic approach addressing regional priorities and supporting the implementation of country programmes by mobilizing the Organization's technical work across the strategic objectives and the cross-cutting themes (statistics, gender, nutrition, governance and climate change).

6. In addition, the Regional Initiatives allow to better respond to country demand and to develop the Country Programming Framework (CPF) in an integrated manner, as well as increase the impact of interventions and their contribution to achieving the SDGs. FAO's work in the country is determined by the CPF which defines the agreed thematic areas and activities for cooperation between FAO and the respective Government; as well as the Country Work Plans (CWP) which operationalize in the medium term the agreed outcomes as stated in the CPF and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF).

7. REU forestry work includes the following priorities:

(a) Ensure sustainable use and management of wood and non-wood forest resources through providing support to member countries in assessing and monitoring forest/tree and wildlife resources with due consideration to biodiversity conservation.

(b) Strengthen country capacity to deal with increasing threats posed by movement of pest and invasive species through expanded international trade coupled with local climatic change, and to implement the Guide to implementation of phytosanitary standards in forestry and other associated forest health guides.

(c) Strengthen country capacity to assess and monitor climate change impacts on forests and land resources, to restore degraded forest and landscapes, and support countries to adapt to climate change and mitigate its impact.

8. In line with the priorities REU has been organising or supporting:

(a) The 3rd annual network meeting of Forest Invasive Species Network for Europe and Central Asia, back-to-back with a technical training on "sustainable management of invasive species of nut trees and their management" in Bursa, Turkey, on 18-20 November 2019

(b) A Letter of Agreement on "Surveying and characterisation of local populations of the chestnut blight fungus (*Cryphonectria parasitica*) and identification of hypovirus strains in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and selected Balkan countries" with the Swiss Federal Research Institute (WSL) in 2019-2020.

(c) A Letter of Agreement on the "Provision of Technical Guidelines on sustainable management of NWFPs and the Status Reports on specific selected products" with the Chamber of Forest Engineers (OMO) in Turkey in 2019-2020.

(d) A global webinar on "Forest Invasive Species - the next global pandemic?" jointly organized with REUFIS and other regional forest invasive species networks on 29 July 2020.

(e) A webinar on "Protecting oak trees for future generations in Europe and Central Asia" jointly organized with REUFIS on 26 November 2020.

(f) A desk review carried out in 2021 on existing national and/or pest-specific contingency plans to prepare the formulation and implementation of national contingency plans with examples on bark beetles and other forest invasive species.

(g) A regional study conducted in 2021 on the Early Warning Early Action (EWEA) systems for invasive species outbreak prevention and mitigation in the Europe and Central Asia region.

(h) The preparation of the distribution map of the native tree species stands suitable for the seed harvesting, including development of Guidelines on how to use the map for conservation of genetic biodiversity in Central Asia and organization of related training workshop on the Guidelines (planned for 2021).

(i) The preparation of Guidelines on climate change impact on sustainable forest management in Central Asia, and organization of related conference (planned for 2021).

(j) The operationalization of FAO-Turkey Forestry Partnership Programme (FTFP).

9. The vast majority of FAO technical assistance has been provided through FAO implemented projects, either provided through FAO Regular Programme funds under FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) or through Extra-budgetary programme funds, mainly the Government Cooperative Programme (GCP) funds or Unilateral Trust Funds (UTF).

A. Countries and territories that requested technical assistance through project support from FAO to tackle country-specific challenges

1. Armenia

10. The World Bank ranked Armenia among the top four Climate Change Vulnerable Countries in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region with rural population heavily dependent on fuelwood for energy. FAO provided technical assistance to the Republic of Armenia for the development of a Green Climate Fund (GCF) project "Forest resilience of Armenia, enhancing adaptation and rural green growth via mitigation (GCP/ARM/008/GCF)" through two TCPf projects (TCP/ARM/3602, TCP/ARM/3703). The GCF project proposal has three components, namely on forest restoration investments, on fuelwood consumption as main driver of forest degradation, and on rural communities' involvement in forest governance and management. The project was approved by the GCF board meeting in August 2020 and the inception phase of this eight year project started in autumn 2021. The total investment is USD 19 168 240 including a GCF grant of USD 10 000 000.

11. To ensure an appropriate environment for GCF project implementation the Government of the Republic of Armenia decided to update relevant policy documents, in particular the National Forest Policy and Strategy (NFPS) and National Forest Program (NFP) adopted in 2004 and 2005 respectively. FAO provided technical assistance through a TCPf project to support Armenia to revise 1) the NFPS (2004) and 2) the NFP (2005), both revisions based on a national stakeholders consultation process. The TCPf "Technical Support for Revision of the National Forest Policy and Strategic framework" (TCP/ARM/3801) with a budget of USD 44 000 was implemented between March 2020 and September 2021.

2. Azerbaijan

12. Forest degradation and small-scale deforestation due to over-grazing, livestock raising and illegal cuttings and gaps in current management practices are the main challenges for forestry in Azerbaijan. The "Forest resources assessment and monitoring to strengthen forest knowledge framework in Azerbaijan" project focuses on introduction of sustainable forest management to provide social and economic benefits, improve the quality of existing forests and increase the forest carbon stocks through carbon sequestration. The implementation period of the project is 2018-2021 with USD 1 400 000 from GEF 6.

13. Land degradation, habitat fragmentation, overharvesting, pollution from waste, invasive species and climate change are the main causes of the decline in biodiversity in Azerbaijan. The project "Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity: Strengthening Azerbaijan's system of protected areas through improved governance and management" focuses on strengthening the effectiveness of Azerbaijan's protected area system to deliver Global Environmental Benefits using a landscape approach to governance and management. Implementation period of the project is 2021-2025 with USD 2 639 726 from GEF 7.

14. Support to income generation through beekeeping activities in addition to adequate consideration of pollination within forest management plans are high on the agenda of the relevant Ministries. Both concerns of the Government will be addressed through the project "Strategy for safeguarding forest biodiversity through promotion of beekeeping - Integrating pollinators into Sustainable Forest Management Plans". It aims to assist in developing the country's capacity and knowledge to integrate biodiversity (especially pollinators) into

sustainable forest management plans in Azerbaijan. The implementation period of the project is 2021-2022 with UDS 40 000 from TCPf.

15. A concept note was developed for a project on “Assessment of the environmental conditions and degradation degree of local areas in Azerbaijan”. The aim is to develop a proposal for the assessment of natural resources in recently liberated areas of Azerbaijan.

3. Bosnia and Herzegovina

16. Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is rich in forest resources, 53 percent of its territory is covered by forests. Forests represent the key source of income for many small municipalities, as well as the key source of energy essential for livelihoods in rural areas. However, there is also the uneven use of forest areas due to presence or absence of forest road to access the resources, putting at risk the ecological sustainability of easily accessible forests. At the same time, good examples from abroad of making use of fast-growing species in plantation forests is widely ignored (less than 0,1 percent of the total area in BiH is plantation forests), and the implementation of a strategic approach to establishing plantation forests is absent despite their potential benefits in terms of reducing the pressure on natural forests to meet the demand for forest products (roundwood, fibre, fuelwood and non-wood forest products) wood and achieving multiple economic benefits in a period much shorter than in the case of natural forests. FAO provided technical assistance through a TCPf project to support Bosnia and Herzegovina to 1) undertake an assessment of potential locations for plantation forests, focusing on fast-growing tree species along rivers); and 2) prepare a database and guidelines for the establishment and management of plantation forests. The TCPf “Potentials of fast-growing plantation forests” (TCP/BIH/3802) with a budget of USD 63 000 is implemented between May 2021 and April 2022.

4. Georgia

17. Forests and other tree resources (fruit and palm trees) are of exceptional importance for Georgia, both in terms of the overall economy and livelihoods of the rural population, and in terms of protection of the environment and biodiversity. Currently there are 20 invasive pest species (forest and horticultural) identified in the Caucasus region with the potential to severely threaten the livelihood and environment of Georgia. FAO provides technical assistance within the framework of the EU-UNDP Rural Development Programme (Phase II) to secure agriculture-based livelihoods by strengthening the capacity of local actors to, among other things, control the four main invasive species (Red palm weevil, Boxwood moth, Chestnut blight and brown marmorated stink bug). A project “funded by EU under ENPARD III” (GEO/18/001/01/99) with a budget of USD 900 000 (only for forestry-related activities) was implemented between September 2018 and September 2021.

5. Kyrgyzstan

18. The FAO GEF project on “Sustainable Management of Mountainous Forest and Land Resources under Climate Change Conditions in Kyrgyzstan” has been successfully completed in May 2021 with all expected outputs. The project aimed at contributing to the sustainable management and enhanced productivity of mountainous silvo-agro-pastoral ecosystems and improved mountain livelihoods in the Kyrgyz Republic. It introduced a more integrated cross-sectoral approach that considers the role of land and forest resources in the carbon balance, while generating multiple global environmental and socio-economic benefits by sustaining flows of critical ecosystem services, such as climate and water regulation, soil erosion control and regulation of natural hazards.

19. In Kyrgyzstan, livestock is the most important source of income, the primary source of nutrition, and a financial safety net for the rural poor. Climate change and the poor management of natural resources have led to overgrazing, increased forest degradation, and serious land erosion. The GCF Project “Carbon Sequestration through Climate Investment in Forests and Rangelands in Kyrgyz Republic” will reduce the drivers of land degradation and the emissions this causes by supporting national institutions and promoting the participatory and ecosystem-based sustainable management of natural resources and green growth investments. The project will include the introduction of integrated rangeland and forestry resource planning and community-based investments in natural forest regeneration,

sustainable forest management, afforestation and reforestation. The project will secure, mainstream and scale up the enabling environment for diversification, increase of efficiency and competitiveness reducing the dependency of communities on direct uses of resources (i.e., wood and pasture) and increasing their reliance on ecosystem services such as protection (reduced climate vulnerability), biodiversity and diversified livelihood opportunities. The implementation period of the project will be 2021-2029 with USD 50 000 000 from the GCF and other co-financiers.

20. FAO developed a project under GEF 7 on development of a comprehensive legal framework on biosafety in accordance with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in Kyrgyzstan. The project PIF was approved on June 2021, expected GEF contribution is 1.5 million USD. The full-size project document preparation will be initiated soon.

6. Kosovo²

21. Two identified challenges in the forest sector, namely 1) the insufficient availability and quality of data on forests and 2) the creation of employment opportunities for rural poor were in the focus of the previously FAO implemented, Finnish-funded forestry project (GCP/KOS/005/FIN). Upon request and financial support of Kosovo FAO provides technical assistance to enhance data availability and to design employment programmes for the forest sector. The Unilateral Trust Fund (UTF) project “Complementary support to Implementation of the Forest Policy and Strategy in Kosovo” (UTF/KOS/006/KOS) with a budget of USD 210 829 is implemented between September 2016 and March 2022.

22. Formulation of the FAO GCP project on “Support to strengthening sustainable and multipurpose forest management to improve rural livelihoods and address climate change in Kosovo- GCP/KOS/007/SWE” was completed and funding agreement with Sweden (2.5 million USD) was signed by the end of 2019. An additional funding agreement with the EU (1.5 million USD) is expected to be signed in 2021 to fill the funding gap. The project aims to manage forests more efficiently using a multi-purpose approach, establish a good legal baseline for forest management, and support the forestry-based, gender-sensitive value-chains for poverty alleviation. Project implementation initiated in 2020.

7. Moldova

23. Forests of the Republic of Moldova are considered an important strategic natural and renewable resource with the potential to contribute to the national economic development. There has never been a nation-wide systematic forest inventory in the country, but adequate information on forests is critical for policy and decision making, FAO provides technical assistance to Moldova to develop the human and technical capacities, as well as to address institutional responsibilities for designing and implementing a state-of-the-art national forest inventory (NFI). The provided assistance includes the provision of preliminary land cover assessment to help design the first NFI. The TCPf “Developing the institutional capacity of the National Forestry Agency in the preparation of NFI” (TCP/MOL/3702) with a budget of USD 60 000 is implemented between May 2019 and Dec 2021.

24. However, the fragmentation of forest resources and their uneven distribution across the country is making it difficult to address the challenge of climate change, enhance living conditions for the population and provide wood and non-wood products without putting at risk the biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration potential of the forest sector. Aiming at improving the situation, the Government set the goal to increase forested areas up to 15 percent of the total land area by 2020 and to improve at the same time the condition of the existing severely degraded forests. However, the progress towards this end is slow due to limited technical and institutional capacities in the country. FAO provided technical assistance through a TCPf project to undertake pre-feasibility studies in relation to the climate change adaptation and mitigation potential of the forest sector, based on which a project idea will be prepared and eventual a fully-fledged project proposal to be submitted to the GCF. The TCPf “Promoting sustainable and climate resilient management of natural resources”

² References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

(TCP/ MOL/3705) with a budget of USD 52 000 is implemented between November 2020 and October 2021.

8. Serbia

25. The Forest Law and Law on Nature Protection provide the main legal framework for forest conservation and management in the Republic of Serbia. The Forestry Development Strategy sets the operational framework for forest development and planning, defining conservation and improvement of biodiversity as a part of the concept of sustainable forest management (SFM). FAO together with national stakeholders developed a GEF project addressing barriers for applying SFM throughout Serbia. To this end the project aims at (i) setting up a Forest Information System and implementing the second NFI in Serbia; (ii) strengthening coordination and dialogue between public and private stakeholders, (iii) strengthening capacities to implement SFM practices; (iv) designing incentive mechanisms for private forest owners to engage in SFM, and (v) implement new approaches in forest management planning and implementation in two pilot regions. The total financing of the project “Contribution of sustainable forest management to a low emission and resilient development in Serbia” (GCP/SRB/002/GFF) amounts to USD. 29 454 799, with GEF contribution of USD 3 274 658, and is implemented between January 2018 and December 2022.

26. FAO and national counterparts have also developed a follow-up project under the GEF7 programme on “Forest and landscape restoration of degraded lands in Serbia” which has been submitted to the GEF secretariat for eventual approval by the Board. Total indicative total financing will be USD 6 000 000 with GEF contribution of USD 875 891. The tentative period of implementation is January 2022 to December 2025.

27. Upon request by the Government, FAO furthermore provided technical assistance to the Republic of Serbia through a TCPf project to undertake pre-feasibility studies in relation to the climate change adaptation and mitigation potential of the forest sector and to eventually develop a GCF project proposal. The TCPf “Forest Resilience to CC and BD loss via mitigation and adaptation investments” (TCP/ SRB/3801) with a budget of USD 53 000 was implemented between April 2021 and September 2021. Based on the results of the TCPf a concept note for a GCF project has been submitted for review by the GCF secretariat.

9. Turkey

28. Human pressure on the limited surface water and groundwater resources; land degradation caused by soil erosion, floods and landslides; declining groundwater tables and drying out of wetlands are the main challenges in the Konya Closed Basin of Turkey. “Sustainable land management and climate-Friendly agriculture in Konya Closed Basin” project focuses on sustainability of farm and land management and adaptation and dissemination of low carbon technologies. Implementation period of the project is 2015-2021 with USD 5 700 000 from GEF 5.

29. Expanding cultivation and infrastructure growth, overuse of pastures by domestic livestock, medicinal plants collection, and poaching of rare species (Gazelle and Great bustard) threaten the integrity of steppes in Turkey. Species and ecosystems are affected due to the loss of connectivity in the fragmented landscape. “Conservation and sustainable management of Turkey’s steppe ecosystems” project focuses on steppe conservation through protected area management and mainstreaming steppe conservation into production landscapes. The implementation period of the project is 2016-2022 with USD 2 300 000 from GEF 5.

30. The development of for the FAO GEF project on “Biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management in Kaz Daglari” was initiated in November 2020. The project aims to improve biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management in the Kaz Daglari region in Turkey through protected areas and mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into production landscapes for environmental and socio-economic benefits. The expected budget of the project is USD 4 600 000. The final draft of the full project document is expected to be ready in October 2021 for the submission to the GEF secretariat.

31. Two FAO UTF projects were developed with Turkey in July/August 2020 for the development of Feasibility Study and Environmental and Social Instruments for obtaining loan from the World Bank for the Bolaman Basin Rehabilitation Project (UTF/TUR/067/TUR) and Cekerek Basin Rehabilitation Project (UTF/TUR/068/TUR). The two projects were successfully completed with all expected outputs in July 2021. Total funding for both projects were USD 750 000.

10. Ukraine

32. The promotion of restoration of degraded landscapes in the forest-steppe and steppe zones is one of the priorities in Ukraine. The FAO together with national stakeholders developed and implements a GEF project which aims at 1) creating an enabling environment for integrated natural resources management (INRM) practices; 2) restoring productivity and resilience of production landscapes through INRM; and 3) learning and sharing of lessons learned. Component 2 comprises developing capacities for improved management of shelterbelts, coupled with field demonstrations of rehabilitation and multipurpose management (erosion control, carbon sequestration, non-wood forest products). The total financing of the project “Integrated Natural Resources Management in Degraded Landscapes in the Forest-Steppe and Steppe Zones of Ukraine” (GCP/UKR/004/GFF) amounts to USD 12 099 751, with GEF contribution of USD 1 776 484 (component 2 about 60%), and is implemented between November 2017 and July 2020.

33. Formulation of the forestry component of the FAO EU program in Ukraine (Support to Agricultural and Food Policy Implementation/Europeaid/137-136/DH/SER/UA) was completed in 2020 and funding agreement was done with EU at the beginning of 2021. Total funding for the forestry component is about USD 600 000. The forestry component of the program aims to strengthen enabling environment for the forestry sector to help secure the long-term sustainability of forest management and to improve evidence-based policymaking in the sector. The project implementation started in March 2021.

11. Uzbekistan

34. Inadequate data on forests for management planning, limited carbon sequestration, lacking forest cover and degradation due to livestock grazing, unsustainable harvesting of timber, fuel wood and non-forest products are the main challenges in Uzbekistan. The project “Sustainable management of forests in mountain and valley areas” focuses on introduction of sustainable forest management and improved status of forest and tree resources. Implementation period of the project is 2017-2022 with USD 3 100 000 from GEF6.

B. Technical assistance through subregional project support from FAO to tackle challenges common to a number of countries

35. Both the Republic of Belarus and Ukraine have great potential for forestry development, however, there are new emerging threats associated with extreme weather events. Natural disturbances such as severe and protracted drought, combined with poor silvicultural practises cause limited water and nutrition availability. As a consequence, on thousands of hectares conifer trees have become stressed and susceptible to bark beetle attacks reaching severe outbreak levels. FAO provided technical assistance in analysing the underlying causes for the outbreaks of various bark beetle species involved in the dieback of pine forests. Available data and information on current health status of pine forests and related pest management activities in Belarus and Ukraine as well as in neighbouring countries were reviewed and primary causes of dieback of pine forests were validated through an expert meeting. International forest health experts shared their experience with large-scale pest outbreaks and management from other regions and continents in the workshop and assisted in identifying appropriate pest management measures and associated capacity building needs for Belarus and Ukraine. Due to the limited institutional capacities in forest health at national level, the Governments of Belarus and Ukraine requested technical assistance from FAO in implementing an emergency action plan for combating dieback of pine forests and developing a long-term, coordinated solution to reduce and control the periodic incidence of bark beetle infestations. A regional project on “Strengthening the

resilience of pine forest to bark beetle outbreaks and associated dieback” (TCP/RER/3801) with a budget of USD 405 000 is being implemented from 15 July 2020 to 14 July 2022.

36. Overuse and degradation of temperate deserts by overgrazing, firewood collection and infrastructure development, losses of ecosystem services and biodiversity, and lacking integration of ecosystem services and biodiversity into land management practices are significant conservation challenges in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. “Central Asian Desert Initiative (CADI): Conservation and sustainable use of cold winter deserts in Central Asia” project focuses on conservation and management of ecosystem services and biodiversity across borders and strengthening of stakeholder capacities through participatory approaches. The implementation period of the project is 2017-2019 by FAO and its partner, the Michael Succow Foundation (based in Germany) with USD 1 200 000 from the Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-University Greifswald (through the Internationale Klima Initiative - IKI).

37. Forest landscapes have been degraded throughout Central Asia due to unauthorized fuelwood removal, logging for commercial purposes and overgrazing by domestic livestock. Established forest institutions are understaffed and underfunded to carry out forest management activities and enforce forest protection effectively. These challenges will be addressed through “Forest Restoration Improvement for Environmental Development and Sustainability in Central Asia – FRIENDS” project. The project aims to develop national capacities to successfully conduct large-scale forest and other wooded lands restoration, by enhancing know-how to prevent degradation. The implementation period of the project is 2021-2023 with UDS 2 000 000 from FAO-Turkey Forestry Programme.

C. Regional work on Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs)

38. FAO supported the European Forest Institute (EFI) in the implementation of the project “Innovation Networks of Cork, Resins and Edibles in the Mediterranean basin” (INCREDIBLE). As member of the Advisory Board, FAO provided guidance to the implementation of the project that aimed to “foster communication and knowledge transfer to highlight how enhanced fluxes and multi-actor networks can help to seed real and effective innovation of NWFPs in the Mediterranean and contribute to business discovery, social innovation and the co-design of locally adapted innovative value chains.”³ Furthermore, FAO co-hosted in March 2021 with EFI and other project partners the “Policy Forum: Untapping the potential of NWFP for Europe’s green economy”⁴ and is preparing jointly with EFI a white paper on “NWFP for people, nature and the green economy. Recommendations for policy priorities in Europe”⁵. The White Paper indicates how leveraging the potential of NWFP can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and building back better a more sustainable post-COVID bioeconomy.

39. In addition, a Letter of Agreement has been implemented with the Regional Centre for Forestry and Rural Development (REFORD) in North Macedonia on “A regional study on the status of non-wood forest products (NWFPs) in selected Western Balkan countries” in 2021. The results should become available in spring 2022.

III. Regional work programme development in FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia for the next biennium

40. As of 2022 a new Strategic Framework 2022–2031⁶ and Medium-Term Plan 2022–2025⁷, both approved at the 42nd session of the FAO Conference in June 2021, will be in place, seeking to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive,

³ See <https://incredibleforest.net/content/objectives>.

⁴ See <https://incredibleforest.net/incredible-policy-forum>.

⁵ The White Paper is being finalized. The draft version, which was discussed during the Policy Forum is available at

https://incredibleforest.net/sites/default/files/nwfp_white_paper_draft_for_consultation_9032021.pdf.

⁶ Strategic Framework 2022–2031 <http://www.fao.org/3/ne577en/ne577en.pdf>.

⁷ Medium-Term Plan 2022–2025 <http://www.fao.org/3/ne576en/ne576en.pdf>.

resilient and sustainable, agri-food systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind.

41. The four betters represent an organising principle for how FAO intends to contribute directly to SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger), and SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) as well as to supporting achievement of the broader SDG agenda, which is crucial for attaining FAO's overall vision. The betters reflect the interconnected economic, social and environmental dimensions of agri-food systems. As such, they also encourage a strategic and systems-oriented approach within all FAO's interventions.

42. An overarching theme of the SDGs is to Leave No One Behind (LNOB), requiring global action to reach the poorest of the poor and fight inequality. FAO is uniquely positioned to play a role in achieving these goals, based on the close intersection of agriculture, rural areas, and poverty, and FAO's involvement in many cross-cutting interventions in these areas. Poverty reduction calls for a multidimensional and multisectoral approach, requiring a combined effort from all FAO divisions and offices to reduce poverty and achieve SDG 1.

43. Twenty Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) will guide FAO on filling critical gaps and putting in place the conditions needed to drive the changes that will ultimately contribute to the achievement of the selected SDG targets. By fully embracing the SDGs, FAO moves away from bespoke targets and indicators and adopts a common language.

44. FAO will also apply four cross-cutting/cross-sectional "accelerators": (i) technology, (ii) innovation, (iii) data, and (iv) complements (governance, human capital, and institutions) in all its programmatic interventions to accelerate impact while minimizing trade-offs.

45. At the regional level, the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) continues to formulate regional positions on global policy and regulatory issues, advise on and identify specific problems of the European and Central Asia region as well as agrees on priorities of FAO's work in agriculture, fisheries and forestry in the Europe and Central Asia region. These agreed regional priorities are considered in the preparation of planning, programme and budget documents of the organization. The ERC at its 32nd Session in 2020⁸ acknowledged the importance of the proposed revised priorities for the Region:

(a) Formulating effective policies, promoting digital innovation and facilitating rural livelihoods, with emphasis on smallholders, women and youth;

(b) Food system transformation and support in exploring new markets through the alignment of trade, food safety and sanitary and phytosanitary policies to meet WTO commitments and promote value chain development;

(c) Promoting sustainable natural resource management and facilitating resilience in agriculture, forestry and other land-use sectors, including mitigating and adapting to climate change; and

(d) Addressing food insecurity and reducing all forms of malnutrition.

46. As for the 2020-2021 programming, the three regional initiatives focusing on Empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods and poverty reduction (RI-1); on Improving agrifood trade and market integration (RI-2); as well as on Sustainable natural resource management under a changing climate (RI-3), will enable the translation of these priorities into a regional programmatic framework. These regional priorities and initiatives will be reflected in the FAO Programme of Work and Budget for the Region and ensure a programmatic approach in the implementation of country programmes, taking full account of the four aspirations, the PPAs, the accelerators as well as the cross-cutting themes (gender, youth, inclusion).

47. The Regional Initiatives also facilitate the development country demand driven CPFs in an integrated manner. From 2020 onwards, the CPFs are fully derived from the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for a specific country

⁸ Report of the 32nd Regional Conference for Europe <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/regional-conferences/erc32/erc20rep/en/>

and define the agreed thematic areas and activities for cooperation between FAO and the respective Government.

48. As in the past, FAO's regional multi-disciplinary Programme of Work will be formulated in line with the respective CPF and in light of the regional priorities. Following internal iterative work planning process engaging Country Offices, Regional Office, HQ Offices and Technical Divisions, FAO's respective Regional Commissions (specifically on forestry, the European Forestry Commission) and Global Statutory Bodies (specifically on forestry, the Committee on Forestry) in coordination with the Office of Strategy, Programme and Budget, the Organization formulates its country and regional workplans. Following corporate review, the approved workplans inform endorsement of the biennial Programme of Work and Budget by FAO Council's session held in December preceding the first year of the new biennium.

IV. Points for consideration

49. The Commission may wish to encourage countries in the region to:

(a) More effectively incorporate integrated landscape approaches amongst various land management agencies responsible for agriculture, forestry, fisheries and livestock management into relevant national planning processes and enhance intersectoral collaboration at the landscape level;

(b) Require all formulators of country projects to integrate poverty considerations and conduct poverty analysis when designing projects, take advantage of entry points to address poverty, and ensure interventions are inclusive and Leave No One Behind.

(c) promote the sustainable production and consumption of NWFP by i) securing the conservation and sustainable supply of NWFP; ii) building competitive, equitable and sustainable value chains; iii) improving transparency, data and information flow on NWFP and iv) establishing enabling conditions in policy, financial and innovation terms;

(d) Provide financial and/or in-kind contributions to support the FAO regional forestry programmes, in particular on phytosanitary standards in forestry in the region, and FAO project work, in particular with view to providing complementary funding for GEF and GCF projects.

50. The Commission may wish to recommend FAO to:

(a) Strengthen the integration of incorporate integrated landscape approaches in operational forestry work in the region, as well as into existing and future REU Regional Initiatives, considering the multi-functional roles of forests;

(b) Integrate poverty considerations into the design and formulation of projects, in particular large project such as GEF and GCF, applying approaches such as poverty measurement, poverty profiles, poverty mapping, and poverty-based targeting;

(c) Continue to support natural resource management including forests through the harmonization and strengthening of national policy, financing, incentives, taxation and governance frameworks and measures, including regulations, standards and monitoring for forest management interventions and practices, and support capacity development in this regard;

(d) Continue supporting countries and other stakeholders, including the private sector, to promote coordinated action enhancing the sustainable production and consumption of NWFP, including capacity building related to the collection and dissemination of statistics on NWFP; and

(e) Continue to support the Forest Invasive Species Network for Europe and Central Asia (REUFIS) and its activities, in particular in organising topical trainings on emerging invasive species.