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EFC matters

**Contributions of FAO's work in forestry to the
implementation of the SDGs within the scope of FAO-REU
Regional Initiatives**

Food and Agriculture Organization

European Forestry Commission

Thirty-ninth session

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

In order to support regional level work and focus on specific outcomes, the FAO European Regional Conference (ERC) identified regional priorities and Regional Initiatives in alignment with the FAO Strategic Objectives at Outcome level.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the contributions of FAO's work in forestry to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals within the framework of the overall priorities of FAO in the Region and its Regional Initiatives. Members may wish to review ongoing and planned work and give guidance on further synergies to ensure that the universality and connectedness of the SDGs is taken into consideration across the sectors.

I. Introduction

1. Food and agriculture are critical to achieving the SDGs, allowing for integrated approaches and addressing the challenges of sustainable development in its three dimensions. In fact, the sustainable development of food and agriculture systems is recognized as a key enabler for SDG implementation, and marked as a priority cross-cutting issue in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, identifying the financial and non-financial means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda, and complementing SDG 17, dedicated to the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development and Means of Implementation.

2. FAO's Strategic Objectives promote a holistic approach to food security, nutrition, poverty eradication and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems, providing tools for integrated implementation of SDGs, and allowing FAO to deliver comprehensive support to its Members. This is the result of FAO's full engagement in the post-2015 negotiations, with its knowledge and expertise fully recognized by negotiators and equally fully reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. FAO has reviewed its Strategic Framework and prepared its Medium Term Plan 2018-2021 to ensure that its work is harmonized with the 2030 Agenda. FAO's 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")¹.

4. At the regional level, the FAO Regional Conferences are providing a forum for consultation on matters pertaining to the mandate of the Organization including any special issues of interest to the members in the region concerned. 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 priority areas of work, which should be taken into account in the preparation of planning, programme and budget documents of the organization.

5. In order to implement these priorities, the Region has developed two regional initiatives focusing on small holders and family farm development as well as on agrifood trade and market integration. In addition, to cope with the challenges of climate change as part of the Paris Agreement and to emphasize the cross cutting nature of climate change, a third regional initiative related to sustainable natural resource management in a changing climate is being developed. These regional priorities and initiatives are reflected in the FAO Programme of Work Budget for the Region.

6. The technical commissions of the Region review technical aspects and issues of importance in the areas of agriculture (European Commission on Agriculture - ECA), forestry (European Forestry Commission - EFC), fisheries and aquaculture (European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission – EIFAAC, and Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission-CACfish). Technical commissions' recommendations complement and inform discussions during the ERC on the Programme of Work, its strategic focus, and the Regional Initiatives. The results of discussions and recommendations stemming from the ECA, EFC, EIFAAC, and CACfish should be used as a basis for preparation of the topics of the ERC for policy discussion and adoption as well as preparation of the priorities for the region.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mt357e.pdf>

II. Regional Initiatives of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU)

7. The 30th session of the ERC in 2016 endorsed future priorities for the Region:

- a) Formulation of effective policies for sustainable and inclusive growth for farmers and the rural population with emphasis on small holders and family farms;
- b) Help reach new markets through alignment of trade, food safety and SPS policies to meet the World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments and through value chain development to meet international food safety quality requirements;
- c) Sustainable natural resource management, combating land degradation and desertification, mitigation and adaptation of climate change;
- d) Addressing food insecurity and reduction of all forms of malnutrition.

8. Furthermore, the ERC reviewed and endorsed the scope of the Regional Initiatives “Empowering Small Holders and Family Farms” and “Agri-Food Trade and Regional Integration”. Based on the defined regional priorities as well as the lessons learned from the implementation of the Regional Initiatives a third Initiative “Sustainable Natural Resource Management under a changing climate” was added to the existing two for implementation in 2018-19.

Regional Initiative 1 (RI-1) – Empowering Smallholders and Family Farms for improved livelihoods and poverty reduction – ongoing

9. The Regional Initiative will continue to support smallholders and family farmers, women and men, at both policy and farm levels, to increase their competitiveness, improve rural livelihoods and contribute to reducing rural poverty. It has two technical components: (i) Support to innovative practices for increased sustainable agricultural production; (ii) Support to enhanced access to natural resources and rural employment including social protection through multi-sectoral rural development policy support and community development including improved access to value chains for smallholders.

10. RI-1 is primarily built upon the legacy of the UN International Year of Family Farming (2014), as well as on the “Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests” (VGTT), and existing relevant partnerships in the European Region. The RI-1 programme is mainly focusing on SDG 1, SDG 2, and SDG 8, but will also contribute to SDG 4, SDG 5 and SDG 10.

Regional Initiative 2 (RI-2) – Improving Agrifood Trade and Market Integration

11. The objective of the Regional Initiative is to support member countries in strengthening the national food control systems, enhancing the agri-food trade policy environment for small and medium-sized agricultural and food producers, and in rising capacities for the participation in international SPS related standards setting bodies (Codex Alimentarius, IPPC, OIE). In pursuit of this goal, the RI-2 will enhance capacity development both for trade agreements and for domestic food safety and quality standards, and help develop supportive environment for trade. It has three technical components: (i) Capacity development on WTO trade agreements and effective use of WTO procedures; (ii) Implementation of global food quality and safety standards including sanitary, animal health and phytosanitary issues; and (iii) Support to export diversification and promotion.

12. RI-2 further contributes at the policy level to RI-1 actions to increase the rural poor’s access to markets and value chains and to creating an enabling environment for the scope of RI-3 by strengthening institutional capacity for implementing policies for sustainable production. It aims to improve the capacity of governments and stakeholders to use financial

resources to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition. The RI-2 is specifically targeting SDG 2, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG10, SDG 12, SDG 15 and SDG 17.

Regional Initiative 3 (RI-3): Sustainable Natural Resource Management under a changing climate

13. The objective of the Initiative is to support member countries of the region to address the interlinked challenges of climate-induced changes and degradation of natural resources through transitioning to sustainable food, agricultural and energy systems that also contribute to meeting national SDG targets and Paris Agreement commitments. RI-3 has three technical components: (i) Support in the development and implementation of sustainable food, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, livestock and landscape production systems; (ii) Support policy dialogue, harmonization of legislation and incentive/taxation and the alignment and integration of climate change and environmental issues into national policy and development frameworks; and (iii) Capacity development.

14. The use of landscape approaches, optimising ecosystem services and using different soil/water management and production systems including forestry, cropping, livestock and aquaculture can greatly contribute to increasing incomes from, and reliability of food production, and reducing the detrimental impacts of extreme climatic events. However, achieving this requires an approach that identifies the optimal interventions and creates the needed enabling environment to allow stakeholders to make the required transitions.

15. RI-3 is closely linked to government's obligations to international environmental conventions on Biodiversity, Desertification and Climate Change as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF). In particular, RI-3 provides that platform for FAO to support member countries in achieving their NDCs under the Paris Agreement. RI-3 also provides the interlinkages of REU countries to international platforms for knowledge exchange and support, for example the Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture (GACSA), including the action group on knowledge. RI-3 will in particular address SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 12, SDG 13, and SDG 15.

III. Contributions of FAO's work in forestry

16. FAO is supporting sustainable management of forest resources in the region through its relevant forestry programmes and operational work under the FAO Strategic Objectives, which ultimately contribute to the implementation of the REU Regional Initiatives and the relevant SDGs. In addition to the thematic works, they require policy integration and a cross-sectoral approach involving all relevant sectors in order to create the necessary enabling environment. All of FAO's forestry work contributes to the achievement of the SDGs and much of it could be linked to the Regional Initiatives. The following paragraphs provide some examples to illustrate these links and are no meant to be exhaustive.

17. The Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) provides support to forest and farm producer organizations (smallholders, rural women's groups, local communities and indigenous peoples' institutions) to increase their technical and business capacities to play their precious role in fighting against climate change and improving food security. FFF is a cross sectoral and multi layered programme that focuses on the small scale private sector which is large in terms of numbers and thus represents an important stakeholder group.

18. The FFF is currently active in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Implementing similar approaches or programmes or expanding FFF activities to the Region would provide substantial contributions to RI-1 and the relevant SDGs through inclusive livelihood

approaches, increased entrepreneurship, access to markets and finance through equitable value chain and business development services within Forest and Farm Producer Organizations (FFFPOs), and equitable access to social and cultural services (SDG 1, SDG2, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10, and SDG 12). Such activities would also contribute to RI-2, through more inclusive governance and cross-sectorial processes lead to enabling policies, improved and equitable access to social and cultural services (SDG 2, SDG 8, SDG 10, and SDG 17). The FFF approach and activities are also strongly linked to RI-3 and could improve delivery of landscape scale mitigation, adaptation and resilience for climate change through direct engagement of FFPOs and integration with inclusive livelihood approaches (SDG 2, SDG 13, and SDG 15).

19. The Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLR Mechanism) aims to significantly contribute to scaling-up, monitoring and reporting on FLR activities to a level needed to meet the Bonn Challenge and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, particularly Aichi Biodiversity Target 15. For this, it helps to coordinate and facilitate the development and implementation of projects, programmes and related activities in FAO member countries, in full collaboration with other key actors. The FLR Mechanism supports national policy processes and builds an enabling environment for FLR. It also explores investment opportunities and greater involvement of the private sector to develop appropriate value chains linked to forest and landscape restoration opportunities.

20. Declining land productivity and biodiversity loss remain serious problems in the Region. Implementation of restoration and sustainable land management will contribute to RI-3 and the relevant SDGs. Landscape restoration will be a key element in achieving SDG 15, halting and reversing land and natural habitat degradation, as well as the SDGs linked to poverty (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2, especially food and nutrition security) clean water (SDG 6) and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8). The FLR Mechanism could be a useful instrument for supporting forest and landscape restoration in the Region.

21. The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGTT) are a tool to promote responsible governance of all forms of tenure: public, private, communal, indigenous, customary, and informal. Their overarching goals are to achieve food security for all and support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security. The Guidelines are also intended to contribute to achieving sustainable livelihoods, social stability, housing security, rural development, environmental protection, and sustainable social and economic development.

22. The use of the VGTT in the region by multi-disciplinary teams in a cross cutting manner can improve governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests for the benefit of all, and provide the needed foundation to eradicate hunger and poverty, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized people. Implementation of the VGTT in the Region will contribute to the RI-1 and RI-3 and SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 5, and SDG 17.

23. The FAO Guide to Implementation of Phytosanitary Standards in Forestry helps foresters to deal with increasing threats posed by pest movement in expanded international trade coupled with local climatic change which may increase the potential for establishment of pests in new areas. FAO is currently implementing the guide and contributing in all regions, including Europe and Central Asia, to strengthening country capacities to minimize transboundary pest introduction and spread. The implementation of the guide contributes to SDG 13 and 15.

24. FAO is facilitating regional Forest Invasive Species Networks in Asia Pacific, Near East, Africa, and South Cone countries to address and manage the increased threats to forest health from forest pests and diseases, invasive species, climate change and abiotic disturbances. In 2016, FAO facilitated the establishment of forest invasive species network for Europe and

Central Asia (REUFIS) and its inaugural meeting will be held in Budapest Hungary in October 2017. Detailed information is provided under the EFC document: FO:EFC/2017/14. The activities of the networks are in line with SDG 15.

25. Through its project work in the region, FAO provides assessment tools, methodologies and data (including GIS and mapping) to evaluate the impacts of current practices as well as climate change, and supports defining policy and investment options and evidence based planning and management of the country's natural resources, especially but not limited to the forest sector. In particular, a number of ongoing and planned projects specifically supporting Integrated National Forest Assessment programmes (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, and Uzbekistan) substantially improve countries' capacities to assess vegetation and soil carbon, and improve the understanding of linkages between climate change, ecosystem, and land-use changes using remote sensing, field observations and modelling data. At the same time, these projects also assist the countries to meet their commitments including reporting obligations deriving from international treaties and memberships.

26. Important project work is underway in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in relation to wood energy, contributing to its sustainable production and consumption. Together with previous projects on this subject in neighbouring countries, a profound knowledge base will soon be available for Western Balkans for evidence based planning and management of both, public and private investment. These activities contribute in particular to RI-3 and SDG 12, 13, and 15, but also to RI-1 and SDG 8.

IV. Points for consideration

27. The Commission may wish to encourage countries in the Region to:

- Recognize the multi-functional roles of forests in the implementation of the REU Regional Initiatives and their contributions to the SDGs;
- 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;
- Provide financial and/or in-kind contributions to support the FAO regional forestry programmes and relevant global programmes and tools, including FLR, FFF, VGTT, and phytosanitary standards in forestry in the region.

28. The Commission may wish to recommend FAO to:

- Strengthen the integration of specific forestry programmes (including FFF, FLR, VGTT) and other operational forestry work in the Region into existing and future REU Regional Initiatives, taking into account the multi-functional roles of forests;
- 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;
- Provide assessment tools, methodologies and data (including GIS and mapping) to evaluate the impacts of climate change and support the definition of policy and investment options and evidence based planning and management of the forest resources.

29. The Commission may wish to invite the Regional Conference to consider the Commission's recommendations in its deliberations on current and future regional Initiatives and on the programme of work and budget.