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THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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*GENERAL SECRETARIAT*

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*DIRECTORATE-GENERAL B  
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES  
SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH*

*International and horizontal aspects  
of the CAP, in particular direct  
support schemes and crop products*

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**Subject: 38<sup>th</sup> session of the FAO European Commission on  
Agriculture  
(Bucharest, 1 - 2 April 2014)**

**item 3: Priorities for FAO Activities in the Region**

Delegations will find attached the final version of the EU Statement on **item 3** of the abovementioned meeting.

This statement has been approved by the Coordination Working Party (FAO) at its meetings in Bucharest on 31 March and 1 April 2014.

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**38<sup>th</sup> session of the FAO European Commission on Agriculture  
(Bucharest, 1-2 April 2014)**

**Final Presidency Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States**

**Item 3:           Priorities for FAO Activities in the Region**

Ms/Mr Chairperson,

1. I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union and its 28 Member States.

The candidate countries to the EU Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey align themselves with this statement.

2. We would like to thank the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) for providing the Conference with this document. The **Priorities for FAO Activities in the European and Central Asian Region** are set in the context of the reform process, the new Strategic Framework and the PWB 2014/2015. Within that framework FAO's work is knowledge-based and has to be exercised in a neutral manner.
3. We note the significant increase [+49 %] in extra-budgetary fund-raising in 2012/13. We would like to underline the importance of using these additional funds in line with agreed FAO strategic objectives and regional priorities.
4. We would appreciate to get further information on major achievements in different member countries. This would allow us to better assess the performance of FAO's work in the region in line with FAO's mandate and core competences. We agree that the work should be further concentrated on the identified focus countries that show significant ownership and emphasize FAO's important role as neutral forum for policy discussions and technical advice.
5. We acknowledge the consultation process with members in the region in order to identify regional priorities for FAO's work. Yet, the decision process for the two regional initiatives lacks transparency.
6. The proposal to add a new regional initiative on "Agri-food trade and regional integration" came as a surprise considering earlier exchanges in the informal consultation and in the European Regional Group. This raises some concerns as regards consultations with members. Comments made in the consultation in Chisinau on the pilot initiative on Agrarian Structures need to be taken into account when drawing up new regional initiatives, in particular about balance in geographical focus.

7. Moreover, FAO work on trade-related issues in the region requires a cautious and balanced approach. To remain neutral, FAO should not expose itself in on-going trade negotiations. In practice, quantitative analysis of specific trade agreements is beyond the remits and resources of FAO. By contrast, FAO work on capacity building, especially for WTO accession and compliance, as well as cooperation on implementing trade agreements and other frameworks are welcome. We encourage cooperation with WTO, including for the work relating to "design of appropriate trade policies".

While FAO proposes to target the work on selected countries, an overall balance is needed. When working on the implementation of regional trade agreements, FAO should be open to all involved partners including the EU, where relevant, building up on best practices. With regard to the proposed products and services to be delivered, in the sense of efficient use of resources duplication should be avoided and work of other organisations be considered, e.g. the medium term wheat production outlook should take into account on-going FAO activities, in particular under the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) and the FAO-OECD Outlook.

8. Since food security in the Caucasus and Central Asia remains a priority issue as stated under “trends and challenges”, it should be addressed more prominently and not just be an “integrated part” of regional initiatives. In particular the important ESAFF<sup>1</sup> Initiative should foremost address that issue.
9. As FAO’s work has to be based on the Strategic Framework and on the Country Programming Framework (CPF), the support of those 50 percent of the focus countries that have not yet finalized their CPF remains one of REU’s highest priorities.
10. We endorse REUs overall approach to improve the control of animal diseases, plant pests and food safety hazards as well as natural resource management. In both areas of work FAO should assist members in streamlining their legislation and governance with international norms and standards. This is in fact one of FAO’s core competences and core functions. Regarding animal diseases, we remind that a close cooperation with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is needed. When developing veterinary legislation, the results of PVS (performance of Veterinary Services) pathway should be taken into consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> ESAFF = Empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods and poverty reduction.

11. We welcome any and all efforts to increase our preparedness and ability to respond to food safety emergencies. In particular, when it comes to animal diseases such as African Swine Fever (ASF) which has recently been seen to be spreading westwards in Europe due to poor disease eradication measures, we support assistance that may be provided to help ensure ASF is brought under control. To achieve this, a long term and co-ordinated approach is needed, which includes all affected countries. In fact, solely sporadic efforts, or efforts by only some countries, will not be sufficient to prevent the further spread of this virus. Ultimately, the objective must be to bring the situation of any disease under control so that it can be properly managed, or better still, eradicated.

Activities in the field have to be conducted in partnership with OIE under the umbrella of the FAO/OIE Global Framework for the progressive control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TAD for Europe). This ensures that all countries in the region can be beneficiaries, and that actions are not just directed to emergency responses but also well coordinated at regional level with all relevant actors in this field.

12. With regard to the development of capacities, REU should lay more emphasis on applying the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the context of national food security. Also, as mentioned at the ERC in 2012, we reiterate the importance that fishery and forestry sectors receive adequate attention in the coming biennia. These sectors should also be covered under the regional initiative on empowering smallholders and family farms, in line with the 2014 International Year of Family Farming.
13. We welcome the clear indication of the alignment of FAO's Strategic Objectives and REU's regional Priorities (Table 1). However, we would appreciate REU to provide members with its plans for budget and human resource allocation to the different fields of work which we consider as a precondition for the endorsement of the proposed document.

Thank you, Ms/Mr Chairperson.

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