

## CONCEPT NOTE

*for consideration during 30<sup>th</sup> CSO Regional Consultation  
Antalya, Turkey, 2-3 May 2016*

**FAO REU-CSO Facilitation (Coordination) Committee in this document referred to as FC**

### **I. Background and rationale**

FAO recognizes and re-affirms that CSOs are critical partners across a wide spectrum of activities at the local, national, and international level. The autonomy and independence of CSO's is a central value that is undoubtedly recognized by FAO: CSOs in the region recognize that, all issues and the policies discussed in FAO have direct implications on civil society, moreover that future food and agriculture policies for the Region will be also influenced by FAO.

The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) approved at UN level, last September, are to be implemented by all the countries of the world, including Europe and Central Asia. FAO has a fundamental role in implementing and monitoring SDG achievements, which extends to the role that FAO can now play in monitoring EU policy and other country policies. It was made clear in the Sustainable Development Goal number 17 that partnership working with CSO's is a methodology for implementation of the Goals. CSOs are critical in putting forth ideas based on a rights based approach towards food security as well as sustainability concerns rather than an approach based on economic development. Many CSOs have unique connections with the communities and the population at large and are able to reach the unreached. CSOs can provide important feedback about the real situation on the ground, thus inform decisions on policy issues. FAO Strategy on Partnership with CSOs indicates that the “Strategy promotes that the views of small farmers, fisher-folks, pastoralists, indigenous, agricultural and food workers, consumers, NGOs, women and youth are brought to the policy, normative and technical discussions convened by FAO”<sup>1</sup>.

FAO REU's work with the civil society in the region is comparatively new and is expected to increase. Yet, it is difficult because there are fewer mechanisms in the Central and Eastern Europe (as compared to Western Europe), which allow CSOs to meaningfully participate so that policymakers can take Civil Society views, into account when formulating and implementing policy decisions.

Streamlining procedures through which civil society in the region could engage in a more effective, consistent and efficient way of cooperation with FAO REU and support as well as reflecting on FAO REU's work in the countries and at regional level is the aim of the FC. There

is a need to establish a mechanism through which civil society work with FAO REU will be realized in a more consistent and timely manner.

The FAO will provide initial support to this committee recognizing that CSO engagement is critical to its work, but it is the role of the CSO's to decide how the FC will be structured and the terms of engagement with FAO REU.

## **I. Expected outcomes (from the work of Facilitation Committee)**

**Increased involvement of autonomous and independent CSOs into FAO REU work :** Autonomous and independent Civil society organizations from the region, especially social movements are better linked with FAO REU, providing contributions (e.g expert advice or direct substantiated evidence from the ground) to country offices and REU;

**Increased collaboration between FAO REU and CSOs:** Better engagement with CSOs, especially social movements, in policy, normative and technical works at national and regional levels will have a mutual benefit, both for FAO REU and CSOs in the region. For the FAO providing direct access to the information on its work and to beneficiaries of FAO activities, and for the CSO's the FC will be a possibility to provide an input into the substantive areas of work of FAO REU, involvement into dialogue with country offices and REU, access to information and policy-making processes.

### **The Facilitation Committee description:**

#### **1. The FC composition:**

- criteria of selection of 3-4 CSOs per sub- regions 2:
- geographical factor: Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia, Western Europe,
- not more than 12 people, at least 50 % to be social movements
- relevant CSOs with practical expertise in specific thematic areas which are priorities to FAO REU,
- different constituencies, but priority to smallholders, agricultural and food trade union organisations,
- indigenous' organizations, and consumer organisations with attention to gender balance and youth.

### **Selection process:**

FC member will be selected through a self-organized, internal CSO process, based on commitment to follow issues, available time, technical expertise, and representation of broad and diverse civil society. Each FC member will be responsible for a specific constituency.

- Working language is English and Russian for FAO but other languages will be included in discussions.
- First steps: The concept, structure and remit of this FC will be discussed in detail at the CSO Consultation in Antalya, 2-3 of May 2016. It is envisaged that Facilitation Committee members will be selected and approved at the CSO Consultation in Antalya, 2-3 of May 2016.

### **2. Responsibilities of FC (FC will be grouped around several aspects: organization, communication, advocacy, technical inputs and monitoring)**

- a) Build relations and collaboration with CSO platforms and partners at national or regional levels, and facilitate their views at FC meetings and FAO events by means of:
  - sharing all relevant information with regional networks on timely basis;
  - providing necessary technical inputs into CSO position papers, reports or briefings;
- b) Facilitate the participation of CSOs at various relevant meetings at country or regional level. FC members who have participated in a meeting or event are responsible for feeding back outcomes to the broader CSO Forum, and following up on issues arising from these meetings jointly with the CSO constituency –
- c) Monitor how Government commitments are fulfilled at national, regional and international levels and feed the information back to CSO Constituency and to FAO REU.
- d) Liaise between FAO REU and the broader CSO networks, keeping it apprised of the upcoming events and relevant information.
- e) Solicit inputs from the CSOs on relevant thematic priorities in the on-going matters and feed it to the relevant FAO technical officers/units. CSOs will provide relevant inputs and contributions to FC as appropriate
- f) Act as a communication channel to relay regional and country concerns on the implementation of FAO priorities and important updates to relevant FAO units/departments.

- g) Openly communicate any possible conflict of interest
- h) Publish reports and minutes of each meeting.

### **III . Operational aspects**

The FC functions through a number of means:

**Quarterly conference calls** held on a pre-established schedule, with agenda items submitted to the entire group at least 48 hours in advance. The conference calls allow for follow up of items that are underway, the sharing of new information and the opportunity to take urgent decisions if needed.

**Two face-to-face meetings held per year.** Preparations for the meetings are made by a self-nominated working group of FC members led by the FC Chair based on current events and planned activities.

In total, the FC members should participate in 2 meetings per year.

**Information shared by e-communication platform.**

**Emails via an internal FC mailing list** to permit sharing and action in between the conference calls.

**Small working groups** convened on ad-hoc basis, when needed, to prepare/develop documents on specific issues. Self-nominations will be solicited and the FC will make appointments. Drafts of work are submitted to the entire FC for comments and, when time and items permit, to the entire CSO Forum before finalizing the document.

A quorum for a meeting (either teleconference or in person) will be a majority of members. To take definitive action, a majority of FC members present at the meeting must support the action.

CSOs consultation: CSOs will meet once in 2 years (alongside the ERC and new members of the FC will be nominated then, however should the need arise it can be done earlier, through online consultations and discussions).

## **IV Resources**

Financial support has been offered by the FAO to cover:

1. Costs for travel for travel of SC members to meetings twice a year
2. Technical support in terms of website, e-communication platform and email. In that there are two options – to use website one of the organizations who are founding members of the Committee or use Agroweb page- <http://agrowebcee.net/> or we can establish an independent website/page
3. An Independent Communication Focal Point- an organization can be one of the founding members of the committee or someone “from outside”, contracted for the purpose of supporting smooth flow of information between FAO regional office, CSOs and Facilitation Committee