

## EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA SUB-REGIONAL FARMERS FORUM

Istanbul - 23 February 2023

### Statement

*Recalling* resolution 76/253 of 17 March 2022, by which UN General Assembly proclaimed the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists – 2026, and resolution 72/239 of 20 December 2017, by which UN General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028), and resolution 73/165 of 21 January 2019, by which UN General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, and resolution 73/284 of 1 March 2019, by which UN General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade of on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030);

*Welcoming* the fact that IFAD investments in the Europe and Central Asia region made significant contributions in favour of small-scale producers;

*Emphasizing* the pivotal role small-scale rural producers play in improving nutrition, ending hunger and ensuring sustainable food systems, eradicating poverty, contributing to the rural and national economy, conserving biodiversity, tackling climate crisis, achieving environmental sustainability and helping to address migration;

*Recognizing* that traditional small-scale production systems are dynamic and transformative livelihoods linked to the diverse ecosystems, customary institutions, cultures, identities, traditional knowledge and historical experience of coexisting with nature;

*Emphasizing* the importance of sustainable traditional production systems along with the use of local varieties and indigenous breeds; agroecology, organic and other nature – climate positive small scale agricultural, pastoral, forestry and fishery practices and the local indigenous seeds and breeds;

*Concerned* with the level of soil and land degradation in its many forms in the region and acknowledging the urgent need for addressing this major threat with conservation and restoration actions, and agroecological and regenerative agriculture practises;

*Emphasizing the need for national and regional level conservation policies and implementation focused on the protection of soil and micro biodiversity towards* ensuring sustainable food systems;

*Aware* of the need for addressing the root causes of land and soil degradation to minimize the negative impact of unsustainable agricultural and livestock production systems;

*Emphasizing* the importance of the establishment of mechanisms for encouraging targeted public and private investment in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture for reducing the negative impact on freshwater and coastal ecosystems of water abstraction from unsustainable water abstraction, mainly from agriculture, tourism and urban development;

*Concerned* that small scale rural producers including crop farmers, pastoralists, fishers and forest users in the region face urgent challenges, including land & soil degradation, limited or no access to traditional lands and resources, denial of land governance and management rights, loss of biodiversity, vulnerability to climate change, insecurity, low investments, inequity, limited access to education services, infrastructure and access to markets, exodus of youth, migration or abandonment of rural areas, and limited access to social and financial and extension services;

*Concerned* that there are still many small-scale producers in the region which lack the capability and capacity to form institutionalized – statutory membership-based organisations both at local and national levels to advocate their rights; and the existing organisations at local and national levels need support to enhance their institutional capacities;  
*Convinced* that small-scale rural producers in the region should be supported in their efforts to promote and undertake sustainable production systems and practices that support and are in harmony with nature and contribute to tackling climate change;

*Recognising* the need for development and application of innovative technologies that can contribute to the transition of rural small-scale producers to innovative, commercial production, helping them to increase their own food security and nutrition, generate marketable surpluses and add value to their production;

*Aware* of the need for particular attention on rights related to gender, youth and vulnerable groups, taking into account the need to address any form of discrimination;

*Aware* of the need for regional level events and mechanisms that offer small-scale producers a space for exchanging knowledge and experiences, learning from each other and co-developing new ideas, actions, and collaborations in order to create an impact at regional level.

We, representatives of 16 Farmers' organizations including pastoralists organisations,

1. decide to establish the sub-regional Steering Committee of the Farmers Forum for Europe and Central Asia region;
2. request the sub-regional Steering Committee to interact with existing regional/international entities for influencing policy dialogue;
3. invite FOs to elaborate evidence-based analysis and adequate policy papers/positions for policy engagement;
4. invite IFAD and governments in the region to acknowledge the role small-scale producers can play in responding to global crises of biodiversity, climate, and in ensuring sustainable food systems and resilient rural economies and societies;
5. call upon IFAD to take the necessary measures for improving the dialogue with and between FOs in the region, towards ensuring full representation and participation of the producers in development of Country Strategic Opportunities Programmes (COSOPs), Project implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation;
6. call upon IFAD and governments in the region to consider local specificities and varying socio-economic and historical contexts with a specific focus on rights related to gender, youth and vulnerable groups and with taking into account the need to address any form of discrimination in designing and implementing its actions;
7. invite IFAD and governments to acknowledge the beneficial role of sustainable customary institutions and traditional ecological knowledge of rural producer communities and support them with also introducing innovative technologies;
8. invite the sub-regional Steering Committee, FOs, IFAD and governments of the region to observe the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 through regional, sub-regional and national level actions aimed at raising awareness on and the visibility of the Year;
9. invite FOs to get organised at national and regional level towards becoming a strong counterpart for the dialogue with IFAD;

10. call upon IFAD to support mapping and profiling of FOs and the communities that are not yet represented within an organisation in the region to facilitate the interaction and the consultations,
11. call upon IFAD to acknowledge the importance of support actions towards formation of membership-based small-scale organisations and to improve the capacities and governance of existing FOs.
12. invite the sub-regional Steering Committee, FOs, IFAD and governments in the region to systematically document experiences, good lessons and collaborations;
13. call upon IFAD to support the work of the sub-regional Steering Committee by including but not limited to allocating its resources towards exploring potential opportunities for partnerships and the creation of an effective collective for achieving impact at the scale that matters;
14. call upon IFAD to mobilize existing support tools and initiate new ones for providing direct support, including funding, to FOs for enabling institutional strengthening, capacity building and improved governance, as well as a more efficient contribution in terms of services to members and policy engagement.

**Signed**