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In the June Newsletter, we discuss results of the Eighth Session of the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly. To protect the well-being of delegates and partners it was held in a virtual format.

We also announce the winners of the fifth round of Food Policy Case Studies and their topics. Winners are invited to online training sessions on the case study methodology.

Upcoming events for 2020 and 2021 are listed in the updated calendar.

The Eighth Session of the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly

By Anna Kontoboytseva

Because of the public health impact of COVID-19, the Eighth Global Soil Partnership (GSP) Plenary Assembly was held virtually on June 3–5. The virtual format allowed a record number of participants. For three days, about 350 representatives of the ministries of agriculture of the countries participating in the GSP, as well as international organizations and research networks and leading research institutions and their partners, discussed the [agenda](#) items of the meeting.

The official Russian delegation

was represented by **Kirill Antyukhin**, Agricultural Attaché and First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome; **Ekaterina Fomina**, representative of the Department of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation; and employees of the Eurasian Center for Food Security (ECFS), which is an official GSP partner and acts as the Secretariat of the subregional Eurasian soil partnership.

Kirill Antyukhin stressed that it makes sense to maintain existing financial mechanisms—in particular, to lend financial support to the Healthy Soil Facility Fund—to ensure the implementation of measures aimed at the sustainable management of soil resources in developing countries.



The results of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS) were discussed. ITPS, established at the first Plenary Assembly of the GSP, is composed of top soil experts representing all regions of the world. Its main function is to provide scientific and technical advice and guidance on global soil issues and to respond to specific requests submitted by international institutions.

The discussion was attended by **Pavel Krasilnikov**, Deputy Director for Science at ECFS, who represented Europe in this body from its inception until 2019. Currently, Europe in ITPS is represented by **Maria Konyushkova**, the Senior Researcher at ECFS, who also attended the event. During the discussion, the leading role of the ITPS as the body carrying out the scientific review of documents

submitted for approval by the Plenary Assembly of the GSP was noted.

A new and promising direction of the GSP is the creation of a global database of legal information, SoilEX, built on the basis of the [FAOLEX Database](#). The main goal of SoilEX is to provide access to information about existing national legal instruments related to soils currently in force and to bridge the gap between various soil stakeholders, and to facilitate the exchange of experiences in soil governance among countries and regions. **Anna Kontoboytseva**, the ECFS researcher, emphasized that an analysis of the legal mechanisms and trends in the development of legislation on the use and protection of soil in different countries and their regions is needed to identify areas that require more active engagement. These are also areas that provide opportunities to implement sustainable soil management (SSM) approaches. For example, in Russia, the many changes in legislation on the use and protection of soil in recent years is the result of problems in enforcing the law. By the quality of legislation in the area of state support for the fertility of agricultural soils, one can judge the potential of a region to introduce SSM practices in the near future. The quality of legislation is also important for determining the possibilities of reliable soil information.

All issues discussed at the Eighth Plenary Assembly of the GSP are extremely relevant to the Eurasian region.

The next GSP session will be held in Rome in 2021.

A Case Study Approach to Analyzing the Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Food and Nutrition Security in Eurasia

By Anna Buyvolova

The World Bank and ECFS, together with scientists from the Eurasian region, will develop case studies on current policy issues of food security and examine the effects of the COVID-19 crisis for food policy. Each case generates policy-relevant evidence that is so necessary for those who are

responsible for agricultural development and food quality in Eurasia.

The case study method is a research method used for intensive analysis of a single food policy—relevant case or phenomenon within its real-life

context for the purpose of clearly understanding the problem and defining policy-relevant issues. Case study research will help researchers from the Eurasian region to better understand how to analyze policy options in food security and nutrition. [The call for proposals](#) opened in May 2020. An expert committee selected the 12 best case study proposals out of the 53 submitted. Authors of the selected case studies are invited to take part in a training on case study methodology. Below we introduce research topics of the selected cases.

Four studies will be devoted to the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis on food security in Russia. The case study from **Natalya Nesterenko** (Saint Petersburg State University) and **Sergey Meloyan** (Armenian National Agrarian University) will investigate the problems of general sales of organic produce with particular attention to the organization of an online store and to an effective system of sales and product delivery. **Elena Frolova** and **Sergey Skomorokhov** (Alexander Nikonov All-Russian Institute of Agrarian Issues and Informatics) will analyze the effectiveness and sustainability of new forms of cooperation between small farmers and large businesses in Russia, which arose in response to the pandemic crisis. **Natalya Galkina** (International Trade and Integration Research Centre) will present an economic analysis of the potential impact of the new government policy on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) on poultry farming. **Sanat Seitov** and **Sergey Kiselev** (Lomonosov Moscow State University) will review issues of state policy in reducing the price risks of wheat producers in the Russian market during a pandemic.

Two cases discussing the food policy problems of Armenia are devoted to nutrition. **Anatoly Maksimov** (Alexander Nikonov All-Russian Institute of Agrarian Issues and Informatics) and **Marina Harutyunyan** (Social and Industrial Foodservice Institute) will discuss the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 crisis in organizing school meals, and will evaluate the measures taken to mitigate the crisis and propose school feeding policy options. **Davit**

Pipoyan, Seda Stepanyan, and Melin Baglaryan (Informational-Analytical Center for Risk Assessment of Food Chain, Center for Ecological-Noosphere Studies) will study the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the nutrition and dietary patterns of the population of Yerevan and will justify the need for government programs to improve nutrition quality.

An overview of the main problems of the agricultural sector of Armenia as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic will be presented by **Naira Harutyunyan** (Yerevan Haybusak University) and **Elena Belova** (Eurasian Center for Food Security). Scientists will identify bottlenecks in the value chain of vegetables and fruits in the initial period of the crisis, and will consider potential problems that may arise in the medium and long term as a result of the crisis.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the main exporters of agrifood products to the Kyrgyz Republic introduced a number of export policies—such as export bans and export quotas for basic food products—that immediately affected domestic food supplies to the country. **Kanykey Asanalieva** (University of Central Asia) will analyze the impact of state policies implemented in response to pandemic and the resulting disruptions in agrifood supply systems on food balance sheet in the Kyrgyz Republic. Closing borders and markets because of COVID-19 and restricting movement during the sowing season created difficulties for small farmers, who had trouble getting access to seeds. Various policy options to address this issue will be proposed by **Aida Dzhamankulova** (Agency for the Development of Initiatives). **Nurila Ibraeva** (Kyrgyz National Agrarian University) will study the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on livestock production and regional markets in the Kyrgyz Republic.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security in Uzbekistan will be studied by **Daria Ilyina** and **Dilfuza Kurbanova** (Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research). A study by a team of scientists from Uzbekistan (**Etenesh Asfau, Marina Li, Inna Rudenko, and Fotima Saydullaeva**) will analyze policies set to make the

urban food supply resilient to shocks in both the short term and the long term. The study will assess what institutional coordination and monitoring mechanisms are in place to respond quickly to food and nutrition insecurity in cities that

may arise as a result of the crisis.

After the training, the authors will start their research, which will be published in the fifth volume of case studies. We wish the authors fruitful work!

Event Calendar 2020/21*

Date	City, Country	Event
May 27–August 26	ONLINE	Virtual Seminars on Applied Economics and Policy Analysis in Central Asia
June 24–26	ONLINE	IAMO Forum 2020 – Digital Transformation: Towards Sustainable Food Value Chains in Eurasia
September 15–17	Utrecht, Netherlands	ICOS Science Conference 2020 (Registration ends on July 19)
September 22	Moscow, Russia	International Scientific and Practical Conference Dedicated to the 200th Anniversary of the Moscow Agricultural Society In Russian only
October 19–20	Moscow, Russia	International Scientific and Practical Conference "Poverty of the Rural Population of Russia: Genesis, Overcoming Ways, Forecast" (website is not available yet, send questions by email: nikonovskie-chtenia@mail.ru)
October 20–23	Rome, Italy	4th GLOSOLAN meeting: Global Soil Partnership Event
December 6–9	Montpellier, France	4th International Conference on Global Food Security
Second half of 2020	Tashkent, Uzbekistan	FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC 32)

Date	City, Country	Event
February 2–4, 2021	Rome, Italy	FAO Global Symposium on Soil Biodiversity (GSOBI20)
Postponed until 2021	Kraków, Poland	16th International Conference on Soil Micromorphology
Postponed until 2021	Syktyvkar, Russia	VIII Dokuchaev Congress of the Society of Soil Scientists. and the School of Young Scientists on Soil Morphology and Classification (in Russian only).
August 23–27, 2021	Geneva, Switzerland	EUROSOIL 2020
September 13–16, 2021	Tashkent, Uzbekistan	Global Symposium on Salt-Affected Soils: FAO event

* Information is current as of June 21, 2020. Check the event's website for updates.