



Lomonosov Moscow State University

# Eurasian Center for Food Security

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Photo credit: Scott Ymker on Unsplash

In the fall of 2020, we asked you to take part in a survey about ECFS activities. In the current Newsletter, we publish the results of the survey, which identified prospects for further development of ECFS.

In addition, we are pleased to announce the start of a new initiative on the development of the new joint ECFS and World Bank flagship study, which will assess the factors affecting the competitiveness of agriculture and the development of agri-food trade in the countries of the Eurasian region.

See the updated event calendar and don't miss interesting webinars!

## Prospects for Developing the Eurasian Center for Food Security Are Identified

*By Dariga Chukmaitova, Hannah Rosenthal, and Nils Junge*

The latest Eurasian Center for Food Security (ECFS) survey results are in! In 2018 and again in 2020, readers of this newsletter were asked to share their feedback on various issues, including collaborating with ECFS staff and the Center as an institution, the benefits the Center provides, its evolution, and its prospects. These surveys have informed the ECFS evaluations, conducted bi-annually since 2016. *Respondent profile:* Newsletter subscribers from 14

countries filled out the survey. The majority were from Russia (35 percent), followed by Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic (15 percent each), Belarus (7 percent), Tajikistan (6 percent), and Armenia (5 percent). Women were more likely to respond than men, at 56 versus 39 percent (the rest declined to specify). Respondents were highly educated: 71 percent reported having a PhD and 23 percent an MA.

*Cooperation:* Half of survey respondents reported having engaged in a joint project or some type of common activity with ECFS as an institution or with ECFS staff. The most common areas of cooperation were agriculture (29 percent) and food security (32 percent). Less common was cooperation in on issues related to economics (8 percent) and soil sciences (5 percent). Asked whether the level of cooperation was sufficient, two-thirds of respondents said it was not. Most barriers were related to insufficient financing or to administrative issues on the part of ECFS.

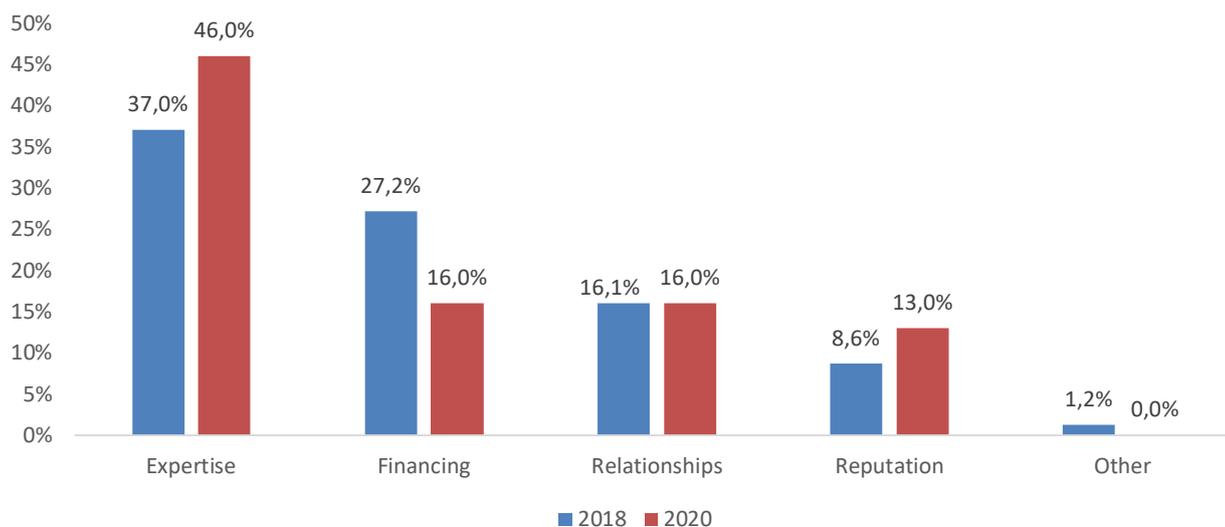
*Motivation to collaborate:* Why do respondents want to work with ECFS? Mostly because ECFS has expertise in their areas of interest. Between 2018 and 2020, there was an increase in the percentage of survey respondents who worked with ECFS because of this expertise, and a drop in those who sought to cooperate with ECFS because they faced difficulties in getting funding for research (Figure 1). Neither ECFS’s reputation nor the existence of a personal relationship between the respondent and ECFS were common motivators to collaborate. It should be interesting to track whether ECFS’s reputation as a motivating factor for working with the institution grows over time.

*ECFS’s prospects:* Eighty-two percent of respondents believe that ECFS has potential to grow into a global or a regional think tank (roughly evenly split) and 13 percent believe it has only national perspective (Figure 2). Referring to cross-border learning and problem-solving, a respondent noted that “the Center has an important advantage—expanding boundaries.”

*Conclusions:* The survey findings provide a good sense of attitudes toward ECFS, pointing toward areas where it is succeeding and where it has room to grow. It is encouraging to see that the majority of respondents would like to collaborate more with the ECFS. The survey results generally align with the positive feedback provided by stakeholder interviews conducted as part of the 2020 evaluation—they expressed optimism about the ECFS’ development and highlighted its successful partnerships and studies, as well as the creation of a network.

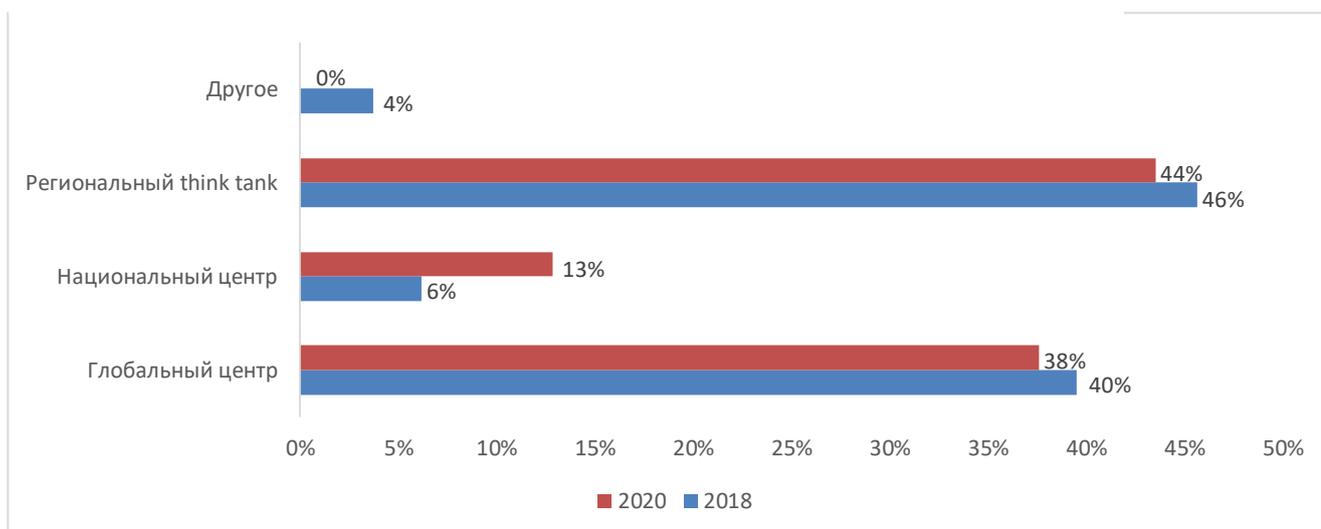
Thanks to all of the 101 readers who responded to the survey! We hope that you, and others, will continue to share your feedback with ECFS in future surveys, as this helps the institution to learn more about its community and contribute to its mission.

Figure 1 The main driver for collaboration with ECFS



Data source: ECFS evaluation surveys 2018 (n=81) and 2020 (n=101).

Figure 2 Prospects for the further development of ECFS



Data source: ECFS evaluation surveys 2018 (n=81) and 2020 (n=101).

## The Eurasian Center for Food Security Is Developing a Report on Regional Agrifood Trade in the Eurasian Region

By Roman Romashkin and Anna Buyvolova

A new joint project of ECFS and the World Bank is aimed at addressing current issues of agricultural competitiveness and the development of agrifood trade in the countries of the Eurasian region. On February 10, 2021, researchers from six countries (Armenia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) began work on country reports that will serve as the basis of the ECFS flagship report. Project Launch Event

The study will include its own specifications. First, a comprehensive analysis of main trends in the area of partial and total factor productivity



will be carried out. In other words, it will analyze the dynamics of factors of production such as labor and land, as well as assess changes in the ratio of total outputs (crop and livestock products) to total production inputs (land, labor, capital, and materials). This approach will help to understand the long-term competitiveness of the agrifood sector in selected countries. This is of particular relevance given that most research on competitiveness is based on trade indicators, which reveal a comparative advantage or confirms its absence in international trade. However, the use of such indicators is often limited because agricultural and trade policy measures influence them, including by introducing preferences in the framework of regional economic integration. To overcome this limitation, a fundamental analysis of agricultural productivity is planned. This analysis will include an assessment of all of the above indicators.

Second, the study will analyze policy measures that stimulate the agrifood trade, increase competitiveness, and support investment in

trade and logistics infrastructure in the Eurasian countries. The results of this analysis will reveal the extent to which self-sufficiency and import substitution policies affect trade, agricultural competitiveness, and national sustainability.

Six country-specific reports (on Armenia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) will be prepared; each will discuss national priorities and programs for the development of agrifood exports, the impact of the food and processing industry on that country's agriculture and trade, and promising opportunities for national policies to strengthen competitiveness and export growth. Country-specific reports will be sought after by national producers and their industry unions, by the industry divisions of national agencies in the fields of agrifood policy and trade, and by industry analysts and researchers.

Based on country materials, it is envisaged that the ECFS flagship report will deliver a synthesis of the results of the country-specific reports that will compare characteristics of national export development policies; assess structural changes, export potential, and export competitiveness; outline promising directions; and develop recommendations for the advancement of agrifood trade in the countries of the Eurasian region. The synthesis report is intended for national governments and agencies in the field of agrifood policy and export development, as well as academics and researchers in the field of agricultural economics, agrifood trade, and markets.

The first results of the study will be presented by the authors on May 2021 during the joint Annual International Conference on Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition in Eurasia featuring the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)'s 2020 *Global Food Policy Report*.

## Event Calendar 2021

Date	City, Country	Event
January 12– June 17	ONLINE	<a href="#">Agricultural and Resource Economics Seminar, hosted by Marc Bellemare or Jeffrey Bloem</a>
February 2– March 16	ONLINE	<a href="#">ADB Water Watch: Science and Innovation for a Water-Secure Future for All. Webinar Series</a>
February 24	ONLINE	<a href="#">Sustainable Soil Management. Climate Change and Agriculture in the Eurasian Region: Challenges or New Opportunities</a> (in Russian only)

Date	City, Country	Event
March 1–5	St. Petersburg, Russia	<a href="#">XXIV Dokuchaev's Readings 2020: Soil Science in a Digital Society</a>
March 12	ONLINE	<a href="#">The 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit: How to Incentivize Food Loss and Waste Reduction?</a>
March 20–23	ONLINE	<a href="#">International Symposium for Farming System Design Webinars</a>
July 19–24	Syktyvkar, Russia	<a href="#">VIII Dokuchaev Congress of the Society of Soil Scientists. and the School of Young Scientists on Soil Morphology and Classification</a> (in Russian only).
August 23–27	Geneva, Switzerland	<a href="#">EUROSOIL 2021</a>
September 13–16	Tashkent, Uzbekistan	<a href="#">FAO Global Symposium on Salt-Affected Soils</a>
December	Tokyo, Japan	<a href="#">Nutrition for Growth Summit</a>