



Lomonosov Moscow State University

# Eurasian Center for Food Security

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*Around 300 experts combined forces to take a closer look at socioeconomic, nutritional and environmental dimensions of food security and to strengthen regional cooperation by participating in the 4th Annual Eurasian Food Security Conference. Conference materials are now available.*

*In the November Newsletter the ECFS Deputy Director identifies new areas of cooperation with African counterparts that was discussed in Russia - Africa Economic Forum in the end of October.*

*We also have the pleasure in inviting you to participate in ECFS events:*

*One week train the trainer course for university teachers wishing to expand their teaching skills in the use of the case study methodology (Please submit your applications before December 1st)*

*The 4th Scientific and Practical Conference on Food Security and Soil, dedicated to the World Soil Day (Please register before December 1st, 2019).*

*In conclusion, you will find the calendar of events 2019–2020!!*

## It's time to act: results of the 4th Eurasian Food Security Conference

*By Anastasia Fabrichnova, Anna Kontoboytseva, Olga Cherkasova, Mikhail Avdeev*

The IV Annual Eurasian Food Security Conference was held on October 29-31, 2019 at the Armenian National Agrarian University in Yerevan. The event attracted a great interest of specialists and gathered a record number of participants - 290 specialists from Armenia, Belarus, the Great Britain, Hungary, Germany, Georgia, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, the Russian Federation, the United States of America, Singapore, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

Conference organizers: [Eurasian Center for Food Security at Moscow State University \(ECFS\)](#), World Bank, [Armenian National Agrarian University \(ANAU\)](#), [International Food Policy Research Institute \(IFPRI\)](#), [International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas \(ICARDA\)](#), [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#), [World Food Program \(WFP\) UN](#). The conference was supported by [the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation](#).



Photo credit: ECFS

*Participants of the IV Eurasian Food Security Conference*

Opening the conference, ECFS director, Dean of the Faculty of Soil Science of Lomonosov Moscow State University **Sergey Shoba** noted the relevance of cooperation in the field of food security (FS) in a changing world and spoke about the results of joint work in the region to ensure sustainable agricultural production and food security.



Photo credit: ECFS

*Greetings of the ECFS Director*

Already in her first plenary presentation, **Beverly Postma**, lead consultant for the GreenOcean Group (Singapore), [noted](#) that 2020 is the Big Year for Nutrition, as it is halfway through the UN Decade of Nutrition Action from 2016 to 2025.

In global scale hunger has again escalated in recent years: about 820 million people on Earth experience hunger (which is almost every 11th inhabitant of the planet), 22% of children under 5 years old are stunted and 7% from malnutrition, and every 3rd woman of reproductive age suffers from anemia.

As **Stineke Unema**, coordinator of the UN Committee on Nutrition, [noted](#), there are many reasons for malnu-

trition on the planet, based on a combination of political and economic factors. Stineke called on all states in the region to commit themselves to the goals of the Rome Declaration on Nutrition, adopted in 2014, as well as the goals of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition.

The Republic of Armenia actively contributes to the improvement of the state of FS in their own country. [According to Artak Kamalyan](#), the government of Armenia pays special attention to increasing food self-sufficiency and reducing dependence on imports, increasing the production of quality food, expanding and diversifying sales markets, as well as the development of advisory services and education in the field of agriculture.

Deputy director of the ECFS **Roman Romashkin**, [touched](#) upon the issues of agricultural integration of countries within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). According to the expert for the balanced development of the common agricultural market it is possible to introduce production quotas, as well as monitor foreign and mutual trade. Stimulating domestic demand could be a powerful driver for food systems development.

Head of the Center for Agro-Food Policy of the RANEPА **Natalya Shagayda** in her speech [examined the role](#) of agricultural holdings in ensuring food security. Currently, large agricultural holdings (with an income of over 2 billion rubles) account for 37% of agricultural products. The speaker shared that in conditions of high concentration of production, there is an increase in environmental and veterinary risks.

Deputy Head of the Department for Strategic Analysis and Forecasting in Agriculture and Food Production of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Uzbekistan **Marsurjon Rasulev** [presented in his report](#) the Uzbekistan Agriculture Development Strategy for

2020-2030. The goals of the reforms are to create a new, competitive, export-oriented agri-food sector.



Photo credit: ECFS

*Participants of the conference at the plenary session*

An up-to-date report was presented by an employee of the ECFS **Maria Konyushkova** [referred to](#) agricultural informatization. Precision farming technologies are becoming more widespread in the world, since they can significantly increase the fertility of the land. An example of such technologies is remote and contact sensing, digital mapping, crop forecasting, differentiated fertilizer application, the use of Big Data, etc. In this regard, in 2019, an [electronic database](#) that allows standardizing and exchanging soil information was patented by ECFS staff

ECFS expert Anastasia Fabrichnova [noted in her report](#) that thanks to the improvement of the general economic situation, as well as the directed efforts of international organizations such as WFP and FAO, the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus have achieved significant success in the fight against malnutrition and other forms of malnutrition in recent years. In Central Asia, the level of malnutrition decreased from 11.0% in 2004-2006 to 5.6% in 2016-2018, the countries of the Caucasus from 6.4% to 3.3%. However, in recent years there has been an increase in the incidence of overweight and obesity.

An employee of the WHO Regional Office for Europe in Moscow, **Kremlin Wickramasinghe**, [spoke about](#) the activities of the WHO office in the European, Central Asian regions and the Caucasus to reduce the burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, etc. Among the ongoing initiatives are epidemiological studies of obesity, the development of nutrition guidelines, the promotion of an active lifestyle and healthy eating, the popularization of breastfeeding, the study of the composition of food products and consumption of

salt, monitoring of digital marketing of food products, etc.

A [poster session](#) was also held on the first day of the conference. Presentations by scientists and researchers of [the Center for Ecological and Noospheric Studies National Academy of Sciences \( Republic of Armenia\)](#), [Institute of Hydroponics Problems after G.S. Davtyan, Kuban State University](#), [St. Petersburg University](#) and [Dokuchaev Central Museum of Soil Science](#) were devoted to the influence of climatic changes and soil conditions on the quality of products and food security. Scientists from [Yerevan State University](#) and [Vanadzor State University](#) in their reports reflected the results of microbiological analysis of food products, and researchers from [the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University](#) presented a study on bread waste in public catering establishments. ECFS staff presented reports on determining the role of genetic factors in the formation of obesity, as well as assessing the competitiveness of Russian agri-food exports in the Chinese market and identifying ways to increase it.

On the second day of the conference, [seven parallel sessions](#) were held (detailed conference program on the website <http://ecfs2019.org/>). The Session on the Development of Organic Agriculture (DAO) the results of studies on five EAEU countries, carried out as part of a joint project by ECFS and the World Bank, were presented. Experts estimated the organic products market in the EAEU at 210 - 230 million EUR, which is only 0.25% of the global market. Factors that impede the development of land conservation in the region include the weakness of the domestic market (70-90% of organic products are exported), lack of statistics on production, sales and exports, lack of certification systems for organic land, and others.

The authors of the fourth round of [case studies](#) presented the results of studies on the introduction of an integrated approach to soil management in Russia and Moldova, the development of the value chain of organic agriculture in Russia and Armenia, soil-conservation and resource-saving agriculture in Russia, and the adaptation of land users to environmental and climate changes that limit farmland productivity in Uzbekistan.

At the Session devoted to the development of agriculture, **Alka Parih**, professor at the Institute of Information and Communication Technologies, [touched upon](#) pressing issues of improving the conditions for agricultural activities and ways to increase agricultural pro-

ductivity, including ensuring the availability of water resources in India.

ECFS researcher **Olga Cherkasova** [presented](#) the results of joint study on the development of Russian agri-food exports to the Chinese market. According to experts, in the medium term, in connection with revenue growth, Chi-tai will increase imports of agricultural products. At the same time, Russia's current export profile in trade with China will continue, and the possibility of its expansion will depend on the competitiveness of the industry and agricultural policy.

ECFS staff **Evgeny Tsvetnov** and **Alexey Belugin** [presented the results](#) of testing the developed Food Security Index (FSI) in selected countries of the Eurasian region. Studies have shown that over the period 2013-2017, food security has improved in Armenia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Russia demonstrates the best state of food security in 2017, the least favourable situation is observed in Tajikistan.



*Presentation of Evgeny Tsvetnov*

In the nutrition section, expert **Maurizio Rosales**, FAO Program Coordinator, [highlighted](#) the crucial and relevant issue of introducing the school feeding system in Armenia, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. Thanks to the efforts of the FAO, WFP, and also with funding from the Russian Federation, there is currently a school feeding program in Armenia, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. Also, in order to increase the nutritional value of diets, projects have been launched in Armenia and Tajikistan to create greenhouses in school territories.

One of the important topics of the conference was the role of rational use of natural resources in the context of climatic change. The Executive Director of the Regional Environmental Center for the Caucasus **Nune Harutyunyan** [presented](#) the results of a project to implement measures for adaptation and conservation of agrobiodiversity in the arid ecosystems of the South Caucasus. According to the study, as a result of climate change, cereal productivity in Armenia will be reduced

by an average of 9-13%, vegetable crops by 7-14%, potatoes by 8-10%, horticultural crops - by 5-8%.

**Enrico Bonauti** ICARDA Monitoring, Evaluation and Training Specialist, [noted](#) the importance of using information technology in agriculture and presented the capabilities of the Central Asia Climate Change Information Portal, designed for a wide range of people.



*World Bank expert Caroline S. S. Franca presented the project and led the workshop*

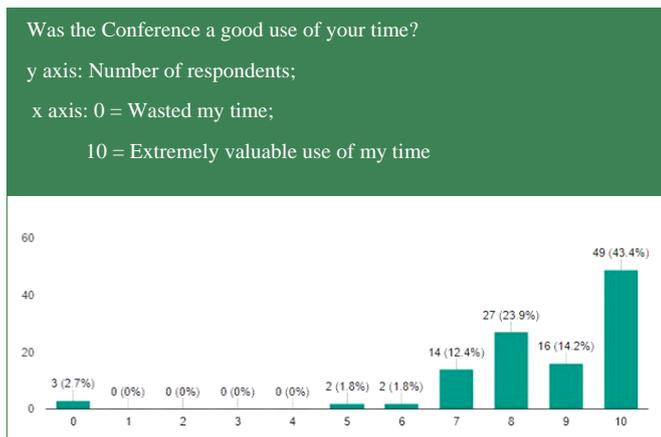
The Ag Observatory Workshop on Digital and Disruptive Agricultural Meteorology for Agricultural Decision Support took place in [the ANAU Agribusiness Teaching Center](#) on November 1st. World Bank expert Caroline S. S. Franca presented the project and led the workshop. Participants successfully progressed in the hands-on modules tailored to the session, including use of the web-based platform, QGIS and R scripts for data access via API, data mining, management, visualization, analysis and interpretation vis-à-vis local context. The seminar was attended by 10 specialists from Armenia and Russia.

On the third day of the conference, [field trips](#) were conducted. The participants got acquainted with the [high-tech mushroom production](#), visited the [family-owned wine and cognac enterprise](#) in the Ararat Valley, the Noi Brandy Factory, as well as a training center based [on the Green Lane](#) organic farm and the CARD Village and Agribusiness Development Center.



*Vardan Urutyunyan, ANAU rector hands over a transfer souvenir to the representative of Uzbekistan Mansurjon Rasulev*

After the event, the organizers conducted a survey among participants in order to improve the format and content of the conference. 113 respondents completed the conference evaluation survey (out of 260 conference participants to whom the survey was sent out). 54% of surveyed participants are female. Most of the respondents are 35-44 years old (31.3%). By professional affiliation, most participants were representatives of education (42.5%) and research (25.7%) institutions, international organizations (13.3%) and private sector (6.2%).



On the scale from 1 to 10, around 93.7% of respondents evaluated the time spent at the conference between 7 and 10 (valuable – extremely valuable). For the majority of the respondents the main purpose for attending the conference was networking (42.5%). Learning (20.4%) and making the presentation (19.5%) was other two main purposes for attending the event. The first Plenary Session (Food Security Challenges in the World and in the Eurasian Region) was considered the most relevant session during Day 1 by 50% of respondents. Respondents indicated that the 4th Annual Eurasian Food Security Conference served as a good networking platform with good quality of presentations and high level of conference organization.

Conference organizers will review each suggestion that would help to make future conference better.

ECFS expresses its deep gratitude to the hosts of the conference - ANAU for the high level of organization of the event, the rich cultural program and unlimited hospitality. The next Annual Eurasian Food Security Conference is scheduled to be held in Uzbekistan in the fall of 2020.

# Outcomes of the first Russia–Africa Summit and Economic Forum

By Pavel Krasilnikov



*The participants the Summit and the Russia-Africa Economic Forum in Sochi*

The Russia–Africa Summit and Economic Forum took place on 23–24 October in Sochi. All 54 African states were represented officially at the Russia–Africa Summit and Economic Forum, 45 of which were represented by their heads of state. Representatives of Russian federal authorities included Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation and Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy to the Far Eastern Federal District of the Russian Federation, Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy to the Southern Federal District of the Russian Federation and 11 ministers of the Russian Federation participating in the Forum.

The main program of the Forum consisted of more than 30 events dedicated to the development of trade and economic relations, existing and potential joint projects in the agricultural sector.

The plenary session became the central event of the forum. The leaders of African countries, representatives of business and the public spoke to the President of the Russian Federation. In his speech, Vladimir Putin emphasized that many Russian companies have long and successfully worked with partners from various sectors of the African economy and are determined to increase their presence in Africa. In addition to the plenary session, the forum included many panel sessions, joint work of ministries and the business community with African partners. ECFS Deputy Director Pavel Krasilnikov took part in the work of a group of specialists accredited by the delegation of the Ministry

of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation.

Among other things, Mikhail Kotyukov, Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation and H.E. Maria do Rosario Braganca Sambo, Minister of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of the Republic of Angola held a working meeting and signed an agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Angola on the mutual recognition of education and qualifications of academic degrees. An updated agreement will increase the attractiveness of Russian education



*Mikhail Kotyukov and Maria do Rosario Braganca Sambo signed an agreement on mutual recognition of education*

Meetings were held with ministers and representatives of ministries of science and higher education in a number of African countries. Representatives of the minis-

tries showed interest in the prospects of creating joint distance courses with ECFS on topics related to agriculture, the rational use of natural resources and food security.

Among the specific issues discussed during the Forum was the development of bilateral relations in the field of science and education with the Republic of Uganda: with this country, we are dynamically developing relations in almost all areas. The meeting was attended by the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Uganda, Dr. Elioda Tuvesigye, who confirmed the readiness of his ministry to support joint scientific research, including in the field of agriculture. Recently, a bilateral Russian-Ugandan competition of applied research projects aimed at strengthening agriculture and food security was announced as part of the Federal target program “Research and Development in Priority Directions for the Development of the Russian Science and Technology Complex for 2014 - 2020”. Among the winners of the competition - Lomonosov Moscow State University; the coordinator of the project aimed at monitoring soil health and improving agricultural technology in Uganda is ECFS Deputy Director Pavel Krasilnikov.

Although Central Asia and the South Caucasus remains the focal region of ECFS, in recent years, ministries and departments of the Russian Federation have set the task of more active interaction with African countries.

## Stop soil erosion, Save our future! We are pleased to invite you to attend the Conference

By Anna Kontoboytseva

Dear colleagues, we are glad to invite you to participate in the **IV International Scientific and Practical Conference on Food Security and Soil Science** that will be held at [Russian Research Institute of Floriculture and Subtropical Crops](#) in Sochi, Russian Federation on **December 5-6, 2019**. Since 2016, the Eurasian Center for Food Security, World Bank, FAO Liaison Office with the Russian Federation with partners has been holding this annual event.

The aim of the event is to facilitate the exchange of experience and knowledge in the field of soil science

In sub-Saharan Africa, the food security situation remains tense; most of the starving people in the world live in this region.

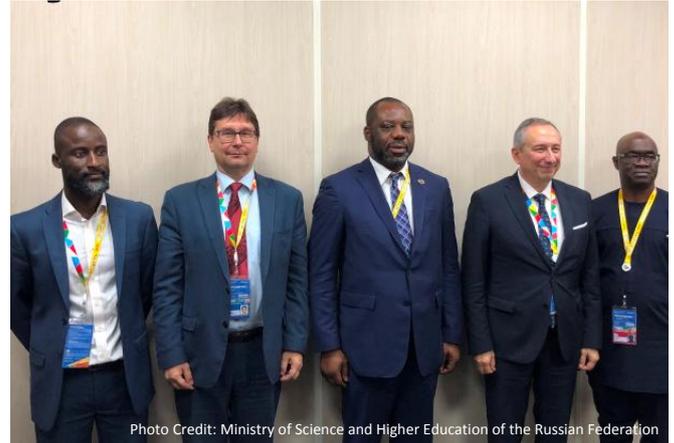


Photo Credit: Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation

Meeting with Minister of Education of Ghana

To a large extent, the food insecurity in Africa is due to the low efficiency of agricultural production, which is not able to provide the population with food. At the same time, there is a real bundle of interconnected problems on the continent: poverty, political and economic instability, insufficient provision of agricultural machinery, lack of access to credit and many other factors that impede the normal provision of the population with food products.

In this regard, the EGFS considers African countries as a region that should be given close attention.

and food security and the strengthening of cooperation between scientists, policy makers, business and non-profit organizations representatives to solve applied problems, as well encouraging the awareness on the important role of soils.

The topic of the conference is **Food Security, Soils and Climate-Smart Agriculture**. One of the main tasks of sustainable development is to solve the problem of land degradation in the context of rapid climate change. Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) is a concept developed by FAO to guide actions needed to transform and reorient agricultural systems to effectively support development and ensure food security in a changing climate.

On the first day of the conference, a **plenary meeting** will be held at which leading experts in CSA will present proven soil management methods that can help agricultural producers in the Eurasian region adapt to the negative effects of climate change. The **plenary discussion** on the importance of the Soil Science professions in solving global problems, prospects and growth points of interdisciplinary research will be held as well.



*World Soil Day in Sankt-Petersburg (2018)*

On the second day, discussions continued at three thematic round tables.

At the first round table “**Technological innovations for sustainable land management**” experts will discuss how to effectively address the issues of sustainable land management, combining scientific achievements, technological developments and experience of farmers in the fields.

The second round table “**Agroecological problems of erosion, soil degradation and the best available technologies for climate-optimized farming in chernozem and black soils**” involves discussion of issues related to quantitative research, modeling, forecasting

and prevention of processes of anthropogenic degradation of Chernozems and others variants of black soils, economic conditions of land and water use, mass applications of farming systems and agricultural technologies. Particular attention will be paid to a systematic analysis of agroecological problems of the accelerated development of erosion, to increase economic efficiency and safety.

Participants of the third round table “**Agriculture in subtropical and tropical zones: is soil a limiting factor?**” will share their experience of sustainable soil management in tropical and subtropical zones, discuss the role of Russian soil scientists in research in these regions and outline prospects for cooperation, including on soil nutrient management.

**The participation in the Conference is free and includes meals during two days of the Conference, as well as a field trip.** The Conference participants are to cover their travel and accommodation expenses in Sochi.

Click [here](#) to register before **December 1!** Look for updates on the [event page](#) on the ECFS web site.

Please feel free to contact the organizing committee directly: Anna Kontoboytseva [kontoboytseva@ecfs.msu.ru](mailto:kontoboytseva@ecfs.msu.ru) and Anna Buyvolova [abuyvolova@worldbank.org](mailto:abuyvolova@worldbank.org).

You can find the results and materials of the past events [here](#).

# Do Not Miss the Opportunity to Learn a New Teaching Methodology: ECFS Organizes Training for University Professors

By Anna Buyvolova



ECFS invites university teachers who wish to expand their teaching skills in using case studies to apply for the weekly train the trainer course. Please submit your applications before December 1st, 2019. Detailed information [can be found here](#).

Every year since 2016, ECFS together with the World Bank has prepared a case study publication consisting of 6-7 cases on current issues of food security in the selected Eurasian countries.

The publication has a twofold purpose: produce policy-relevant evidences on a specific problem, identifying policy options that can support decision making, as well as using cases as a pedagogical tool to develop students' analytical skills and critical thinking through case study analysis.

Over four years, experts suggested policy measures to address food security issues, among which are measures intended to develop wild harvest sector and reduce rural poverty in Armenia, institutional, economic, and environmental measures that would ensure the sustainable development of Yakutia to improve food self-sufficiency, as well as measures aimed at increasing the resistance of agriculture to drought in Uzbekistan. Case studies are available online on the [ECFS website](#). Moreover authors present their case studies at the Annual Eurasian Food Security Conference to have it discussed by different groups of stakeholders. All published cases are competitively selected and go through at least one round of review.

However, the educational purpose of case study publication has not yet been fully realized. Cases are not systematically used in the educational programmes in universities of the Eurasian region. One of the reasons is that the methodology of using case studies is not widely recognized among professors teaching food policy and related subjects. Thus, ECFS decided to organize [Training for University Professors in the Use of the Case Study Methodology in Food and Nutrition Policy Teaching Programmes](#). Training will be held from January 27 till January 31, 2020.

## Event Calendar 2019–2020

Date	City. Country	Event
<b>December 2–6</b>	Cape Coast, Ghana	<a href="#">RUFORUM 15th Annual General Meeting (AGM)</a>
<b>December 5–6</b>	Sochi, Russia	<a href="#">World Soil Day - 2019</a>
<b>January 27-31. 2020</b>	Moscow, Russia	<a href="#">Training for University Professors in the use of the Case Study Methodology in Food and Nutrition Policy teaching programmes</a>
<b>June 16–19. 2020</b>	Montpellier, France	<a href="#">4th International Conference on Global Food Security</a>