

Prosperity Division

IMPACT STORY

Training professionals in trade, food security and nutrition

January 2022

Background

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and UNITAR jointly delivered a four-week online course on “**Trade, Food Security and Nutrition**” on May to June 2020. The course, held in Russian, targeted professionals working in trade and agriculture from eleven post-Soviet countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The course captured experiences across the post-Soviet region and globally on trade policies and achieving food security while also addressing nutrition as well as impacts from the COVID- 19 pandemic. Ultimately, the course sought to strengthen the capacity of these post-Soviet countries in Europe and Central Asia for implementing trade policies following the contribution of an open and inclusive trade regime towards global improvements in food security and nutrition.

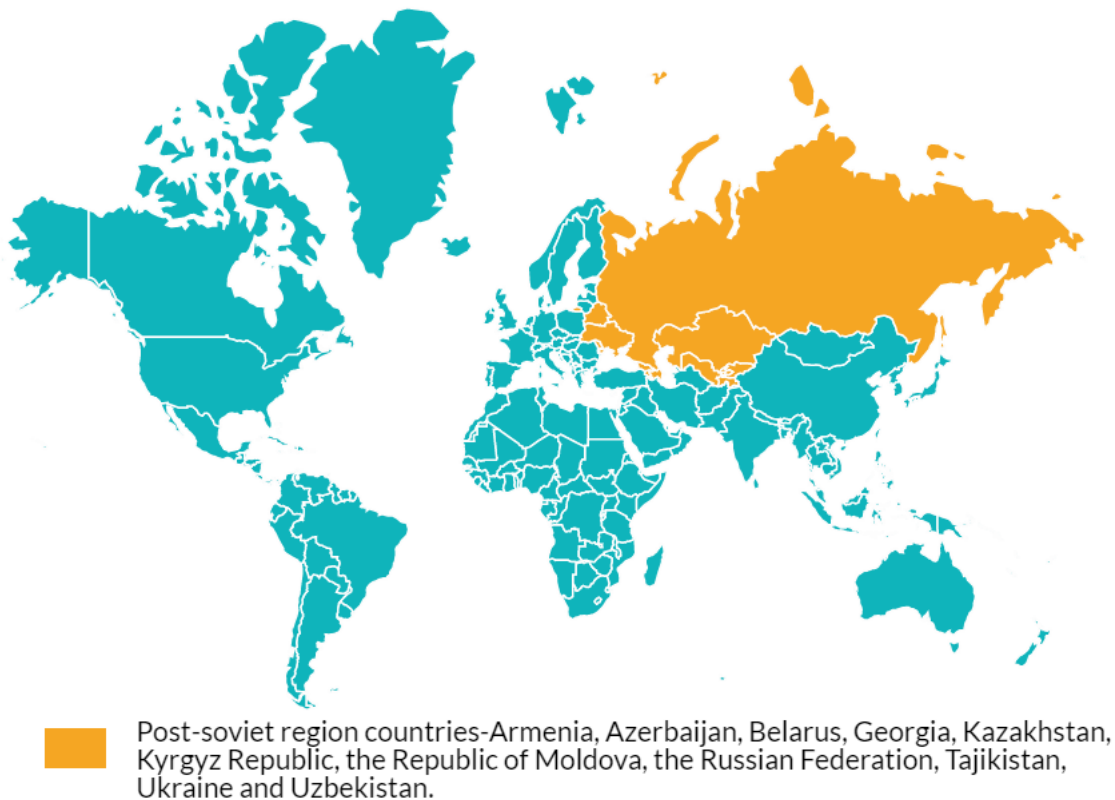
The course learning objectives included:

- Assessing the challenges and opportunities posed by greater openness to trade for food security and nutrition;
- Evaluating different types of trade policy measures and their role in promoting food security, in order to design and implement coherent and evidence-based policies;
- Formulating agricultural trade policies and strategies, taking into consideration the international trade rules.
- Analyzing each of the aforementioned topics in the post-Soviet region’s context.

The course received 271 applications with 70 participants selected. The participants represented different professional backgrounds, with majority, 42 per cent, coming from the public sector. The course indicated high participation from women. Sixty-four per cent of the selected participants were women. Russia and Ukraine had the highest number of participants.

One hundred per cent of the evaluation survey respondents indicated that the course mentors were efficient in delivering information and answering questions with 96 per cent stating that the course was directly relevant to their work and 98 per cent of the respondents planning to apply the knowledge and skills gained to their work. This follows responses received from 47 course participants on the course evaluation survey. Seventy-five per cent of the respondents indicated that the course information was completely or relatively new.

Figure 1: Participants' countries of origin



Selected participant feedback

"I always take into consideration while preparing offers for administration all the knowledge I get from this course. I got more info about agriculture and some details of animal husbandry sphere in neighbouring countries."

"The acquired knowledge was used in the development of the Strategy of socio-economic development of the region (agro-industrial sector)."

"I fully applied gained knowledge while doing the research work on sustainable food security which included parts on trade issues within EEU and nutrition aspects."



The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has a long-standing collaboration aimed at expanding access to education and training to strengthen capacities of stakeholders, with training activities on a wide range of topics being implemented since 2010.

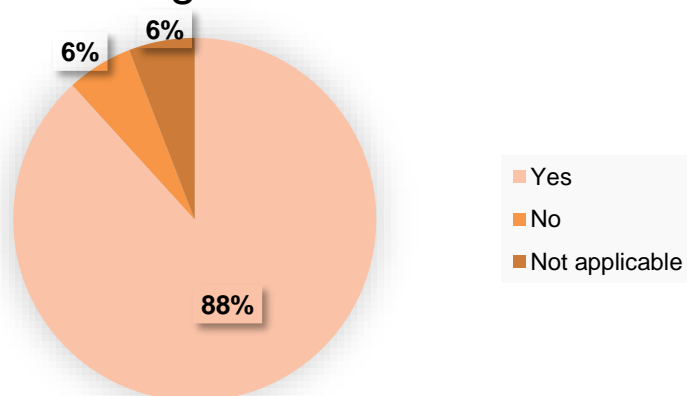
The partnership builds upon the strengths of both institutions by transforming the

knowledge expertise provided by FAO into high-quality learning products and services designed to transfer knowledge, impart skills, and raise awareness and takes full advantage of modern information and communication technology (ICT) for greater outreach and cost-effectiveness.

Application of knowledge and skills

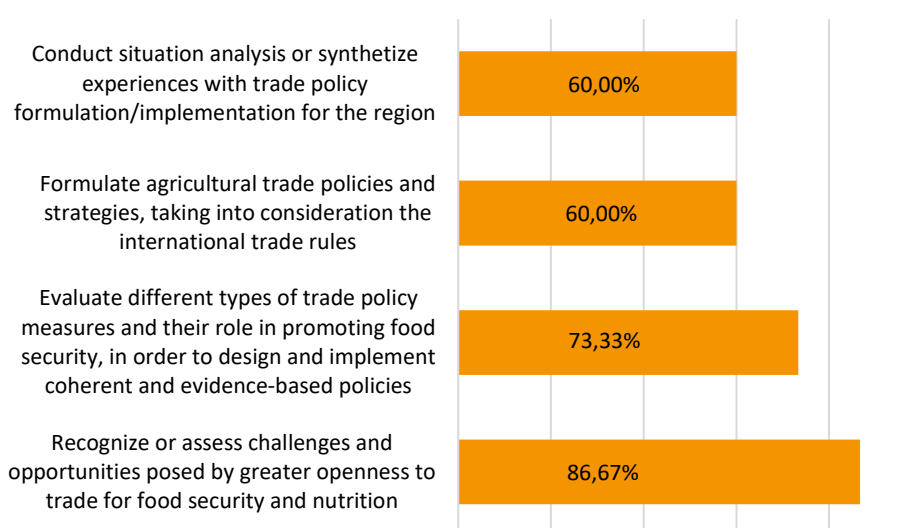
A follow-up survey was shared with the participants one year after the completion of the training to capture the changes in their work as a result of the training. Eighteen responses were received representing a fourteen per cent response rate. The majority of the respondents (fifty per cent) indicated that they work on trade issues at the national level with six per cent noting that they work in other sectors. The responses further indicated that fifty-six per cent of the respondents are involved in developing and implementing evidence-based agricultural, food security or trade policies.

Application or transfer of knowledge and skills to work



Eighty-eight per cent of respondents indicated that they have applied the knowledge and skills gained from the course. With regard to the knowledge and skills applied following the learning objectives, close to eighty-seven per cent stated they have applied knowledge and skills on “recognizing or assessing challenges and opportunities posed by greater openness to trade for food security and nutrition”. Figure three illustrates the application or transfer rate of

knowledge and skills per learning objective.



Sixty-five per cent of knowledge and skills applied by the participants was also directly attributed to the training with seventy-three per cent of respondents indicating that they often apply the

knowledge and skills in their work. Furthermore, sixty per cent of the respondents noted that the application of knowledge and skills from the course is very important for the success of their work. Following this, fifty-six per cent of the respondents indicated that they were very confident in applying or transferring the knowledge and skills to their work.

The high level of confidence and the availability of sufficient knowledge and skills to be applied were the two leading enabling factors pushing the respondents' success in the application of knowledge and skills. However, lack of funds and the provision of knowledge and skills which could not be adapted to the respondents' contexts were the key factors which prevented the participants from applying the knowledge and skills gained in their work.

The respondents still actively engage with each other as eighty-one per cent indicated that they have been in touch and continue sharing ideas with each other and with mentors from the course.

The experiences from two participants, narrated below capture the changes in behavior and approaches after the course completion.



Tetiana Monke

Regional Coordinator in Cherkasy Region-USAID's Agriculture Growing Rural Opportunities Activity Program in Ukraine (AGRO), Ukraine

Advancing expertise on food security and markets

Cherkasy region, Ukraine. Tetiana works as the Regional Coordinator in Cherkasy Region-USAID's Agriculture Growing Rural Opportunities Activity Program in Ukraine (AGRO)Coordinator of an international project which is part of a programme of the USAID Agrarian Rural Development. In this role, Tetiana implements and shares her expertise which she has garnered over the years on the food industry, food enterprises and food safety. Prior to her current position, Tetiana worked in the public sector on agribusiness development where she honed her skills in the food market and safety systems, and through which she contributed to the implementation of agribusiness development programmes such as the HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points).

The course arrived at an opportune moment for Tetiana as besides providing better comprehension of food reserves in her region and establishing what more can be done to improve the system and share experiences with partners, it also expanded her knowledge in analyzing food security issues. Tetiana notes that the course fostered her reflective approach towards analyzing food security issues from different angles as well as borrowing from the multiple approaches of problem solving from other course participants. The course steered Tetiana's drive in searching for a greater role through which she could share more of the knowledge and skills she has obtained while also learning new skills and tools in trade and food security. **Accordingly, the course pushed for her search and application for her current position, which she has since occupied after attending the course.**

Acquiring both practical and theoretical skills were a priority for Tetiana towards her course participation. In this regard, the course advanced Tetiana's knowledge in areas which she had limited skills and information, such as in food export and communication and engagement with other partners. The course fulfilled Tetiana's ambitions for this practical and theoretical knowledge by enhancing her capacities to monitor and analyze market situations and identify opportunities for entry. Tetiana went further and shared the course knowledge and skills on export information with agribusiness and production firms given her region's large production of chicken meat and by-products, exporting about 220,000 tons of these products annually to the Eurasian Economic Union of post-Soviet countries.

Her **application of the course knowledge and skills has also extended towards the implementation of her projects where she applied the skills in a project known as "Organic Cherkashina" on organic products and their exports in her region from which she examined the market situation, identified the available organic producers and how they could successfully export their products.** She appreciates that she can still access the course material and still refers to them as often as possible.

Tetiana valued the course's influence in boosting her confidence as a professional in her work following the vast knowledge and skills she acquired which has also been very beneficial to her employer. She continues to appreciate the FAO-UNITAR courses in which the majority of her

colleagues also participated and which she believes are essential in their knowledge and skill improvement.



Tetiana Smirnova

Head of Communication Services and Project Manager of the Ukrainian Berries Association, Ukraine

Developing knowledge to improve export potential

Kyiv, Ukraine. Tetiana is the Head of communication services and project manager for the Ukrainian Berry Association (UBA). The UBA supports the export of Ukrainian berry products and the diversification of market sales in order to increase sale volumes and quality while also creating a positive image of Ukraine in the international arena. The association works with farmers and foreign partners and unites berry market actors not only from Ukraine but also from other CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) and European Union (EU) countries. The association is keen on analysing international regulations and normative acts and export limitations in order to assess potential markets and establish projections.

Tetiana applied for the course with the goal of strengthening her theoretical knowledge on the building of international relations, international agreements and food security. Tetiana often refers to the course materials when considering bills following her Association's involvement, while recommending improvements to its representatives of the Agrarian Committee of Ukraine (the Committee proposes and amends bills impacting the market). **The course stood out for Ms. Smirnova as it steered her capacity in tackling unprecedented issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and their impact on trade and food security.** Tetiana notes that the course provided much needed knowledge in responding to such global challenges where approaches taken need to be flexible but still within the standards and frameworks of food security and gathering the required information needed to adapt to the unforeseen changes.

Tetiana notes that a shift in her behaviour and attitude towards her work has changed following her participation in the course stating that the knowledge enhances the presentation of her association's position, the strategy of conduct and its proposals for legislative changes related to the agrarian economy. She adds that **"The knowledge I gained from the course helped me soften the corners and manoeuvre between the important aspects of my work"**. In particular, Tetiana intends to use the knowledge gained in creating a strategic plan for the implementation of a new project focusing on a trade mission to the Netherlands and Germany.

Despite her work duties not being directly linked to food security, Tetiana acknowledges the course's influence as a reference for making quality decisions. She further commends the course for its flexibility in its design given that she could easily follow it as per her schedule and the course content was easy to digest. Additionally, Tetiana found that the other course participants offered enriching perspectives and it was interesting to see their different approaches and how representatives of the same country also had different points of view on state strategies. Tetiana recognizes the course's impact on her work and continues to use its content as a quality foundation for her duties.

Conclusion

The impact story illustrates the achievement of the course's learning objectives through the participants' experiences. The change in perspectives such as advances in career as noted by the participants' applications to new positions and the efforts placed towards conveying their organization's goals and objectives suggest that the course was beneficial in strengthening their capacities.

The two experiences illustrate that both directly and indirectly, the course's contribution to knowledge and skills growth is appreciated in efforts to foster interlinkages between trade, food security and nutrition.

A key element of peer-to-peer learning is also facilitated by the course as recorded by the participants' recognition of beneficial discussions and debates with each other with all providing different outlooks and approaches in trade and food security.

The utility of the course is also established particularly based on its occurrence during the COVID-19 pandemic with a large number of applications received and participants noting its usefulness in providing content necessary for responding to the pandemic following its huge impact on trade and food security.