**FAO supports rural women to conserve agrobiodiversity resources and increase financial income**

***18 December 2024, Dushanbe*** – Agricultural biodiversity is a broad term that includes all components of biological diversity of relevance to food and agriculture, and all components of biological diversity that constitute the agricultural ecosystems, also named agro-ecosystems: the variety and variability of animals, plants and micro-organisms, at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels, which are necessary to sustain key functions of the agro-ecosystem, its structure and processes.

A training workshop aimed at empowering women to conserve agrobiodiversity and increase income from its sustainable use was successfully held in Dushanbe yesterday. The workshop brought together participants from farms and households in the Shahriston, Tojikobod, Rasht, and Baljuvon districts, underscoring the importance of women’s leadership in agrobiodiversity conservation.

The event was organized as part of the FAO’s GEF (Global Environment Facility)-funded "Facilitating the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity for improved food and nutrition resilience in Tajikistan" project. Designed to strengthen food security and nutrition resilience, the project recognizes the critical role women play in managing agrobiodiversity, which is essential for sustainable livelihoods and environmental health.

During the workshop, participants were introduced to a wide range of practical tools and strategies for conserving local crop varieties, enhancing soil fertility and improving agricultural practices that increase both productivity and biodiversity. Key sessions focused on the use of traditional practices of using local agrobiodiversity to increase community income and conserve genetic resources; new ways to involve women in agribusiness and new agrobiodiversity initiatives; practical recommendations for promoting products of local agricultural crops and their wild relatives; establishing seed banks to conserve local agrobiodiversity; improving the quality of agricultural products and improving economic conditions.

The training provided a productive platform for knowledge exchange and sharing of experiences, offering valuable insights into sustainable farming techniques that can improve the quality and profitability of agricultural products.

“This initiative highlighted the importance of empowering women farmers, as they are often the backbone of local farming communities. Women play a central role in preserving traditional agricultural knowledge and practices that are essential for maintaining agrobiodiversity. By equipping women with the knowledge and skills to manage agrobiodiversity, the project is helping to improve food security, boost local economies, and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources for future generations.”, emphasized Aghasi Harutyunyan,  FAO Representative ad interim in Tajikistan.

"Women and men often have different roles, knowledge, and experiences related to agrobiodiversity. Unfortunately, women's contributions to conservation policies and programmes are often undervalued. By mainstreaming gender into biodiversity conservation, we recognize and utilize the unique experiences and skills of both women and men. This inclusive approach leads to more effective conservation strategies, builds community resilience, and promotes social justice.", said Zarafo Kiyomzoda, Deputy Head of the Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan (CEP).

CEP’s National Center of Environmental Protection Actions of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan is the project’s implementing partner.