**FAO expands its efforts on developing National Strategies and Contingency Plans for the prevention and management of wheat rust disease**

***27 February 2025, Dushanbe*** *–* The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) held a three-day workshop focused on developing a National Strategy and Contingency Plan for the Prevention and Management of Wheat Rust Diseases in Tajikistan and training on breeding for wheat rust resistance.

Wheat rust diseases pose a significant threat to wheat crops across Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC), as these airborne pathogens can easily cross borders, endangering regional food security and sustainability of agriculture. FAO has launched the CACRust project, supported by the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programme, to enhance national capacities and foster regional cooperation in the management of wheat rust diseases.

As part of the CACRust project’s activities in Tajikistan, this workshop aimed to strengthen national readiness in preventing and managing wheat rust diseases. The workshop provided a platform for multi-stakeholder consultations among national entities involved in plant protection, raised awareness about the CACRust project, collected critical data for a National Strategy and Contingency Plan, fostered connections between national wheat rust researchers and the international research community, and explored collaboration opportunities for breeding rust-resistant wheat varieties.

The workshop brought together key national stakeholders, including representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, and experts in wheat improvement, production, and disease surveillance. Researchers specialising in wheat rust monitoring, breeding, and disease control were also in attendance, together with the agencies focusing on plant pest management, variety registration, and production enhancement. The event was also attended by representatives from universities and research institutions, stakeholders from the seed production, and farmer training.

"The threat of wheat rust diseases is a serious challenge to food security and agricultural sustainability across Central Asia. This workshop is a vital step towards strengthening national efforts and regional cooperation in the fight against wheat rust. By developing a science-based National Strategy and Contingency Plan, we are not only enhancing Tajikistan's preparedness but also contributing to the broader goal of ensuring a resilient and sustainable wheat production system in the region. FAO remains committed to supporting countries in their efforts to protect crops, improve livelihoods, and strengthen food security for future generations," said Aghasi Harutyunyan, FAO Representative a.i. in Tajikistan.

The CACRust project is being implemented across Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Türkiye, with a view to promoting regional coordination to address wheat rust diseases. FAO and its partners are working to create a more resilient and sustainable wheat production system through enhanced surveillance, training, breeding for rust resistance, and strategic planning.

By uniting policymakers, researchers, and key agricultural stakeholders, this workshop marks a significant advancement in developing a robust, science-driven National Strategy and Contingency Plan for wheat rust disease management in Tajikistan. The event further solidifies FAO’s commitment to boosting food security and fostering sustainable agriculture in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

**About the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programmes**

The objectives of the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programmes are to provide support to ensure food security, rural poverty reduction and sustainable forest management; combat desertification; and preserve ecosystems in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and other countries of mutual interest.

Established in 2007, the first phase of the FAO-Türkiye Partnership Programme on Food and Agriculture (FTPP) has benefited from trust fund contributions totalling USD 10 million, financed by the Government of Türkiye and represented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. During the first phase of the programme, 28 projects were implemented in 16 countries between 2009 and 2015.

In 2014, Türkiye and FAO commenced the second phase of the FTPP along with the first phase of the FAO-Türkiye Forestry Partnership Programme (FTFP) with additional funding of USD 20 million, bringing Türkiye’s total contribution to USD 30 million.