**FAO support to Tajikistan’s cooperatives and rural development improves agricultural productivity**

***18 April 2025, Dushanbe*** – Within its ongoing efforts to strengthen Tajikistan's agricultural sector, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), has successfully completed a Technical Cooperation Programme Facility project on cooperative development and to strengthen rural institutions under the national Agrarian Reform Programme. The FAO project helped improve the working environment of cooperatives and strengthened the capacity of national authorities to support the development of cooperatives and rural institutions. On a local level, the project supported four agricultural cooperatives.

In line with these initiatives, FAO recently provided office equipment to the four cooperatives, as well as made the purchase and transfer of essential agricultural equipment to the Nuri Shahriston Farmers’ Cooperative. The items include two two-wheel tractors, a potato harvester and various related tools. The availability of this machinery for use by members and their communities will significantly enhance the cooperative's impact and utility.

"FAO is committed to continuing its technical assistance and support to strengthen cooperatives, help ensure their institutional and economic sustainability and further contribute to Tajikistan's agricultural growth and food security. FAO is also working closely with local partners to strengthen the capacity of cooperatives to better serve the needs of smallholder farmers and promote rural development in the country," said Aghasi Harutyunyan, FAO Representative a.i. in Tajikistan.

FAO's efforts are in direct support of the “Agricultural Reform Programme of the Republic of Tajikistan,” which has been instrumental in establishing cooperatives such as “Nuri Shahriston”. Through these efforts, FAO is empowering cooperatives and their members to address challenges such as increasing farm productivity and improving access to machinery and markets— thereby ultimately contributing to the long-term growth and sustainability of Tajikistan's agricultural sector and stability of its rural economy.

**Milestones of the project**

With the support of the Ministry of Agriculture, in March 2024 the project hosted the First National Cooperatives Forum. It provided a platform for local stakeholders and cooperatives to discuss their challenges and experiences, explore opportunities for development and to learn from the successes of cooperatives from other countries that joined the Forum online. The Forum concluded with a Final Statement of the participants, which emphasized the importance of creating an enabling environment for the development, promotion and emancipation of cooperatives.

A particular focus of the project has been the support to the Ministry of Agriculture in revising the Law of Republic of Tajikistan on Cooperatives. A thorough analysis of the current legislative framework for cooperatives in Tajikistan, along with recommendations, was prepared and discussed in several rounds with the Ministry of Agriculture and relevant stakeholders, including members of existing cooperatives. The proposed amendments to the law were submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture for their further approval by the Government of Tajikistan. It is expected that the amended law will contribute to enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of cooperatives.

A series of training sessions were organized on horticulture and potato production, providing cooperative members with valuable skills to apply sustainable agricultural practices. An accounting system was created and capacity building on accounting was provided for the management of the cooperatives. Based on the analysis of the existing capacities, comparative advantages and assets of the cooperatives, as well as the needs of their members, a set of development recommendations were prepared for each cooperative with detailed action plans and cost-benefit analyses. These were followed by marketing and financial planning trainings.

The United Nations has declared 2025 the International Year of Cooperatives under the slogan “Cooperatives Build a Better World”. Globally, more than three million cooperatives across all economic sectors provide goods and services that contribute to more prosperous and inclusive societies. Cooperatives, especially in the agrifood sector, are crucial in combating hunger and malnutrition. These organizations are strategic allies in reducing power asymmetries, promoting decent work, strengthening territorial governance, and fostering public-private partnerships.