

Addressing Land Abandonment in Armenia Through Land Market and Land Management Instruments

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SUMMARY

The Government of Armenia seeks to take pro-active steps to reduce the amount of abandoned agricultural land and ensure its targeted use. Such an objective is set forth in the recently adopted Programme of the Government (2019), thus making it a high political priority.

Analysis of land abandonment in Armenia conducted by FAO in 2017 revealed that 1/3 of all arable land distributed into private property is abandoned in the understanding that land parcels are unutilized.

The analysis concluded that land abandonment is a multi-dimensional phenomenon with interlinked economic, environmental and social root causes. In Armenia, several negative trends such as inefficient farm structures, an aging rural population, migration, dependence of agricultural production on water and lack of availability of irrigation facilities, various problems along the agricultural value chains, etc. are leading to land abandonment. The analysis had also revealed that the agricultural land market in Armenia is functioning with an annual turnover of 1 percent, which nevertheless did not improve the average farm size and the level of fragmentation significantly since the land reform in the 1990's.

The Ministry of Economy leads implementation of agricultural policies and strategies and intends to develop a comprehensive policy framework addressing the problem of land abandonment in a broader context of farm structures improvement and by focusing on the smallholders and family farms as the main target group.

In 2019, the Ministry of Economy has requested FAO support with the development and operationalization of a new regulatory framework and introduction of land banking and land

consolidation to address the abandonment of agricultural land. FAO responded positively and initiated a technical assistance project to be implemented during 2019-2021.

The new regulatory framework, also referred to by the Government of Armenia as a “land reform”, envisages measures to be undertaken at policy, legal and institutional levels. The central element of the proposed concept is establishment of a new institution generically called the Land Agency. Guided by the strong integrity and transparency standards, the Agency will be responsible for formulation and implementation of land policies and land market regulation, and be operating a land banking and land consolidation instruments, with the overall mission to support agricultural development and farm restructuring.

The presentation will provide insights into the problem of land abandonment in Armenia, present details of the envisaged policy framework and discuss the land management instruments available to facilitate farm structure development in the overall context of agricultural land market.

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