

JOINT STATEMENT
of the Executive Committee of IFAS and International Development Partners on
implementation of the
Action Program on Assistance to the countries of the Aral Sea Basin
(ASBP-4)

The Coordination meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and international development partners took place on October 18, 2021 in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Governments of Central Asia countries, IFAS institutions, donor countries, financial institutions and other international development partners.

The meeting was aimed at presentation of the ASBP-4, strengthening and expanding cooperation among the Governments of all Central Asia countries, IFAS institutions and international development partners for exchange of information on the ongoing activities and future plans, and ensuring synergies in joint implementation of projects and programs at the regional level.

The ASBP-4 was approved by the decision of the IFAS Board on June 29, 2021 in order to implement joint projects and perspective programs to address the Aral Sea crisis and strengthen cooperation through targeted actions at the national, regional and international levels. The program aims to improve the water management, environmental and socio-economic situation for sustainable development and improved livelihoods of people in the Aral Sea basin. Implementation of the ASBP-4 is particularly relevant in the current realities of climate change, population growth, urbanization, and industrialization processes, as well as decreasing availability of water in the region and deterioration of its quality. By the Resolution of the IFAS Board, the Executive Committee of IFAS was instructed, together with the Inter-State Commission on Water Coordination (ICWC) and the Inter-State Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD), to ensure implementation of the ASBP-4 and provide regular updates on the ASBP-4 progress to the IFAS Board.

Along with the implementation of the ASBP-4, the IFAS is investing efforts in the process of improving the institutional, legal and regulatory framework of the Fund for establishment of an effective and sustainable institutional framework resilient to the emerging challenges and enabling full-fledge mutually beneficial regional cooperation. This task is also included in the ASBP-4 to improve capacity and mandate of the IFAS institutions to effectively implement and manage the full breadth of ASBP-4.

Recognizing the importance and timeliness of ASBP-4 implementation in accordance with the best global practices and highest standards, participants of this meeting expressed their willingness:

- To join efforts in establishing a platform for dialogue and coordination among all Central Asian countries and international development partners on the regional initiatives aligned with the ASBP-4 objectives and priorities. The platform will ensure transparent and effective implementation of relevant programs and projects of regional and cross-sectoral significance co-financed by international development partners, governments and other stakeholders;
- To provide targeted support to the Executive Committee of IFAS in designing and establishing adequate arrangements for monitoring performance and progress of the ASBP-4 and ensuring linkages with other regional projects and programs through annual reviews;
- To consider opportunities for aligning regional initiatives planned by international development partners with the priorities laid out in the ASBP-4 for the benefit of all stakeholders;
- To ensure an inclusive approach to consultations on design of mutually beneficial implementation arrangements for activities and projects included in the ASBP-4;
- To join efforts for co-financing of mutually beneficial and cross-sectoral activities and projects of ASBP-4 under different modalities and financing terms;
- To encourage an open, regular and transparent exchange of information and join efforts in advancing the improvement of the institutional, legal and regulatory framework of IFAS to ensure that the changes and recommendations proposed in this process are duly reflected in the proposals for financing, implementation and monitoring arrangements of regional projects and programs co-financed by international development partners.

This joint statement prepared as an outcome document of the Coordination meeting of the Executive Committee of IFAS and international development partners aims to reflect the readiness of the parties for deepening cooperation related to implementation of objectives and priorities of the ASBP-4.

Republic of Tajikistan, Dushanbe
October 18, 2021