



ALAWUC/NE/10
December 2010

REPORT OF THE SIXTH SESSION



AGRICULTURE AND LAND AND WATER USE COMMISSION FOR THE NEAR EAST (ALAWUC)

Khartoum, Sudan
30 November - 02 December 2010

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Regional Office for the Near East



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I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

A. Organization of the Commission

1. The Sixth Session of the FAO Agriculture and Land and Water Use Commission for the Near East (ALAWUC) was held in Khartoum, the Republic of the Sudan, from 30 November - 02 December 2010, at the kind invitation of the Government. The opening ceremony of the Commission was attended by 21 persons, including 9 official participants from 4 Member Countries, 7 representatives of 4 regional and international organizations active in the field of agriculture and land and water in the Near East region, and, in addition, 4 observers from Sudan and one representative in the private sector in land and water.

B. Inaugural Ceremony

2. The Commission was inaugurated by Dr. Abdellatif Ahmed El Ojaimy, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, the Republic of the Sudan, and Dr. Saad AlOtaibi, Assistant Director-General, FAO Regional Representative for the Near East.
3. Dr. El Ojaimy, on behalf of H.E. Abdul-Halim Ismail Al-Mutaa'fi-, Minister of Agriculture in Sudan, welcomed the participants and expressed his thanks to ALAWUC Member Countries for holding the Commission's Sixth Session in his country. He recalled that most countries of the Near East are faced with water scarcity with heavy reliance on groundwater and substantial contribution of livestock to the livelihoods and food security. He also appreciated FAO for the preparation of the session documents that address crucial challenges for the agriculture and water sectors in the Near East. He expressed his wishes for a successful meeting of the Commission, including recommendations that are up to the expectations of the Commission Member Countries.
4. The Deputy-Minister gave a brief overview of the great natural resources in the Republic of Sudan, including agricultural lands and their uses, water resources, animal wealth and forests, in addition to the institutions and finances allocated for the development of the agriculture sector and food security. He also mentioned that the topics presented for discussion at the sixth session of the commission find a great interest in Sudan, given its resources base that assisted it enormously in absorbing the impacts of the acute increase in food resources prices since 2007

and the world financial and economic crises. He further expressed his hope that the session deliberations be geared toward supporting the policy orientation that emerged lately between the countries of the region and which promotes external investments for ensuring food, in addition to the recommendation of a package of adapted measures for the short, medium and long terms in support for sustainable national and regional food security.

5. Dr. AIOtaibi welcomed the participants and conveyed to them the wishes of the FAO Director-General, Mr. Jacques Diouf, for a fruitful and successful meeting. He expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Sudanese Government, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, for their hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for convening the Commission Session. He highlighted the topics covered by the meeting, which include three papers for presentation and discussion, and five information notes. He reminded participants that these topics were selected based on the recommendations of the previous session and additional screening by the Near East Country Representatives to FAO. He further stressed the importance and relevance of these topics for addressing the challenges facing agriculture and food security in the region and requested participants to come up with realistic recommendations that are in harmony with the priorities of the region. He also gave an overview of the major initiatives taken by FAO Regional Office for the Near East over the past two years. In addition, he reaffirmed FAO's readiness to cooperate with its Member Countries of the region for implementation of the recommendations reached by the Commission.

C. Election of Chairman, Vice Chairman and Appointment of Rapporteur

6. The Commission unanimously elected Dr. Ahmed Yacoub Fath AlRahman, from the Sudanese Ministry of Agriculture, as its Chairman for the Session, and appointed Mr. Akeel Al-Khaldi, from the State of Qatar, as the Session Rapporteur. They further agreed that the Heads of Delegations from all other Member Countries participating to the Session would serve as Vice-Chairmen.

D. Adoption of the Agenda

7. The Commission considered the Provisional Agenda (ALAWUC/NE/10/1) and Provisional Timetable (ALAWUC/10/INF/2) and unanimously approved them without changes.

II. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

A. Report on Action Taken by FAO for Implementation of the Recommendations of the Fifth ALAWUC Session

8. The document ALAWUC/NE/10/2 "*Report on Action Taken by FAO for Implementation of the Recommendations of the 5th Session of ALAWUC*" was presented by the ALAWUC Secretariat. The Commission commended FAO and its Regional Office for the Near East (RNE) for their extensive efforts in giving due consideration to the recommendations through the implementation of a broad range of activities, projects and programmes at the national and regional levels during the biennium (2008/09).
9. The Commission reviewed the activities implemented by FAO and its Regional Office over the past biennium. These activities were focused on: (i) sustainable natural resources management and addressing emerging environmental threats in agriculture and food security; (ii) reform of agricultural products marketing rules and regulations in light of the new socio-economic changes; (iii) public private partnerships to finance, construct and operate irrigation systems.
10. The Commission expressed its appreciation to the activities carried out by FAO, under its regular and field programmes, with high relevance to address the priority issues and needs of the Near East region, including land and water resources management, adaptation to climate change, drought preparedness and management, information on agricultural water, plant protection and quarantine, and animal production and health.
11. The Commission also appreciated FAO's wide array of technical support provided to Member Countries of the region in the identification, formulation and implementation of a large number of projects and programmes both under regular development and response to emergencies. FAO provided varied technical assistance to improve irrigation water use and management at the country level. It also supported the elaboration and implementation of a number of emergency response projects, particularly in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Somalia, Iraq and Sudan. In addition, FAO actively responded to the outbreak of the Avian Influenza in the region. The Commission requested FAO and other organizations to continue giving priority

to field programmes and assisting Member Countries to formulate and implement development and emergency projects in the region.

12. The Commission approved of the continuous FAO's assistance in the promotion of non-conventional water resources to alleviate the burden on fresh water resources. FAO has been engaged in varied assistance in the use of treated wastewater in a manner that is compatible with environmental and health conditions in the region and elsewhere. During the previous biennium, FAO pursued data collection, country assessments and consultations throughout the world, including the Near East region, with the aim of producing a Water Report on the economics of wastewater use in agriculture. FAO also carried out the development of farmer field school for implementing the joint WHO/FAO guidelines in non-treatment options and presented the results at the All African Horticulture Congress. Furthermore, FAO provided varied technical support to Member Countries in the region, including the formulation and implementation of projects on the reuse of treated wastewater and treatment sludge in agriculture as well as the implementation of a pre-feasibility study on seawater water desalination for agriculture use and a national study on the evaluation and valorization of brackish groundwater potential.

13. The Commission emphasized that FAO RNE has adopted climate change as a priority area for coordinated actions and established a Multi-disciplinary Working Group on climate change. The Commission satisfactorily noted FAO's wide range of activities for managing climate change impact on agriculture and food security. These included the review of the likely impacts of climate change in the region and the preparation of a concept note on a regional multi-disciplinary initiative, focusing on adaptation of the food-security related sectors. FAO, in collaboration with the World Bank, WFP and IFAD, also organized a regional forum on climate change with the aim of advancing the agenda for investment in climate change adaptation and mitigation. FAO also actively participated in the "Ninth Sectoral Meeting between the League of Arab States and the United Nations and their Specialized Organizations on Climate Change." At the country level, FAO assisted the elaboration of a large number of studies and the implementation of a large number of projects. The Commission requested FAO to continue and further expand its climate change initiatives in agriculture and food security in the Near East region, in close collaboration with Member Countries and other organizations.

14. The Commission appreciated FAO's continuous support in the field of drought preparedness and management, including the production of systematic

documentation and information, implementation of capacity building activities, and provision of technical assistance and advisory support for drought plans and strategies. FAO with its partner center produced two landmark publications, namely "A Review of Drought Occurrence and Monitoring and Planning Activities in the Near East Region" and "The Near East Drought Planning Manual: Guidelines for Drought Mitigation and Preparedness Planning," both available in Arabic, English and French. FAO and its partners also organized a regional workshop on drought preparedness and management based on the training manual mentioned above. Moreover, FAO provided assistance with respect to a national drought strategy and drought plan. Care has also been taken for the inclusion of drought measures implementation within the framework of several on-going FAO projects in the Near East countries. The Commission recommended FAO and other organizations concerned to continue their initiatives in the field of drought management in the Near East region.

15. The Commission noted that FAO supported Member Countries to strengthen national capacity in sustainable management of range and pasture resources through the organization of regional meetings with partner institutions, including an expert consultation meeting on irrigated forages for sustainable animal production and a meeting on wildlife conservation and protected areas management.
16. The Commission acknowledged FAO's continuous efforts in the development of information systems and materials on agriculture water, including its regular update on the AQUASTAT database. The Commission thanked FAO for the preparation of a booklet titled "Water Resources in the Near East - Facts and Figures" that consolidates the updated country and regional data on water resources and their use with emphasis on agricultural water. In addition, the Commission noted that FAO launched the Near East Rural and Agricultural Knowledge and Information Network - Regional Agricultural Information System (NERAKIN-RAIS). The Commission requested FAO to continue the exercise of updating water resources information in agriculture use in close collaboration with Member Countries.
17. The Commission noted that FAO has been engaged in the preparation of a new publication to present comprehensive and objective information and analysis on the current global State of Land and Water Resources (SOLAW). It also noted that FAO actively participated in an expert group meeting on sustainable land management in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) region and provided guidance and technical assistance to a national workshop on Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA).

18. The Commission recognized FAO's continuous support in the field of plant protection and quarantine, including awareness-raising, capacity building and information exchange as well as the establishment and management of the Near East Plant Protection Organization (NEPPO). FAO continuously supported to publish the Arab and Near East Plant Protection Newsletter (ANEPPNEL) jointly with the Arab Society for Plant Protection. In response to the threat posed by the killer wheat fungus, FAO, in collaboration with ICARDA and CYMMIYT, has carried out an assessment of the presence and extent of infestation in the Near East countries and also worked closely with a national institute and authorities to collect more information on the disease at the regional level. In addition, a global project has been formulated and submitted to donors to assist countries in their effort in dealing with this newly emerged trans-boundary disease.

19. The Commission acknowledged that FAO organized a number of seminars and training workshops with respect to plant protection at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. These activities covered extensive subjects, including i) Integrated Pest Management (IPM), ii) Wheat rust "UG 99", iii) Peach Fruit Fly and Red Palm Weevil, iv) Weed Risk Assessment, v) Phytosanitary control, vi) quarantine pests, vii) invasive plant *Solanum elaeagnifolium*, viii) Rotterdam Convention, and among others.

20. The Commission affirmed that FAO has actively collaborated with other organizations active in the water sector and concerned with agricultural water, including other UN organizations; donor agencies such as the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank; financing institutions including the Global Environment Fund; and bilateral cooperation and a regional partnership. It is noteworthy that FAO chaired the UN Water in the last biennium and committed to promoting coordination and coherence among UN entities and outside partners that are involved in issues related to freshwater and sanitation.

21. The Commission acknowledged that FAO provided varied assistance in the areas of agricultural marketing systems and regulations, supply chain analysis, and international standards. FAO, in collaboration with the International Plant Protection Convention, held a regional workshop to review the draft International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures. FAO with its national partner also organized a seminar on the distribution systems of agricultural products in the North Africa. Moreover, technical assistance was provided in various other areas, including animal

quarantines and import requirements, integrated plant health management, and organic agricultural production, certification and marketing.

22. The Commission appreciated FAO's technical support and training aimed at reforming irrigation water management. Within a regional initiative on irrigation modernization, FAO, in collaboration with its international and national partners, held regional and national training workshops on "Mapping System and Services for Canal Operation Techniques (MASSCOTE)" approach. The regional initiative was intended to introduce the FAO's latest irrigation modernization approach, which is considered particularly useful in the context of improving agricultural water management and irrigation water productivity in the Near East. The approach has been applied in Egypt, Iran, Jordan and Syria by country teams with technical supervision provided by FAO and its international partner. In addition, FAO, in collaboration with its international and national partners, organized a regional training workshop on "AquaCrop" with the aim of improving skills in strategic farm management practices toward increasing crop water productivity in rainfed and irrigated production systems.
23. The Commission noted satisfactorily that FAO continued support to Iraq with a view of rehabilitating and modernizing its agricultural sector, including national capacity building, technology transfer, job-creation, development of sustainable livelihoods, rehabilitation and improvement of agriculture and agro-industry infrastructure, and agricultural marketing. FAO mission has continually maintained its presence in over 4 sub offices and 30 project sites in the Republic of Iraq.
24. The recommendations that emerged from the discussions of document ALAWUC/NE/10/2.
 - A. The Commission's sixth Session deliberations recommended taking the required technical measures for the establishment of clear and specific standards to be adopted as a basis for the success of projects and incorporated among the monitoring and evaluation criteria
 - B. The adoption of effective measures that lead to the improvement of coordination, information exchange and cooperation between the organizations concerned with agriculture and land and water in the Near East Region, particularly between the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), the League of Arab States (LAS) and FAO

- C. In view of water scarcity in the region and the negative impacts resulting from climate change, there is a need for reviewing the programmes specific to water resources and supporting them in order to align them with the new challenges to be addressed.
- D. The supposed cooperation between the public and the private sectors vis-à-vis the problems facing the Agriculture and Land and Water Sectors are still below the minimum level required; the concerned parties should work at all official and private levels to improve its activation canals.
- E. The experience and information related to the sessions of the Agriculture and Land and Water Use Commission for the Near East since its first session in Beirut in the year 2000 has yielded the following:
 - 1. The limited participation of the Commission's Member Countries and the lack of enrichment of its discussions and recommendations during the organization of its biennial sessions
 - 2. There has been no positive change regarding Commission's budget increase since its establishment in 1997 despite the multiplication and increase in its responsibilities vis-à-vis what the region faces in terms of the high dangers related to land reform and water scarcity.

In this respect, the participants to the Commission's sixth session recommend the following:

- The preparation of internal statutes for the Commission to organize its working criteria, with the Commission Member Counties playing a lead role in such preparation, and the establishment of a board from Member Countries for the monitoring and management of the Commission's affairs.
 - The session participants also urged the Commission's Member Countries to contribute financially to the Commission's resources to allow it to improve its working mechanisms and the implementation of its general programs.
- F. The discussions revealed that the issues related to land tenure as well as the regulations and practices related to land use in agriculture constitute constraints that have to be addressed in consultation with FAO in view of finding legal solutions to them.

In this respect, the participants to the sixth session recommended the organization of a workshop for Member Countries in the Region, at the policy

and executive levels, to assess these issues and the ways to address them, in compliance with the laws applicable in these countries.

B. Groundwater Management in the Near East

25. The Commission considered Document ALAWUC/NE/10/3, titled "Groundwater management in the Near East." It understood that the purpose of the paper is not about hydro-geology but rather attempts to address the question of groundwater management in the region, based on studies in the pilot countries of the region with additional information from other regional countries to provide a more complete picture. The Commission thanked FAO for highlighting the state of groundwater use and groundwater management responses as well as raising crucial issues that countries ought to consider in the achievement of sustainable management of overall water resources and groundwater in particular.
26. The Commission recalled the importance of groundwater resources in the region. Most countries have come to rely heavily on groundwater to meet growing water demands in all sectors. In particular, irrigated agriculture is the most significant cause of the growth in groundwater use; it consumes 80-90 percent of the groundwater pumped in most countries of the region. This has produced many benefits, including underpinned significant socio-economic development in rural areas and lifted many thousands of families out of poverty. However, there are costs too.
27. The Commission acknowledged that urgent actions are required to reach a balance between groundwater supply and demand in the region. Although groundwater will continuously play a dominant role in supplying water for all sectors, it is clear that the current rates of groundwater withdrawals are far from sustainable in the region. Almost all countries listed in Table 2 are shown as overdrawing on renewable groundwater and six countries are also exploiting fossil groundwater resources. There was scant knowledge of groundwater resources and what could be safely withdrawn. Private farmers found it relatively easy to access groundwater while governments positively encouraged them to grow more food locally through promoting finance and credit and the technology to drill deep wells. Serious over-exploitation of groundwater across the region is reaching to a point where it is beginning to threaten national food security and rural livelihoods. Significant changes are needed if supply and demand for groundwater is to be brought into line.

28. The Commission agreed that it is the utmost importance to achieve high efficiency and productivity from water resources in general and groundwater in particular. The country studies confirm the low levels of water use efficiency in irrigation, often less than 50 percent, in most countries even with their serious water scarcity. According to the reports, the improvement of agricultural water use efficiency is the most important strategy of water conservation for most countries in the region as governments seek to achieve a more sustainable groundwater supply-demand balance. Although various agricultural water sector organizations have attempted to do this, farmers have few incentives to improve efficiency and they have not met with much success. Policies like import-barriers, price support and subsidies tended to have the opposite effect to the efficient use of water.

29. The Commission noted that water quality and the impact of over-abstraction on the environment are increasing concern in some countries. As a result of over-abstraction, irreversible saline intrusion is occurring and impacting on coastal communities in many countries of the region. Contamination from sewage in urban areas and excessive use of agricultural chemicals is also showing up in a number of countries but the full extent of the problems is not clear due to poor monitoring services.

30. The Commission recalled that strong institutions and policies are required to provide the backbone for the sustainable management of groundwater resources. Several countries have re-organized their institutional structures towards rationalizing and consolidating water responsibilities into one ministry. However, in many countries, water supply and sanitation, and agriculture still tend to be handled differently. There is also confusing overlap as more organizations become involved in groundwater issues. In addition, some countries are pursuing policies of decentralization to place the decisions of groundwater management at the lowest administrative levels as a means of beneficiaries' participation. However, progress is slow and it is a challenging process in countries with highly centralized management systems.

31. The Commission noted that although progress is being made, new policies and organizations are in many cases not fully achieving their intended goals in groundwater management. The reasons include subsidy regimes, the status quo and resistance to change, legislation which lacks implementing rules and regulations, and weak enforcement of the regulations. Farmers are reluctant to change, and the messages to farmers from governments are also mixed; there is the desire by governments to control and regulate groundwater abstraction but at

the same time some government departments are encouraging private farmers to use more groundwater through various sorts of subsidies. The task of regulating groundwater requires strong enforcement mechanisms considering the extent of the territory involved, the complexity of licensing systems, and the lack of materials and resources to police them.

32. The Commission recognized that more scientific data and analysis of shared aquifers are needed to form the basis for national and/or joint decisions on the development, conservation and protection of groundwater resources and of the interdependent land-based resources.
33. The Commission noted the importance of the mobilization of high level political support and the identification of solutions to water related issues both within and outside the sector. There is a growing realization that groundwater management is highly political and cannot be dealt with by the water sector alone. Solutions may lie outside the more immediate influence of the water sector. The steps recommended include promoting education about multi-sectoral aspects of water management, investing in data collection on groundwater availability and quality, and tailoring this to meet the needs of policy makers outside the immediate water sector.
34. *The Commission found the conclusions of the study relevant and agreed to present the following recommendations to the Member Countries:*
 - The Commission commended the continuous efforts made to face the crisis related to both surface water and groundwater, nevertheless all these efforts remain below the minimum level required for addressing this crisis the damage breadth extent of which are not known.
 - The Commission adopted the presented document related to groundwater and recommended its publication on the electronic information website and sending copies of it to all Member Countries for adopting its recommendations and working towards the implementation of the statements thereof.
 - Countries are urged to continue giving due consideration to the sustainable management of groundwater resources, in view of the certain role they play in responding to increasing vital needs for water resources in all sectors, insisting that the achievement of groundwater supply and demand balance is a particularly urgent pressing issue that requires rapid action.

- Countries should review their water laws and the related application legislation with the objective of encouraging the involvement and participation of beneficiaries in this application, the mobilization of financial resources from both the public and private sectors and the achievement of high efficiency and productivity from water resources in general and groundwater in particular.
- The overarching role of water in social and economic development as well as the number, the nature and the enormity of issues related to water resources call for high political mobilization and the identification of solutions outside the water sector to supplement those from within the sector.
- The Commission recommended to its Member Countries the building of specialized national capacities capable of implementing these recommendations in order to respond effectively to the stated technical and scientific aspects
- The participants urged Member Countries to allocate human and financial resources to upgrade the scientific and research levels pertaining to surface and ground water issues.

The Commission recommended that FAO and Other Organizations:

- Continue supporting Member Countries and building their capacities in the adoption of integrated water resources management and the achievement of sustainable balance between groundwater supply and use.
- Support countries of the Near East region in the application of integrated water resources management in general and of policies and regulations for the sustainable management of groundwater resources in particular.
- Promote the mobilization of high level support for the water sector and give particular consideration to the research for solutions to the water-related issues both within and outside the sector.

C. A Coordinated Integrated Approach for the Control of Animal Diseases Emerging at the Animal-Ecosystem Interface in the Near East

35. The Commission considered Document ALAWUC/NE/10/4, titled "*A coordinated integrated approach for the control of animal diseases emerging at the animal-ecosystem interface in the Near East.*" It understood that the main purpose of the

paper is to overview the FAO One Health Programme and outlines the Near East Animal Health Strategy over a five-year period (2011-2016). The Commission thanked FAO for the comprehensive consolidation of the review of animal health emergencies, gaps and needs to address animal and human health issues, and the global initiative and proposed regional strategy on animal health. The strategy is based on a comprehensive approach to the strengthening of prevention measures, improved early detection and robust control of diseases emerging at the human-animal-ecosystem interface, and builds on the achievements and lessons learned from FAO's response to highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and other animal diseases over the past six years.

36. The Commission recalled that public and animal health emergencies caused by zoonoses, including HPAI, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and most recently pandemic influenza A (H1N1), have led to human sickness and death and threatened livestock industries, food security and livelihoods. These diseases are highly infectious in nature, and can potentially travel large distances rapidly. Moreover, they demonstrate the link between human, domestic animal and wildlife health, and underline the need for a broader understanding of health issues.
37. The Commission noted the rationale behind the FAO One Health initiative, which is to minimize the global impact of epidemics and pandemics through enhancing disease intelligence and emergency response systems at various levels and also through supporting such interventions by strong public and animal health services, inter-sectoral collaboration, partnerships and effective communication. The Commission noted various collaborations between FAO and international partners such as the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and WHO. The current efforts of the three agencies include the Global Early Warning System (GLEWS), designed to capture early signals of high-impact, transboundary animal and zoonotic disease threats.
38. The Commission recognized that human behavior underpins the events of emerging infectious diseases, and that multiple and interrelated global factors drive these processes. Given the broader ecological dynamics and concurrent farming intensification, more disease problems are forecasted. It is realized that acute flare-ups of new outbreaks still need to be managed while efforts in early-warning-detection-response must be consolidated and expanded. The main challenge now is to build on the emergency response platforms already established and trace infectious disease events back to their root causes or drivers, and to apply insights

gained in order to create a safer world, better prepared for and able to prevent pandemics.

39. The Commission noted recent major diseases and zoonoses in the region. Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) occurs in many countries in Near East with the high risk of spreading to new areas across borders mainly by sheep and goat. FMD strained epidemics severely affected the region in 2005 and several outbreaks were reported in different countries in the region more recently. Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) continues to spread and affect many countries in the region with high impacts on the livelihood of the rural communities. Vector-borne diseases such as bluetongue and River Valley Fever (RVF) are also threatening in the region. RVF is a major constraint to international and regional livestock trade in addition to its severe socio-economic and public health consequences. Brucellosis is endemic in the region and poses a major economic burden and public health hazard. Glanders is a highly contagious and a potentially fatal bacterial infection of equines that can cause rare but serious infections to humans with a high mortality rate. Its outbreak was recently reported in Bahrain, affecting horse stables throughout the island.

40. The Commission admitted that qualified veterinary services are required in the countries of the region. Although there are functioning veterinary services in regional countries, most of them have limited capacity to control diseases and rapidly respond to outbreaks and prevent their spread. The effectiveness of their veterinary services is hampered by a number of constraints, including:
 - limited financial and human resources allocated to animal health, and market and food inspection;
 - non-adapted veterinary structure and legislation in compliance with international standards;
 - limited epidemiological and laboratory diagnostic capacities;
 - lack of adapted veterinary extension programs;
 - poor bio-security practices in production, transport and marketing systems.
 - absence of adequate early response capacities to minimize the public health, economic and social impacts of disease outbreaks;
 - inability of managing animal movement inside the country and among neighboring countries;
 - limited involvement of private stakeholders in planning and implementation of animal health programs; and
 - limited strategic linkages between research and education institutions and veterinary services.

41. The Commission recognized that there is the need for an integrated and holistic approach to control diseases in the countries of the region. The control programs done by the countries are based on fragmented national approaches to disease-control and often based on limited reliable epidemiological information. There is the need for the harmonization of animal health measures and the systems of disease surveillance, diagnosis and control. In addition, human-animal interactions and other underlying risk factors, which facilitate the emergence, maintenance and transmission of diseases, need all to be considered in disease-control approaches in order to ensure effective animal health management. The Commission also recognized that multi-sectoral collaboration is needed for zoonotic diseases. The effective management of these diseases requires close cooperation, particularly between the public health, veterinary and agricultural sectors at each level.
42. The Commission acknowledged that a coordinated regional approach is necessary to tackle the threats of Transboundary Animal Diseases (TADs) in the region. Controlling contagious livestock diseases only at a national level is bound to fail primarily because of the dynamics of regional and global trade and travel as well as the movement of animals or animal products, including the cross border movement of pastoral herds. Adopting a regional approach is necessary to solve regional disease problems with an improved understanding of determinants of disease-entry-risks and pathways for disease propagation in the region, combined with the harmonization of disease control strategies. This strategy prevents catastrophic losses caused by a given disease and paves the way to a cost-effective implementation of harmonized control measures, progressive disease control and the increase of animal production and opening of new markets.
43. The Commission appreciated FAO's extensive assistance to strengthen animal health programs in the region during recent years, including the establishment of decentralized units of the Emergency Center for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) in Beirut for Middle East and in Tunis for North Africa. FAO has also developed and implemented an action plan for the preparedness and responses to HPAI, and also provided technical assistance to Member Countries to finalize their dossier for the accreditation of rinderpest freedom. In addition, FAO has been responsible for advancing practical knowledge and experience in prevention and control of TADs and zoonoses (e.g., FMD, PPR, RVF, and brucellosis) in various countries in the region. Despite these efforts, there remain significant challenges and gaps in preventing and controlling priority TADs and zoonoses in the region. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop additional joint activities under the

guidance of a strategy in an effort to strengthen national and regional capacities and to reinforce mechanisms for inter-sectoral collaboration and regional coordination.

44. The Commission adopted the FAO Animal Health Strategy for the Near East region, described in the conference paper. The strategy is excerpted from the paper as follows.

Vision: Safeguard animal health and livelihoods from the threat of infectious diseases and mitigate the risk for public health arising from animal sources in line with the approach to "one health" initiative.

Goal: Increase food security and improve the livelihoods of small scale livestock holders in the Near East and prevent animal and human disease threats.

Objectives:

- 1) Improve the capacities of the veterinary services for effective control of animal diseases and zoonoses
- 2) Enhance regional cooperation in animal disease surveillance, disease management and sanitized trade in animals and animal products
- 3) Ensure a high level of public and food safety by managing the risk of zoonoses and food-borne diseases
- 4) Promote partnership and applied collaborative research

Guiding Principles: The strategy envisions an integrated approach, including animal health, production systems, socio-economic as well as policy and regulatory issues. It will be also used as a framework for the development of stronger collaboration.

Implementation Strategy: The strategy will be implemented by FAO and government counterpart institutions (i.e. Ministry of Agriculture) in close collaboration with OIE and UN agencies as well as regional organizations and donors.

45. The participants endorsed the FAO "One Health" vision and strategy and the role of FAO and its financial and technical support provided to the Near East countries in the prevention and control of transboundary animal diseases. Considering the importance of the presentation emphasizing the identification of transboundary animal disease risks in the Near East region which is a hub of crossing routes between Africa, Asia and Europe, the commission made the following recommendations:

To Member Countries

- Support and invest in the animal health sector, through improvement of national veterinary capacities, to safeguard animal health and livelihoods from the threat of infectious diseases and mitigate the risk on humans, including through review of financial allocations to veterinary administrations and services
- Strengthen cooperation between countries in the region with regard to animal health, in view of its economic and social importance, through the involvement of relevant technical professionals in national and regional meetings and international standards organizations
- Improve exchange of experiences between countries of the region in the field of veterinary medicine
- Support the implementation of FAO animal health strategy for the Near East countries through the provision additional financial resources for the control of animal diseases in the region
- Improve the animal health status of the extensive and nomadic production systems given their direct impacts on environment, health and food security.
- Countries should coordinate efforts and actions for communication with livestock keepers and provide them with updated information, awareness and extension taking into account their geographical, cultural and practical knowledge.
- Provide and advocate for more resources for the control of animal diseases in the Region.
- Encourage studies and scientific research on impact of feeding on animal health and spread of transboundary animal diseases.

The Commission recommended that FAO and Other Organizations:

- Implement in close collaboration with member countries the FAO animal health strategy.
- Coordinate the animal health networks in the Region, such as REMESA, and the launching of a new network for the Middle East and the Horn of Africa.
- Establish and update a database on animal diseases and report on risk assessments and early warning whenever possible

- Participate in the formulation and implementation of national and regional projects on animal health.
- Provide adapted information and technical assistance on animal health issues to Member Countries.
- Support member countries in their efforts and actions for communication with livestock keepers and provide them with updated information, awareness and extension taking into account their geographical, cultural and practical knowledge.
- Support studies and scientific research on impact of feeding on animal health and spread of transboundary animal diseases.

III. CONCLUDING ITEMS

A. Information Notes

46. The following documents were circulated as Information Notes:

- *Drinking water quality concerns for animal health and production*
- *Update on promotion, ratification and implementation of the Rotterdam Convention in the Near East Region*
- *Strengthening of plant protection and plant quarantine capabilities in the Region: establishment of and operational arrangements for the Near East Plant Protection Organization (NEPPO)*
- *Spate irrigation in the Near East: Situation and prospects for improving its management and performance*
- *Capacity building on drought monitoring and early warning systems for drought preparedness and impact mitigation*

B. Subjects for Discussion at the Seventh Session

47. The Commission considered various topics for discussion at the next Session of ALAWUC and recommended that the Agenda Items of the forthcoming Session be selected from the following items, giving priority to the topics not covered under past sessions and in accordance with the Commission's mandate and responsibility:

1. **Status of non-conventional water resources use and water recycling in the Near East**
 - Reuse of treated wastewater in agriculture: Situation, constraints and prospects for improvement;
 - New developments in the use of brackish water for agricultural production in the Near East;
2. **Water resources development and management**
 - Role and Importance of Integrated Watershed Management Plans as a base for achieving proper management of water resources and agriculture production

- **Training needs on Water Demand Management in Agriculture**
 - Experience in small-scale water resources development, including water harvesting, flood spreading and groundwater recharge
 - Cloud seeding and artificial precipitation: experience and relevance for the Near East
 - Strengthening regional capacity for water quality monitoring
 - Experience in regulations and legislation of water use in agriculture
 - Assessment of water allocation between sectors, including criteria and arbitration.
- 3. Irrigation**
- Performance assessment and improvement of private irrigation in comparison with public schemes;
 - Economic, social and technical measures and criteria recommended for adoption for the assessment of conversion from surface to localized irrigation.
- 4. Climate change and drought**
- Impacts of Climate Change on Water and Crop Production
 - Capacity building on drought monitoring and early warning systems for drought preparedness and impact mitigation;
- 5. Land issues**
- Status of the use and management of fertilizers in the Near East Region and proposals for improvement
 - Land Tenure Issues in the Near East: Situation and Impacts on Land Management
- 6. Experience in agricultural products marketing in the Near East Region and training needs for capacity improvement in this area**
- 7. Animal production and health**
- Avian Flu impacts in the Near East Region and the means to enhance the Region's capacity to cope with future episodes

- The diseases that have direct impact on animal products exports and their negative impacts both on animal and human health, such as Foot and Mouth Diseases, Rift Valley Fever, etc. that affect livestock in the region countries
 - Impacts and consequences of animal feed on animal health
8. **Regional experience on range and pasture management, with emphasis on positive achievements and lessons learnt in the Near East Region;**
 9. **Strengthening of plant protection and plant quarantine capabilities in the region;**
 10. **Role of agro-climatic zoning in optimizing agricultural water use under water-scarcity conditions;**
 11. **Management and valorization of agricultural production residues;**
 12. **Research progress in the areas of crop water-stress tolerance and salt tolerance**

C. Date and Place of the Seventh Session

48. Since it is a standing decision that the meeting of ALAWUC be held back-to-back with the Near East Regional Conference, the date and venue of the 7th Session will be decided and relayed to Member Countries once the date and venue of the next FAO Near East Conference is determined.

D. Adoption of the Report

49. The participants unanimously adopted the report of the Sixth Session of the Commission.

E. Closure of the Session

50. The Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for the Near East expressed the appreciation of FAO to the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Ministry of Agriculture for hosting the Session and the provision of excellent services that contributed in an effective manner to the success of the session. He

also thanked the delegates from Member Countries and Observers for their effective participation and valuable contributions to the session deliberations, and indicated that the report will be submitted to the Senior Officers Meeting planned to be held right after the Session. He also highlighted his appreciation and thanks to the Chairman, the Rapporteur and the interpreters for their efforts as well as to the administration and staff of Burj Al-Fateh hotel for the excellent facilitations and services provided. He also expressed appreciation to the National Organizing Committee for the excellent organization of the meeting. He also thanked the national organizing commission for the excellent organization.

51. Dr. Ibrahim Moussa, from the Sudanese Ministry of Animal Wealth, made a statement in which he thanked the participants for their intensive discussions and relevant contributions to the deliberations of the Session. He also thanked the Session Rapporteur and FAO Secretariat for producing an excellent and comprehensive report that captures the deliberations and recommendations made by participants and reflects the concerns of Member Countries. He also expressed his appreciation to FAO Secretariat for the excellent organization and holding of the meeting, the quality documents prepared for the Session and the arrangements made for effecting the Commission to its successful conclusions.
52. In a statement made by a delegate on behalf of participants, he expressed their thanks to the Republic of the Sudan, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, for hosting the Session and the excellent organization. He also thanked FAO Secretariat for the excellent job done in holding a high level meeting and for the help provided to Member Countries.
53. The Chairman declared the Sixth Session closed at 13 PM of 2 December 2010.

APPENDIX A

AGENDA

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

- A. Organization of the Commission.
- B. Inaugural Ceremony.
- C. Election of Chairman, Vice Chairman and Appointment of Rapporteur.
- D. Adoption of the Agenda.

II. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- A. Action taken by FAO for Implementation of the Recommendations of the 5th Session of ALAWUC.
- B. Groundwater Management in the Near East.
- C. A Coordinated Integrated Approach for the Control of Animal Diseases Emerging at the Animal-Ecosystem Interface in the Near East.

III. CONCLUDING ITEMS

- A. Information Notes.
- B. Subjects for Discussion at the Seventh Session.
- C. Date and Place of the Next Session.
- D. Adoption of the Report.
- H. Closure of the Session.

APPENDIX B

قائمة بأسماء المشاركين LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

الدول الأعضاء في الهيئة

MEMBER NATIONS OF THE COMMISSION

AFGHANISTAN

أفغانستان

KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

ملكة البحرين

CYPRUS

قبرص

EGYPT

جمهورية مصر العربية

IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF

جمهورية إيران الإسلامية

IRAQ

العراق

JORDAN

الأردن

KUWAIT

الكويت

LEBANON

لبنان

LIBYA

Adnan Gebril
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Marine Wealth
Tripoli

الجمهورية العربية الليبية

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خزان جبل أولياد

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سورية

TUNISIA

تونس

TURKEY

تركيا

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

الإمارات العربية المتحدة

YEMEN, REPUBLIC OF

الجمهورية اليمنية

راقبون من دول أعضاء من الإقليم

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الجزائر

AZERBAIJAN

أذربايجان

DJIBOUTI

جيبوتي

KAZAKHSTAN

كازاخستان

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

جمهورية قرغيزيا

MALTA

مالطا

PALESTINE

فلسطين

TAJIKISTAN

طاجيكستان

TURKEMISTAN

تركمينستان

UZBEKISTAN

أوزبكستان

مراقبون من دول أعضاء من خارج الإقليم

**OBSERVERS FROM MEMBER NATIONS NOT IN THE
REGION**

FRANCE

UNITED KINGDOM

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ممثلو الأمم المتحدة والوكالات المتخصصة

**REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND
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مراقبون عن منظمات حكومية دولية

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COMMISSION SECRETARIAT

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Mr. Mohamed Bazza	Commission Secretary
Mr. Mohammed Bengoumi	Technical Staff (Animal production (and Health
Mr. Shinya Abe	Report Officer
Mr. Mohamed AbouHagggar	Information Technology Officer
Ms. Nagwa Farag	Information Officer
Ms. Heba Fahmy	Secretary Assistant
Ms. Myriam Aziz	Registration and other support
Ms. Saadeya Ali	Arabic Secretary/Typist
Mr. Ramadan Fahmy	Protocol and logistics staff

APPENDIX C

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

ALAWUC/NE/10/1	Provisional Agenda
ALAWUC/NE/10/2	Report on Action Taken by FAO for Implementation of the Recommendations of the 5 th ALAWUC Session
ALAWUC/NE/10/3	Groundwater management in the Near East
ALAWUC/NE/10/4	A coordinated integrated approach for the control of animal diseases emerging at the animal-ecosystem interface in the Near East
ALAWUC/NE/10/INF/1	Information Note
ALAWUC/NE/10/INF/2	Provisional Timetable
ALAWUC/NE/10/INF/3	Provisional List of Documents
ALAWUC/NE/10/INF/4	Drinking water quality concerns for animal health and production
ALAWUC/NE/10/INF/5	Update on promotion, ratification and implementation of the Rotterdam Convention in the Near East Region
ALAWUC/NE/10/INF/6	Strengthening of plant protection and plant quarantine capabilities in the Region: establishment of and operational arrangements for the Near East Plant Protection Organization (NEPPO)

ALAWUC/NE/10/INF/7 Spate irrigation in the Near East: Situation and prospects for improving its management and performance

ALAWUC/NE/10/INF/8 Capacity building on drought monitoring and early warning systems for drought preparedness and impact mitigation

These documents can be downloaded from the website:

http://www.fao.org/world/regional/rne/conferences/conf40__en/index__en.htm