



ALAWUC/NE/04
March 2004

REPORT OF
THE THIRD SESSION

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

Doha, Qatar
9-11 March 2004

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

LIST OF ALAWUC MEMBER COUNTRIES

AFGHANISTAN

BAHRAIN

CYPRUS

EGYPT

IRAN

IRAQ

JORDAN

KUWAIT

LEBANON

LIBYA

MAURITANIA

MOROCCO

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SAUDI ARABIA

SOMALIA

SUDAN

SYRIA

TUNISIA

TURKEY

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

YEMEN

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

A. Organization of the Commission

1. The Third Session of the FAO Agriculture and Land & Water Use Commission for the Near East (ALAWUC) was held in Doha, Qatar, from 9 to 11 March 2004, at the kind invitation of the Government of Qatar. The Commission was attended by 48 participants partitioned as follows: 37 persons from 14 Member Countries, 4 Observers from 3 Organizations and 7 Observers from 7 Non-Governmental Organizations. The List of Participant is shown in Appendix B of this Report.

B. Inaugural Ceremony

2. The Commission was inaugurated by Mr. Mohammed Fahd Alfaihani, Assistant Deputy-Minister for Agricultural Affairs, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture of Qatar, and Dr. Mohamad Albraithen, Assistant Director-General / FAO Regional Representative for the Near East.
3. Mr. Alfaihani welcomed the participants and expressed his thanks to FAO holding the Commission Third Session in his country for the first time. He indicated the challenges facing agricultural development in the Near East Region, including water scarcity, drought, desertification and land degradation, and briefed participants on the efforts made by the State of Qatar for achieving agricultural development within the limited natural resources available. He further emphasized the need for elaborating effective policies such as integration between pasture lands and livestock in order to foster and ensure sustainability of the resources, in addition to strategies aimed at finding alternatives to alleviate the effects of water scarcity and to fight drought and desertification.
4. He further announced the opening of the FAO Representation Office in Qatar, thanking FAO for the consideration given to the request of Qatar in this respect and indicating the readiness of his Ministry to cooperate with the Representation for the benefits of the Region in general and his country in particular.
5. In his speech, the Regional Representative welcomed the participants, conveying the wishes of the FAO Director-General Mr. Jacques Diouf for a fruitful and successful meeting. He expressed his thanks and appreciation for all the assistance provided by the Qatari Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture for their hospitality and excellent facilities afforded to convening the Commission Session.
6. He also emphasized the significant importance of the Commission which came to existence in 1997 and requested participants to give due attention during the Session to review its needs in order to make it more effective and beneficial to all Member Countries.
7. Dr. Albraithen highlighted the topics on the Agenda and the information notes and stressed their importance and relevance to address the challenges facing agriculture and food security in the Region. He expressed the hope that participants will reach operable

recommendations for enhancing agricultural development in the Region, urging countries to follow up on these recommendations and indicating FAO readiness to cooperate with them for their implementation.

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

8. The Commission unanimously elected Mr. Mohammed Fahd Alfaihani, Assistant Deputy-Minister for Agricultural Affairs in Qatar, as its Chairman of the Session, and Mr. Mojtaba Rajabbaigy from the Islamic Republic of Iran, as Vice-Chairman. Mr. Maamoun Dawelbeit from Sudan was appointed as Rapporteur.

D. Adoption of the Agenda

9. The Commission considered and adopted the Provisional Agenda (ALAWUC/04/1) and Provisional Timetable (ALAWUC/04/INF/2), after moving to convert the document on Biotechnology (ALAWUC/NE/04/INF/4) from an information note into a discussion document.

II. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

A. Action Taken on the Recommendations of the Second Agriculture and Land & Water Use Commission for the Near East

10. The document ALAWUC/NE/04/2 “*Report on Action Taken by FAO on the Recommendations of the Second ALAWUC Session*” was presented. The Commission expressed its appreciation to FAO and its Regional Office for the Near East for their commendable efforts in giving due consideration to the recommendations, through implementation of a broad programme of activities and projects during the past biennium.
11. The Commission reviewed the implemented FAO regional activities which focused on enhancing the sustainable management of water resources in agriculture, including the reuse of treated wastewater and groundwater, range and pasture land management, drought mitigation preparedness, policy advice, crop production and seed genetic resources. The Commission noted with satisfaction the support provided to Member Countries, through both the regular and field programmes, to build capacity for elaborating policies on water and genetic resources management, including groundwater, and developing technical capacities to implement them.
12. Noting the importance of treated wastewater in the balance of water resources for most countries of the Region, participants stressed the relevance of the activities undertaken by FAO, particularly the support provided to Member Countries both directly and through the *Regional Network on Wastewater Reuse in the Near East*, to build their technical and managerial capacities to use these resources in the most efficient and safe manner.

13. The Commission noted with satisfaction the activities implemented in support of the *Regional Network on Drought Mitigation for the Near East and the Mediterranean*. They commended the emphasis by FAO on drought as a “*priority areas approach*” during the past biennium and welcomed the continuation of this programme during the present biennium, with a need to speed up establishment of a regional centre of excellence on drought. Both FAO and Member Countries were urged to support the initiative and to cooperate towards elaborating and implementing drought preparedness and mitigation action plans.
14. The Commission also noted the wide array of activities on integrated management of natural resources (water, land and pasture) and in the field of rangeland and pasture, particularly the projects implemented in several countries of the Region, as well as those aimed at developing the capacity of Member Countries to deal with genetically-modified seeds.
15. The Commission stressed the need for strengthening cooperation among national, regional and international organizations and centers concerned with land and water utilization and management, with due attention to range and pasture land, crop management, soil conservation and efficient water delivery, use and management systems. Of particular importance is the need for those organizations to have information exchange, co-ordination and standardization of methodologies, data sharing and linkages and compatibility between databases.
16. The Commission **called upon** Member Countries that have not nominated a *focal point* to the Commission to do so, in order to facilitate communication and ensure effective follow-up on the Commission activities. It further requested FAO to send a reminder in this respect to the countries that have not nominated a Focal Point.
17. Realizing the important benefits of networking in ensuring exchange of experience, coordinating activities and addressing issues of regional dimension, the Commission **urged** Member Countries to lend adequate technical and financial support to the newly-established Networks and Commissions. In particular, countries were requested to give due attention to the *Animal Health Commission for the Near East and North Africa (AHCNENA)* in order to make it operational.
18. Noting the limited investment by countries in agriculture and water and the negative impacts of this situation on the performance of the agricultural sector, particularly on food security, the Commission **recommended** that countries, financial institutions and donors reverse the current trend and pay more emphasis on investment in agriculture and particularly in land and water projects, for achieving better food security levels.
19. Noting FAO efforts in promoting investment for an increased level of food security, through the development of regional programmes for food security; the Commission **urged** countries to give due attention to these programmes and entrusted FAO in promoting the cause of greater investment for food security at international financing forums.

20. The Commission emphasized in particular the following recommendations for consideration by both FAO and governments, except as otherwise indicated:

- Enhance greater investment in water resources development without depletion of groundwater aquifers;
- Assess the possibility of organizing a workshop on modern/pressurized irrigation systems and their management for efficient water use;
- Assess the possibility of organizing a workshop on “the role of gender in the conservation and management of watersheds”;
- Promotion of extension and advisory services and of awareness at community level, for improving irrigation efficiency and agricultural water management;
- Assess the possibility of establishing a centre for research and studies on wastewater treatment and reuse in Kuwait;
- Accelerate the process of establishing a drought research and mitigation centre, in coordination with existing relevant organizations, and considering the invitation of Iran to host such a centre;
- The Animal Health Commission for the Near East and North Africa needs more Government support to become operational and active;
- Urgent need for countries to adopt the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
- Urgently strengthen and activate the role of the Consultative Forum on Seeds for the Near East and North Africa (CFS-NENA), to help in guiding the development of the seed sector in the Near East Region.

FUTURE ACTION RELATED TO THE COMMISSION SCOPE

Considering the Commission’s scope, future activities would try to address relevant and standing issues in the Region with these guiding principles:

- Continue to emphasize the need for synergy and linkage between FAO Regular Programme and field projects;
- Prioritize emphasis on developing new projects in the Region and on assisting in their implementation;
- Emphasize Regular Programme activities that will result in increasing productivity of natural resources, through adequate policies, management and practices;
- Continue advocating for reversing the declining trend of investment in agriculture and water resources.

B. Recent Global Events on Water Resources and their Implications for the Near East Region

21. The Commission considered Document ALAWUC/NE/02/3 entitled “*Recent Global Events on Water Resources and their Implications for the Near East Region*”.
22. The Commission noted the importance of the topics highlighted in the document, particularly integrated water resources management, reforming irrigation through modernization, encouraging low-cost technologies, financing water projects and the growing role of groundwater. Noting their relevance to the Region, participants appreciated the role of FAO for the analysis of issues discussed as well as for the support and assistance provided to Member Countries for addressing such issues.
23. The Commission noted the fact that the Near East is characterized by severe water scarcity and that within the near future, many countries of the Region will reach crisis levels, jeopardizing their development and security including food security. Economic growth and agriculture development depend on water resources, particularly with groundwater as the lead input in most countries. Deterioration in water quality is also predicted to aggravate water shortage problems. In addition to the scarcity level of water resources in the Region, the management of these resources is still far from being adequate and appropriate water services are lacking.
24. The Commission also noted the important number of international and regional water-related events that occurred during the past three years, which attests of the global challenges and threats to water-scarce countries. Realizing these threats, many governments and international organizations and agencies have moved to establish dialogue for reaching common grounds on how to address them at different levels. These water-related forums also constituted valuable opportunities for consultation and dialogue. They permitted reaching general agreements on the main issues as well as on the recommendations to address them and which should be considered by countries and other stakeholders in order to avoid reaching water-shortage crisis levels.
25. Recognizing the important role of water resources management, the Commission recommended the establishment of relevant frameworks where the different, and often competing, water interests find a common objective and where multi-sectoral interests can be balanced. To this end, there is a need for introducing significant changes in existing interaction between politics, law, regulations, institutions, civil society and the consumers.
26. The Commission noted the fact that the water crisis is often a crisis of governance and urged countries to create the enabling environment for good governance as an essential element for sustainable development and management of water resources. In addition, communications need to be facilitated between politicians and other decision makers, water managers and users in order to promote water governance. It is also essential that countries promote better communication and access to information sharing between stakeholders.

27. Highlighting greater competition between water uses and the fact that in the Near East Region most water resources are already put into use, the Commission recommended relying on better water management and improved efficiency in the use of irrigation water as the most viable option for the Region to increase irrigation contribution to food production. Recent assessments in the Region show that performance of irrigation in terms of water productivity and irrigation efficiency is low, as a result of poor irrigation water management. Full or partial flood irrigation is by far the most widespread type of water management, covering 93% of the area. Surface irrigation methods coupled with poor practices are resulting in the loss of at least 50% of the applied water amounts. Increasing irrigation efficiency and productivity must become one of the top priorities in the Near East countries.

28. Recognizing water shortage as a priority that needs particular attention from all stakeholders in the Region, participants endorsed the content and recommendations of the paper, emphasizing the following aspects:

- Priority for raising awareness on water use for higher efficiency and on the appropriate management of aquifers, to avoid their depletion and the resulting negative impacts;
- Emphasis on increasing water productivity through the promotion of appropriate policies and practices, including the use of drought-tolerant crop varieties;
- Sustainable water resource development to be given due consideration especially with regard to pollution control;
- Virtual water should be looked at with due consideration to food security;
- Provision of information and training to develop the capacity of Member Countries to adopt Integrated Water Resources Management;
- Cost recovery of water services should take into consideration water rights of the poor layers of the population. In addition, care should be taken so as to avoid that the adoption of recovery of water services cost does not result in increasing the prices of basic foods;
- Promotion of water harvesting, supplementary irrigation and water saving technologies such as tillage and other practices.

Recommended Action by Member Countries:

- Each country should establish a framework under which multi-sectoral demand for water could be met in a balanced way for achieving the common goal, and within which appropriate interaction between politics, law, regulations, civil society and consumers could be activated;
- Countries are urged to give due consideration to water resources demand management, by putting water as a priority on their financial and policy agenda,

developing and implementing clear strategies and taking actions aimed at improving water governance and productivity in a sustainable manner;

- Countries that share common water resources should adopt a joint risk-based approach for the management of shared resources. They should cooperate in the early identification of emerging water risks and in taking necessary preventive measures to support and ensure regional stability;
- Member Countries ought to increase investment in the water sector using their own public funding, as well as external funding and private investment, for improving water productivity.

Recommended Action by FAO and other Organizations:

- FAO and other concerned organizations are requested to assist Member Countries, in developing integrated water resources management and water use efficiency plans, including rivers, watersheds, groundwater, water recycling, seawater desalination, water harvesting and joint research initiatives;
- FAO should assist member countries in the promotion of water-saving irrigation technology and better on-farm water management, as well as the collection of basic data, assessment and monitoring of ground water resources in order to correctly respond to management problems of this source which emerge in many areas;
- FAO is requested to support member countries in implementing the recommendations and commitments made during recent global and regional events on water resources, as they pertain to these countries and to FAO mandate and policy, including by fostering capacity development and enhancing regional cooperation on issues of regional dimension;
- FAO and other organizations active in the water sector should coordinate their strategies, share information and cooperate in the promotion of water policy reforms in developing countries and advocate for increased investment from all funding sources in the water sector;
- FAO and other concerned organizations are requested to cooperate with and provide technical assistance to the International Centre for Biosaline Agriculture for promoting the use of saline and brackish water in agriculture;
- Continue the focus on supporting Member Countries for implementation of policies and activities aimed at improving water demand management, including for food production.

C. Progress Achieved in Developing Strategies for Drought Mitigation and Preparedness Planning in the Near East Region

29. The Commission considered Document ALAWUC/NE/02/5, entitled “*Progress Achieved in Developing Strategies for Drought Mitigation and Preparedness Planning in the Near East Region*”.
30. The Commission thanked FAO for the initiative to compile such an important document which focuses on the importance of concerted efforts to be exerted from all

stakeholders in the Region to adopt and implement long-term preparedness and mitigation plans. It further noted the relevance of the recommendations of the report and requested Member Countries and all stakeholders to implement them. The paper gives an overview of the impact of recent episodes of drought recurrence in the Region and on the progress achieved in getting prepared to face future episodes. It presents future prospects and recommendations for the fulfillment of the Region needs. It further indicates the support provided by FAO and its partner organizations in the preparation of national and Regional drought preparedness plans.

31. The Commission noted that the last few years have witnessed a more frequent rate of drought recurrence in several countries of the Region and that drought severity during the last episode that occurred during the late nineties was the most serious during the past 30 years. In response, the period in between drought episodes should be dedicated to set out and implement national plans of action to rehabilitate the affected areas as well as to be better prepared for the next drought wave.
32. Recognizing the Regional and international characters of drought, participants recommended that governmental efforts need to be strengthened and assisted by UN and other agencies such as FAO, UNEP, UNESCO, UNSO, ACSAD and IFAD. Other main players including World Bank, CIHEAM, European Union, and other donors are invited to consolidate efforts for planning and implementing drought mitigation programmes. Moving from treating drought as an emergency to a new approach of long term planning and implementing sustainable practices to dissipate the negative impacts becomes a necessity in the Region.
33. The Commission further acknowledged FAO efforts as a follow-up to the World Food Summit (1996), whose Plan of Action includes multiple references to common objectives with UNCED, and which are in direct support of the objectives of this current initiative under Commitments Three and Five. For several decades, FAO has spear-headed agricultural improvement and rural development in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones ravaged by drought and desertification. These activities involved emergency and rehabilitation actions in the event of drought or other agricultural disasters.
34. Recognizing the positive impacts of networking, participants to ALAWUC Third Sessions recommended that countries should support the Regional Network on Drought Mitigation in the Near East and Mediterranean, established in cooperation with FAO, ICARDA and CIHEAM.
35. Recognizing drought as being essentially a water shortage in comparison with normal situations, the Commission considered water resources management as the cornerstone for any sustainable solution related to Drought Mitigation. In addition, practices of water harvesting, soil water conservation, use of drought tolerant crop and pasture species, etc. should be promoted.
36. The Commission urged Member Countries to establish Drought Early Warning Systems as essential components of drought preparedness plans and mitigation practices.
37. In view of the limitations of past responses by government to drought, which was based on “Emergency and Crises Management Approach”; the Commission recommended that the Near East Region countries need to adopt a “Risk Management Approach in

developing their national strategies for Drought Mitigation. Due consideration is to be given to the international and Regional initiatives related to Disaster Reduction and Management, led by the UNCCD, UNEP and UNDP.

38. Drought-prone Regions should conduct risk assessments to determine “who and what is most at risk to drought “and why. A vulnerability profile is an invaluable tool in assessing risk, and should be completed as part of drought preparedness planning. The most vulnerable sectors, people and regions can be systematically addressed as part of this planning process.
39. The usual and expected reaction of any government, when an emergency or natural hazard occurs, is to try to undertake immediate and quick measures in terms of relief materials of drinking water, animal feed, as well as food supplies and shelter to affected communities. Of course, all of these relief actions are needed to dissipate the suffering of people and assist them to recover and restore their normal life. However, delivering the aid and relief cannot be looked upon as the right or sustainable solution to the problem. The recurrence of drought during the past few years in many countries of the Region has shown that the waves were coming in a more frequent manner. Such situation warrants a “long term approach” to be considered and adopted.
40. The concept of “risk management” ought to prevail over that of the “emergency or reactive” approach. The resilience of communities to face natural hazards and emergencies can be strengthened through enhancing their capacity to cope with such situations. Three main requirements could be cited to enhance stakeholders’ capacities and these are:
 - an appropriate forecasting and information system for the early-warning;
 - preparedness of the society through public awareness and readiness;
 - institutional set-up allowing an adequate mechanism for quick and timely mobilizing of resources.
41. Few countries in the Region have made some commendable steps towards establishing some national institutional set-ups for dealing with Drought issues The National Drought Observatory in Morocco is one good example of what Member Governments in the Region could plan for. Conducting research work and surveys of past drought waves, establishing of Early Warning Systems, evaluation and continuous monitoring, are activities that lead to better control of the drought detrimental impacts and to alleviate its consequences. In addition to the Ministry of Agriculture, Tunisia managed to focus on desertification and drought issues through the Institute for Arid Zones (Institut des Regions Arides -IRA). In Algeria, the Arid Zones Research Unit exists as part of a university. Egypt, though not much pressed with drought issues as a priority due to the marginal role of rainfed sector, has established the Desert Research Institute since over four decades ago. A multi-disciplinary national committee was also formed to draft strategies for desertification control activities. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, a National Central Committee with 9 Ministries was involved and branching off to many local community committees. Turkey is handling the issue through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Services and /Research Institute of Rural Services.

42. Like other natural hazards, drought also requires assistance and inputs from Regional and international organizations and donors. Most of the drought-prone areas and dry lands fall in developing countries and many of which are among the Low Income Food Deficient Countries (LIFDCs). Addressing any urgent event, like a drought wave, would be beyond the national capacity of these countries. In addition, drought is trans-boundary in nature and impact. It could lead to migration of people and livestock as well as to sudden pressure on natural resources in a mode that would threaten ecosystem environments.
43. For drawing long term plans and strategies for preparedness and mitigation of drought impact, the government's role cannot be overemphasized. Of prime importance is the political will that needs to be committed, at the highest possible level of responsibility, in the form of a declared policy and as a national priority.

Recommended Action by Member Countries:

- Develop guidelines for preparation and implementation of national action programmes for combating drought with particular emphasis on policies, required infrastructures, co-ordination, community participation, political commitment, raising public awareness and provision of finance;
- Lend adequate support to research and technology transfer related to Drought Mitigation activities, including: drought-tolerant germplasm, drought-adapted animal breeds, biotechnology, capacity building and human resources development;
- Specify the basic components for an operable Regional co-ordination mechanism that would accommodate co-operative programmes, joint activities, and institutional set-ups, leading to harmonization of national drought mitigation action plans among neighboring countries;
- Involve and mobilize all community sectors, including NGOs, women and youth, for launching awareness and education campaigns to sensitize all stakeholders to drought impacts and ramifications; as well as identifying each sector's role in the relief and rehabilitation activities (range management, integrated crop and livestock development, marketing of inputs and outputs, storage, credit, extension, information and community participatory efforts);
- Provide facilities and enact required legislation and policies to allow creating enabling mechanisms that would be entrusted with drought mitigation measures to be implemented at district, provincial and national levels;
- Establish adequate liaison with Regional and international organizations, such as CCD, FAO, UNDP and others, and interest groups for the follow-up of drought mitigation activities at Regional and global levels;
- Give due attention to the social and economic dimensions of drought within the framework of the "Preparedness and Mitigation Plans", which should be comprehensive and integrated to address rehabilitation and development of other related drought affected sectors (e.g. rangeland, livestock, forestry and crop production) within an environmental protection context;

- Support at the highest political level possible, for timely adoption and implementation of drought mitigation measures.

Recommended Action by FAO and other Organizations:

- Provide technical assistance and advisory support to Member Countries in setting long-term plans for drought mitigation and management;
- Support national endeavors in initiating such plans through pilot studies, financing expert missions, consultancies and sector reviews;
- Fund some Regional advocacy studies, reports and Regional projects to develop and demonstrate the objectives and their achievements;
- Support systematic documentation and necessary information related to drought occurrence, including early warning and information systems and networking;
- Assist countries in the formulation and identification of projects/programmes and in preparing relevant documents to be addressed to donors for funding;
- Enter in cost-sharing agreements and/or as executing agency for the implementation of those projects;
- Continue providing training services to national cadres from Member Countries to help human resources development and capacity building in this area.

D. Towards Integrating Rangeland, Pasture and Livestock Systems for Sustainable Agriculture for Countries in the Near East

44. The Commission considered Document ALAWUC/NE/04/4, entitled “*Towards Integrating Rangeland, Pasture and Livestock Systems for Sustainable Agriculture for Countries in the Near East*”.
45. The Commission noted that range and pasture lands form a major resource, as reflected in plant diversity, variety of products and variability of habitats and natural ecosystems, and signified as being the largest area under one type of land use in the Region. It further noted the increasing and diverse livestock population in the Region and their importance in pastoral and national food security.
46. The Commission also noted that range and pasturelands play important roles in recreation and conservation of genetic resources and contribute to soil and water protection. They constitute a major carbon sink which is now recognized because of the increasing threats from global warming and climate change.
47. However in many parts of the Region, the capacity to provide these products and to perform these functions is declining due to a combination of environmental and man-made factors. The general trend is shrinkage of areas and decline in quantity and quality of forage produced. Adverse changes in range plant composition, combined with overgrazing and cultivation, have accentuated the decline in native forage production and the deterioration of native forage species gene pool, thus threatening biodiversity.

48. The Commission also recognized that appreciable efforts have been made to improve degraded range by establishing adaptable fodder shrubs. Suitable techniques and equipment for direct seeding and soil moisture conservation, for the benefit of native and reseeded species, have been developed. It was also acknowledged that several attempts have also been made by governments, international agencies and international research centers to improve forage supply from range, natural and cultivated pastures as well as fodder crops for the purpose of enhancing livestock production under different farming situations.
49. The Commission noted the importance of the topics elucidated by the document and its importance in developing holistic approach and complementary range resource planning and management, through integrated system approach. FAO was thanked in spelling out the status, trends and policy options in rangeland management and its integration with other agricultural resources, through coordinated land use planning, community empowerment, user right and tenure development.
50. Participants recognized the importance of range and pasturelands and their integration with other cropping systems and recognized the need to:
- consider range and pasture lands as a multiple-use resource system to ensure its sustainable management;
 - establish acceptable and viable land tenure, user rights and land use systems;
 - institutionalize community participation and create sufficient motives for active community involvement in the process;
 - mobilize all stakeholders to participate in order to set priorities, share responsibilities and to avoid or help in resolving conflicts of interest between stakeholders;
 - enact legislative adjustments to accommodate new approaches as well as institutional and policy changes;
 - provide supporting reliable information and data for appropriate decision making, particularly in the area of rangeland monitoring;
 - motivate the private sector to engage in integrated production systems and in providing services to producers.

Recommended Action by Member Countries:

- ensure participatory approach for range management in which producers and other stakeholders are partners with the government units in designing, implementing, and monitoring to achieve sustainable rangeland management;
- prepare national and local land use plans to harmonize competing demands and to create ownership by local communities and producers' groups of land and resources;
- develop integrated systems to ensure the integration of livestock in agriculture production systems as well as for enhancing agricultural productivity, increasing food production and income and improving the quality of life of rural communities;

- provide the required institutional support and services in areas where the private sector cannot play this role, including the infrastructure necessary for agricultural development, information and other basic services;
- emphasize sustainable management of range and pasture resources to meet livestock requirements, protect soil and watersheds and ensure suitable livelihoods for dependent rural societies;
- ensure environmental protection and conservation of biodiversity;
- facilitate coordinated actions by government institutions, NGOs, CSOs, producers' organizations and the private sector to ensure establishment of sustainable integrated production systems;
- conduct research on integrated systems specific to agro-ecological zones to be promoted by National Agricultural Systems and Research Centers. More effort and weight should be given to the participation of producers and their involvement in application and interpretation of field trials to enhance their adoption.

Recommended Action by FAO and other Organizations:

- assist Member Countries to develop strategies and principles for land tenure suited to sustainable use of rangeland resources with full participation of pastoralists and other stakeholders including active participation of local NGOs;
- establish databases for the works conducted in range and pasture lands in the Region, to serve as documentation on successful programmes and projects in the Region for technology transfer and adoption;
- provide technical assistance to Member Countries in native range seed production and its efficient use in range rehabilitation programmes;
- assist Member Countries to strengthen their national capacity in range and pasture related issues when requested.

E. Seed Policy and Regulations in Light of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

51. The Commission considered Document ALAWUC/NE/04/6, entitled "*Seed Policy and Regulations in Light of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety*".
52. The Commission noted the importance of the paper which provides a brief overview of seed systems and discusses the impact that the new international framework may have on national seed policies and regulations. It further recommended to countries to consider the recommendations of FAO expert workshops on Seed Policy, Seed Emergencies and Relief and Quality Declared Seed, organized as a part of the consultative process, as they apply to their conditions.

53. Participants also recommended to Member Countries to expedite the process of adopting the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and Cartagena Protocol, in view of their importance for safeguarding interests of Member Countries and the Region.

Recommended Action by Member Countries:

- Pay due attention that seed systems are dynamic and complex and should be linked to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture conservation and use, particularly on farm;
- Consider when developing national seed regulations all international developments such as the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the revision of the IPPC and the impending entry into force of the International treaty on PGRFA;
- Consider the recommendations of the expert workshops organized by FAO in 2003 on seed policy, seed emergency and relief and quality declared seed, as means to contribute to the objectives of the Global Plan of Action and the International Treaty on PGRFA.

Recommended Action by FAO and other Organizations:

- Assist in identifying opportunities to build partnerships between public and private sectors in seed systems;
- Assist in promoting participatory processes in the development of seed regulatory frameworks and gather information on existing seed regulatory models in various countries;
- Help Member Countries in collecting and sharing accumulated experiences including best practices and country case studies;
- Help Member Countries in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action (GPA) for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
- Manage information related to seeds in emergency relief operations and work closely with relevant regional and international organizations and agencies as well as NGOs and local institutions in project implementation;
- Finalize and revise the quality declared seed (QDS) document and promote implementation of QDS in the Near East Countries;
- Provide a forum to discuss compatibility of seed regulatory issues to facilitate the movement of seeds among countries.

F. Biotechnology in Crop Production in the Near East: a specific reference to genetically modified crops

54. The Commission considered Document ALAWUC/NE/04/INF/6, titled “*Biotechnology in Crop Production in the Near East: a specific reference to Genetically Modified Crops (GMCs)*”.
55. The Commission expressed its thanks to FAO for the comprehensive and succinct note on the subject and noted the sensitivity and complexity of the issue which raised many controversial questions. It further noted that much of the existing information is focused on the benefits of GMCs, but little is available on their potential hazards on the medium- and long-terms.
56. Recognizing the potential importance of biotechnology including GMCs in raising food production and helping to combat famine, the Commission recommended that international protocols and treaties that protect from potential long-term risks to health and the environment be respected. In this respect, participants requested FAO and other concerned neutral organizations to assist by advocating for the respect of such agreements as well as for conducting further adaptive research in the NE Region to assess potential negative impacts. Research centers in some countries of the Region which have acquired capacity in the subject could serve for this purpose.

Recommended Action by Member Countries:

- Recognize that biotechnology is one of the important tools for improving crop productivity and enhancement of food quality;
- Develop clear policy guidance on biotechnology, including regulatory frameworks, and enforce their implementation;
- Set up well designed national agricultural research strategies and systems with clear goals and objectives for both national agriculture and agricultural biotechnology development, as well emerging public and private sector collaboration;
- Promote clear understanding of the benefits and risks of biotechnology, particularly GMCs;
- Strengthen the overall capacities in plant breeding, including the associated application of biotechnologies in a safe and informed manner.

Recommended Action by FAO and other Organizations:

- Assist as a neutral organization by advocating for the respect of international agreements to protect from potential long-term risks of GMOs and conducting further adaptive research in the NE Region to assess such potential negative impacts;
- Strengthen the Regional Biosafety Network in West Asia and North Africa (WANA) to ensure capacity building and information dissemination for managing the potential environmental effects of GMC;
- Establish a Regional network of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) similar to the African Agriculture Technology Foundation to facilitate access to proprietary

technologies related to biotechnology. Iran expressed interest in hosting such a network.

III. CONCLUDING ITEMS

A. Information Notes

57. The following documents were circulated as Info Notes:

- *Post Harvest Priorities and Strategies in the Region;*
- *Education for Rural Development: Issues and Implications for the Near East;*
- *Report on the Status of Signatories and Ratification of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;*
- *Improving Agricultural Marketing Services to Support Export Development.*

58. The Islamic Development Bank which participated to the Session as an Observer also circulated a message from its Secretary-General to the Commission, through the Commission Secretariat. In his message, the Secretary General expressed his thanks to FAO for its hard work in the fields of water resources and agriculture to improve food production. He gave an overview of the efforts exerted by OIC emphasizing determination of his organization to enhance food security and expressed the readiness of OIC to cooperate with FAO for addressing the issue jointly. He further indicated that OIC commends FAO policy and supports its proposals and views and will continue doing its utmost in collaboration with it to strengthen agricultural cooperation between the OIC Member States and other FAO Member States.

59. The Commission expressed its thanks to OIC and its Secretary General for their support and their participation to the Third Session.

60. Members of the Commission, such as Iran and Turkey, also circulated notes to the Commission giving overviews of their respective experiences in the fields covered by the Third Session. They were thanked by the participants for sharing their experiences.

B. Subjects for Discussion at the Fourth Session

61. 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:

- Wastewater reuse: Reduction of treatment costs and elaboration of national standards on safe reuse in agriculture;
- GMCs: support for more studies to assess adaptation to the Region and role in ensuring greater level of food security, prior to their adoption;
- Assess the possibility of reducing the salinity level of saline and brackish waters, including through solar energy, as well as their desalination cost, to enhance greater use in agriculture;
- Assess the possibility of fog harvesting for agriculture and livestock use;

- Promotion of greater role of Gender in Agriculture;
- Promotion of the role of Information Technology in agriculture;
- Compilation of Regional experience on range and pasture management, with emphasis on positive achievements and lessons learnt in the Near East Region;
- Development and implementation of plant protection and quarantine systems, as a means of enhancing quality control and promoting exports;
- Progress in drought preparedness and planning in the NE Region;
- Capacity development for quality control of food for greater security and as a means to promote exports;
- Capacity enhancement of Member Countries to export agricultural products;
- Integrated management of land and water resources for sustainable agricultural production;
- Promotion of efficient agricultural water productivity through irrigation modernization, better on-farm water management, irrigation management transfer and irrigation water services cost recovery;
- Promotion of the role of technology transfer and extension in improving water use efficiency and mobilization of farmers.

C. Date and Place of the Next Session

62. Since it is a standing FAO decision that the meeting of ALAWUC be held back-to-back with the Regional Near East Conference, the date and venue of the 4th Session would 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

63. The Commission **adopted** the report after discussing it and introducing minor amendments.

E. Closure of the Session

64. Mr. Mohamed F. Alfaihani, Chairman of the Third Session expressed the thanks of his government to the Rapporteur and FAO Secretariat for producing a comprehensive and coherent report that reflects the deliberations of the Session and relevant recommendations to Member Countries and FAO. He also thanked 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. He finally thanked the participants for their high level contribution to the discussions and expressed his wishes to see them again for the Fourth Session.

65. The Assistant Director-General / FAO Regional Representative for the Near East, Dr. Mohamad I. Albraithen, expressed the deep appreciation of FAO to the Government of

Qatar in general and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture in particular for their kind invitation to host the Session. He thanked the delegates from Member Countries and the observers for their participation and valuable deliberations and contributions. He also thanked the Chairman for conducting diligently the Session, the Rapporteur for assisting to catch the participants' views, the interpreters for providing an excellent job and to the Ritz-Carlton management for providing excellent facilities and services. He also thanked the National Organizing Committee for all the assistance provided. He further indicated that FAO and its Regional Office for the Near East will take into consideration the recommendations when preparing the future work programme.

66. The Chairman wished participants safe journey home and declared the Third Session closed at 17:03 hrs. on 11 March 2004.

(المرفق بـ)

APPENDIX B

قائمة بأسماء المشاركين

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

الدول الأعضاء في الهيئة

MEMBER NATIONS OF THE COMMISSION

AFGHANISTAN

أفغانستان

BAHRAIN

البحرين

CYPRUS

قبرص

EGYPT

جمهورية مصر العربية

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Chairman of Land, Water and Environment Research
Institute
Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation
Cairo

شعلان نصر شعلان
رئيس معهد بحوث الأراضي و المياه و البيئة
وزارة الزراعة واستصلاح الأراضي
القاهرة

IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF

جمهورية إيران الإسلامية

Mojtaba RAJABBAIGI
Director-General
Office for International and Regional Organizations
(IRO)
Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture
Tehran

Arzhang JAVADI
Director-General
Agricultural Research and Education Organization
Agricultural Engineering Research Institute\
Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture
Tehran

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Deputy-Director
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Institute
Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture
Tehran

Reza SOHRABI
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Study and Evaluation Department (SED)
Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture
Tehran

IRAQ

العراق

JORDAN

الأردن

Abdallah AL-NAIMAT
Director of Land and Irrigation Directorate
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Amman

عبدالله النعيمات
مدير مديرية الأراضي و الري
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الكويت

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Kuwait

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رئيس قسم هندسة الري
الهيئة العامة للزراعة و الثروة السمكية ،
الكويت

Hani HAJIA
Agricultural Engineer
PAAFR
Kuwait

هاني حاجية
مهندس زراعي
الهيئة العامة للزراعة و الثروة السمكية ،
الكويت

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الهيئة العامة للزراعة و الثروة السمكية ،
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عبد النبي راشد الشيرازي
محلل مبتدئ عينات
الهيئة العامة للزراعة و الثروة السمكية ،
الكويت

LEBANON

لبنان

Louis LAHOUD
Director-General
Ministry of Agriculture
Beirut

لويس لحود
مدير عام
وزارة الزراعة ، بيروت

Selim ROUKOZ
Irrigation Engineer
Ministry of Agriculture
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مهندس ري
وزارة الزراعة ، بيروت

LIBYA

الجمهورية العربية الليبية

MAURITANIA

موريتانيا

MOROCCO

المغرب

OMAN, SULTANATE OF

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باكستان

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QATAR

قطر

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الوكيل المساعد للشئون الزراعية
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وزارة الشؤون البلدية و الزراعة
الدوحة

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علي بن فهد الهاجري
الممثل الدائم لقطر لدى المنظمة ، روما

SAUDI ARABIA, KINGDOM OF

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مأمون ضو البيت
مدير عام
نقل التقانة و الإرشاد
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Ahmed Khaled EL-DAW
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أحمد خالد الضو
مهندس الري و الموارد المائية
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اويديس ارسلان
نائب مدير قسم بحوث الموارد الطبيعية
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وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي
دمشق

TUNISIA

تونس

TURKEY

تركيا

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Ankara

Huseyin VELIOGLU
General Director
General Directorate of Agricultural Production and
Development
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
Ankara

Hasan EKIZ
Director General, Agricultural Research
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
Ankara

Gulgonul Fatma BUYUKDURA (Ms.)
Director of Section
Department of External Relations and EU
Coordination
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
Ankara

Sule OZKAYA (Ms.)
Counsellor DCM
Turkish Embassy in Qatar, Doha

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Habib Hussain ABBOUDI
Director of Planning and Follow-up
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Abu Dhabi

Rahma Bin Abdulrahman AL-SHAMSI
Third Secretary
Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Qatar
Doha

الإمارات العربية المتحدة

حبيب حسين العبودي
مدير مكتب التخطيط و المتابعة
وزارة الزراعة والثروة السمكية، أبر ظبي

رحمه بن عبد الرحمن الشامسي
سكرتير ثالث
سفارة دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة في
قطر، الدوحة

YEMEN, REPUBLIC OF

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Irrigation and Water Management Specialist
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Sanaá

الجمهورية اليمنية

خضر عطروش
أخصائي ري و إدارة مياه
وزارة الزراعة و الري ، صنعاء

مراقبون من دول أعضاء من الإقليم

OBSERVERS FROM MEMBER NATIONS IN THE REGION

ALGERIA

الجزائر

AZERBAIJAN

ازربايجان

DJIBOUTI

جيبوتي

KAZAKHSTAN

كازاخستان

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

جمهورية قرغيزيا

MALTA

مالطا

PALESTINE

فلسطين

TAJIKISTAN

طاجيكستان

TURKEMISTAN

تركمستان

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 SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

مراقبون عن منظمات حكومية دولية
OBSERVERS FROM INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (IGOs)

**ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC
CONFERENCE (OIC)**

Albaraa Farouk TARABZOUNI
Economic Affairs
Jeddah

SAUDI FUND FOR DEVELOPMENT (SFD)

Qassem Mohamed AL-AMER
Senior Specialist
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Saud AL-ABDULHADI
Economic Studies Specialist
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مراقبون عن منظمات دولية غير حكومية
**OBSERVERS FROM INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
(INGOs)**

**INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH IN THE
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Ahmed El-Tayeb OSMAN
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مراقبون عن منظمات غير حكومية

OBSERVERS FROM NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)

**ASSOCIATION NATIONALE POUR LA
PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT ET
LA LUTTE CONTRE LA POLLUTION**

Abla MEDAGUINE (Ms.)
Vice President
Algeria

CENESTA

Maryam RAHMANIAN (Ms.)
Iran

FIAN- NORWAY

Kristin KJAERET (Ms.)
Executive Director
Norway

**UNION NATIONALE DE LA FEMME
TUNISIENNE / ALLIANCE FEMME ET
ENVIRONNEMENT**

Leila BAHRI
President
Tunisia

ASSOCIATION DES AMIS DE LA SAOURA

Mohammed BENDADA
President
Algeria

NAURZUM

Tatyana BRAGINA (Ms.)
Kazakhstan

APNEK

Karim AKROUT
Tunisia