



Saudi Arabia and FAO

Partnering for strengthened food security and sustainable agricultural and rural development

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and FAO have a longstanding history of valuable cooperation for over 60 years. Successive technical cooperation agreements have spanned the full spectrum of food security and agricultural and rural development activities, with interventions targeted to meet the country's needs and priorities. As confirmed by a recently conducted independent evaluation, together Saudi Arabia and FAO have achieved notable results and substantial outputs over the last ten years.

Strategic partnership and technical assistance

An innovative model

Considering the ongoing national transformation and rapidly changing development environment in Saudi Arabia, FAO has developed an innovative model in order to build a strategic partnership and support delivery of the Organization's technical and advisory assistance at the country level. The major defining features of this model are:

- FAO's technical assistance focuses directly on support to implementation of the National Transformation Programme (NTP) 2020 and the Saudi Vision 2030
- FAO focuses on priorities for which it has a comparative advantage so as to ensure successful achievement of quality results.
- The Organization plays a facilitative role to assist and support Saudi Arabia in implementing relevant strategic initiatives
- Interventions target potentially promising sectors and regions, including areas where quick wins can be obtained
- FAO pilots its interventions to enable testing and learning as well as scaling up when practices are proved successful. This also helps to inform future policy directions

Matching FAO's expertise to Saudi Arabia's development priorities

Strategic direction for FAO assistance to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is provided by the 2017-2018 Country Programme, jointly formulated with the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MoEWA). Strategic priorities for technical cooperation have been identified through intensive consultation with multiple development stakeholders to ensure national ownership, while supporting the implementation of the National Transformation Programme 2020.

FAO's technical assistance focuses on participatory integrated capacity development in the following fields:

- Sustainable food and nutrition security
- Sustainable utilization of natural resources
- Sustainable development of marine fisheries and aquaculture
- Prevention and control of animal diseases
- Sustainable plant production and protection
- Empowering and linking small agricultural producers to markets
- Strengthening evidence-based planning and results based performance monitoring

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Prioritizing sustainable food security

Although Saudi Arabia is currently a food-secure country, it is facing growing challenges and risks to its overall food security situation. These include limited agricultural natural resources for ensuring adequate domestic food production; a high dependence on food import; inefficient food consumption subsidies; ineffective food trade and import policies; and relatively high rates of food losses and waste in the country.

“Improving agricultural and food systems is essential for a world with healthier people and healthier ecosystems.”

FAO Director-General

To address the above challenges and related risks, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture and FAO together advocated the need for a national strategy for food and nutrition security. The country has recently completed formulation such a strategy, to which the Organization

contributed with a formulation proposal as well as support to its development. In addition, FAO directly contributed to the formulation of strategic national initiatives on sustainable food security within the framework of the National Transformation Programme 2020.

Currently, FAO is working closely with the Ministry, the Saudi Grain Authority and Agricultural Development Fund to enhance national capacities for ensuring sustainable food security. The objective is to achieve:

- an effective strategic food reserve programme
- an effective food security early warning system
- a functional evidence-based national food loss and waste reduction programme
- a plan for responsible Saudi agricultural investments abroad

Increasing sustainable marine fisheries and aquaculture production and consumption

Owing to the significant decline in oil prices, diversification of the economic and production base is a key national priority. To this end, FAO and the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture have joined forces to encourage the sustainable expansion of aquaculture, recognized by the Saudi Vision 2030 as one of the most promising sectors for food production, employment opportunities and long-term economic development. With this premise, and building on past successful cooperation, a concerted effort has been made to bring about a sustainable increase in marine fisheries and aquaculture productivity as well as to enhance safety as a means of improving food and nutrition security while boosting the sector's contribution to the national economy.

Saudi Arabia and FAO have gone on to design a subprogramme aimed at enhancing national capacities in related fields. Expected results include:

- An ecosystem-based fisheries management framework for appropriate fishing technologies
- A programme to promote the legal extension of Saudi Arabia's fishing activities beyond the territorial waters
- A national aquatic animal health strategy (NAAHS), supported by an action plan
- A strategy and action plan for the production of vaccines for commercial fish farming
- A plan for the introduction and adoption of high-value aquaculture fish species.
- Improved aquaculture feeding procedures to reduce the conversion ratio and increase survival rates
- A strategy and action plan to increase national fish and seafood consumption

Building resilience of food security and nutrition for the Near East and North Africa

Saudi Arabia has been selected as a focus country for the FAO regional initiative “Building resilience of food security and nutrition for the Near East and North Africa”, which seeks to strengthen institutions, markets and production systems to cope with crises and threats.

The Initiative features five focus areas: strengthening capacities for developing coherent policy frameworks and investment programmes at national and regional levels; developing reliable evidence-based food security information systems and advocating for knowledge exchange to ensure efficient decision-making; promoting the development of effective and sustainable food systems with specific attention to reducing food losses and waste; building the resilience of households, communities and agro-ecosystems to anticipate, absorb and recover from the negative impacts of human-made and natural shocks.

Building on existing food security and nutrition programmes in the region, the regional resilience Initiative supports policy-setting bodies such as the Economic and Social Council of the Arab League and the Regional Multistakeholder Forum on Food Security and Nutrition. The aim is to enhance their contributions to building resilient livelihoods and to addressing the multiple threats and crises that the region is prone to. It supports ongoing policy processes and programmes at the country and subregional levels, bringing resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRR/M) planning and policy formulation to the fore.

