The United Arab Emirates and FAO

Partnering for sustainable agricultural development and global food security

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) joined FAO in 1973. The inauguration of the FAO Representation in 2005 was followed in 2010 with the opening of the FAO Subregional Office for the Gulf Cooperation Council States and Yemen in Abu Dhabi, thanks to UAE funding. The Subregional Office is at the forefront of FAO’s support to the country’s pioneering initiatives in technological innovation applied to the management of food, water and energy resources for sustainable growth. Promoting knowledge exchange and fostering partnerships are further key features of current cooperation.

FAO shows appreciation for the UAE’s contribution to food security

At the completion of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) round in June 2015, FAO announced that the UAE was among those countries that had managed to keep undernourishment levels below 5 percent since 1990. The UAE is also a major donor state for international development and humanitarian efforts to ensure food security in many countries affected by crises and malnutrition. In recent years, the country has confirmed its position as the world’s largest international humanitarian donor (as a percentage of GNI).

Cooperation in water management

FAO’s Regional Initiative on Water Scarcity in the Near East and North Africa is designed to support countries in coordinating their policies, governance and practices relating to management of this strategic resource. In December 2015, the UAE Government and FAO – together with the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture and the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas – signed an Agreement providing for joint projects to unlock the potential of Protected Agriculture. The objective is to improve nutrition levels, contribute to food security and curb water consumption in GCC countries. In this respect, FAO has been supporting the establishment of a dedicated centre of excellence within the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment: this newly formed “Agricultural Innovation Centre” will support the development of protected agriculture through the use of a New Generation Green House prototype.

FAO-United Arab Emirates Agreement 2016-2020

In March 2016, the Government of the UAE agreed to build on its support to the operations of the FAO Subregional Office for the Gulf Cooperation Council States and Yemen by expanding its role and extending the scope of cooperation. The renewed partnership between FAO and the Government of the United Arab Emirates aims to:

- Contribute to the elimination of hunger and the reduction of poverty by improving agricultural and fisheries-based livelihoods in the Near East and North Africa;
- Strengthen the sustainability of agriculture and fisheries production in the country as well as the subregion, improving nutrition, food safety and food security;
- Encourage innovation, technology sharing and capacity development in the agriculture sector, in line with the lead role that the UAE plays in the Gulf subregion and broader Near East region.

Support has also been provided in the form of a Comprehensive Country Assessment (CCA) of water resources accounting and water-related laws and regulations, as well as a Report on Water Legislation in the United Arab Emirates.

In addition, in cooperation with the Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority, FAO conducted a comprehensive assessment of the impacts of the use of Tertiary Treated Waste Water (TTWW) in agriculture.

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Partnering to provide up-to-date agricultural information

FAO has assisted the UAE in designing the FENIX/CountrySTAT platform – a statistical system enabling the collection and dissemination of timely and reliable data, including tools for analysis and visualization. Further efforts will be promoted in this area, possibly including projects to map land cover, inventory date palms, and develop statistical systems for the country’s fisheries and aquaculture sector.

FAO designates date palm oases as agricultural heritage sites

In March 2015, Al-Ain and Liwa date palm oases in the UAE were added to the growing number of ecosystems deemed to have international importance as living repositories of genetic and biological resources and cultural heritage. The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) initiative designated Al Ain and Liwas as models of historical agricultural systems and palm groves.

FAO has formulated integrated projects for sustainable development of the date palm industry in the country, in addition to pest management projects targeting the date palm red weevil.

Towards sustainable agro-food systems

In February 2016, the “Policies and Strategies Council” of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment endorsed the National Policy for Food and Agriculture. Formulated by FAO, the policy provides for environmentally sustainable as well as efficient and profitable agro-food systems and the creation of an enabling environment for interventions under the National Policy for Food and Agriculture.

FAO is also assisting the country in implementation of the policy.

Federal Food Safety Index

FAO supported the UAE Government in assessing the performance of food safety controls against international standards. This led to the creation and implementation of a Federal Food Safety Index, which has enabled local authorities in all the Emirates to achieve significant improvements in their food safety control systems. In March 2015, FAO’s Director-General officially commended the UAE Government for its commitment to improved food safety and for its early recognition of the benefits to be gained from developing the Index.

UAE and FAO – working together

- FAO has conducted a study for the Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority (ADFCA) on the potential for aquaculture development in salinized agricultural farms in Al-Khatim, Abu Dhabi.
- In partnership with the General Women’s Union (GWU), FAO has introduced nutrition education and garden-based learning in selected Abu Dhabi primary schools and is aiming to scale activities up to national level. Also with the GWU, FAO has introduced agri-business principles to potential women entrepreneurs with a view to implement a fully-fledged capacity building programme to assist those wishing to establish their own business.
- Following are some further FAO-UAE initiatives that FAO and the UAE Government are currently engaged in:
  - Preparing the National Plan for Animal Health 2015-2025, with a focus on emerging zoonotic threats such as MERS-CoV
  - Developing an Animal Health and Food Safety programme for GCC countries (RPAHFS)
  - Creating drought management and early warning systems in GCC countries
  - Compiling an index to show compliance of local authorities to federal environmental regulations
  - Creating the first Camel Disease Reference Centre in Abu Dhabi
  - Defining national measures for implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
  - Formulating an FAO/IRENA project on Renewable Energies for Sustainable Livelihoods

“Give me agriculture and I will give you civilization”

H.H. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, Father of the Nation (United Arab Emirates)