The Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG)

Why the need for a global framework?

Water scarcity is one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century. Agriculture, encompassing crops, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture and forestry, is both a cause and a victim of water scarcity. It accounts for an estimated 70 percent of global water withdrawals, while competition with other sectors for water is increasing.

Climate change also affects freshwater resources negatively, in terms of both quantity and quality. More frequent and severe droughts impact agricultural production, while rising temperatures translate into increased water demand in agriculture sectors.

Water withdrawals grew at almost twice the rate of population increase in the twentieth century, and a 50 percent surge in food demand is expected by 2050. It is clear that there is an urgent need to address water scarcity.

How will WASAG address these issues?

WASAG will support the development and deployment of policies, strategies, programmes and field capacity for the adaptation of agriculture to water scarcity, using context-specific approaches and processes tailored to specific circumstances and needs, including support for the formulation of transformational projects.

WASAG aims to help governments and related stakeholders in the achievement of the water-related targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with particular emphasis on SDG 6 – “Clean water and Sanitation” and SDG 2 – “Zero hunger”. WASAG also contributes to SDG 1 – “No poverty”, SDG 13 – “Climate action”, SDG 15 – “life on land”, and SDG 17 – “Partnerships for the goals”.

Many countries have listed water scarcity as an important issue in their Nationally Determined Contribution submissions to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Investments made now in dealing with water scarcity in agriculture will provide long-term payoffs for sustainable human development and economic growth and towards climate change adaptation and mitigation and will have immediate short-term benefits.

Climate adaptation strategies in agriculture that build on existing good management practices can increase water security and directly contribute to sustainable development. Innovative technologies derived from applied research, combined with appropriate policies and strategies, are necessary for both adaptation to, and the mitigation of, climate change.
Our vision:
A world whose food systems are secure and resilient to increasing water scarcity in a changing climate.

Our mission:
To support measurable, significant and sustainable progress on improving and adapting agricultural systems in conditions of increasing water scarcity and a changing climate, using the combined expertise and resources of the Partners.

Our objectives:
To urgently address the following important and relevant work areas at international and country levels:

- Advocating for political prioritisation.
- Cooperating on work programmes.
- Sharing and disseminating knowledge and experience.
- Developing new or improved solutions.
- Promoting sustainable and integrated water resources management.

The way ahead

“Together, we will be able to implement strategies to prevent water scarcity from setting us back in our ambitious vision of eradicating hunger, sustaining peace and leaving no one behind”

FAO Director-General - José Graziano da Silva

There is no shortage of knowledge, technologies, resources and good practices for addressing water scarcity. WASAG is promoting and supporting partnerships to harness the knowledge and experiences of stakeholders and enable targeted actions for the sustainable use of water in agriculture, thereby addressing the challenges for agricultural production and livelihoods posed by climate change.

The global framework will:

- Engage stakeholders at the national level, including public and private sectors, local communities and indigenous groups;
- cooperate among countries, including through regional collaborative bodies and mechanisms; and
- collaborate between countries and key players in water management in agricultural sectors, including the United Nations and other development organizations, financing institutions, and non-governmental and civil-society organizations.

You can be a partner in the WASAG global framework. Be informed and get involved!

For more information, please contact the WASAG support team at Water-Scarcity@fao.org or visit www.fao.org/land-water/overview/WASAG