



联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Organisation des Nations
Unies pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION

TWENTY-SECOND SESSION

Tlemcen, Algeria, 13 - 17 December 2015

FOREST AND RANGE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES IN THE NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA REGION

1. In many countries of the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region the lack of sustainable management practices is jeopardizing the state of forests, other wooded lands, rangelands and plantations. Data from the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2015 shows that the rate of loss in the region's forest area is 1.9 percent greater than 2010 levels, which is significant in an area with low forest cover.

2. NENA countries vary widely with respect to the existence and development of forest and rangelands policies, strategies and programmes. Some countries are well advanced in formulation and/or implementation phases, while others do not have formal or detailed forest and rangeland policies per se. In certain cases, forest policies and legislation created in the mid-20th century are still in force.

3. A study commissioned by FAO to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the policies and strategies in some countries of the region found that there is a strong need to update, revise and harmonize policies, strategies, legislations and institutional settings. Possible areas for intervention identified by the study include:

- incorporating forest and rangeland policies and strategies within overall national development policies, and translating strategic objectives related to the sector's contribution to national economies, food security and poverty reduction into operational actions with targets, indicators and budgets;
- integrating forests and rangelands with other land uses, especially agriculture and land management, and strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration;

This document is printed in limited numbers to minimize the environmental impact of FAO's processes and contribute to climate neutrality. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and to avoid asking for additional copies. Most FAO meeting documents are available on the Internet at

www.fao.org

- deepening understanding of the social and economic contribution of forests and rangelands to society in order to increase investment in the sector, and to reflect these contributions as part of the transition to a green economy;
- reinforcing participatory processes by involving local communities, the private sector and civil society in forest and rangelands management;
- increasing compliance with UN and international conventions by building forest and range strategies in synergy with processes including the three Rio Conventions and the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals;
- strengthening regional collaboration to facilitate exchange on lessons learned, and to share experiences of pioneer countries in tools and mechanisms to translate policy priorities into specific objectives, action plans and concrete activities.

Points for Consideration

4. Countries may wish to consider:

- revising or strengthening their forest and range policies, ensuring deep engagement of all stakeholders, to build a stronger policy and legal framework at the country level.
- specifying the contributions of forest and range resources to national economies and their contribution to food security and poverty reduction while exploring synergies with other land uses such as agriculture.

5. Countries may wish to request the assistance of FAO to:

- improve countries' valuation of forest and range resources, connection of forest and range policies and activities to the SDGs and the Rio Conventions, and transition to a green economy.

I. Background

1. In many countries of the Near East and North Africa (NENA) Region the lack of sustainable management practices is jeopardizing the state of forests, other-wooded lands, rangelands and plantations. Based on data from the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2015, the rate of loss in the region's forest area is 1.9 percent greater than 2010 levels, which is significant in an area with overall low amounts of forest cover.

2. While in some of the countries in the Region the forest administrations date back to the early and mid-20th Century, other countries have recently created or strengthened their forest and rangelands administrations. This historical development has reflections on the structure and the status of the forest and rangelands institutions and the manner in which they operate. In some countries, forest and rangelands authorities maybe under the jurisdiction of different ministries or institutions. In such cases, there is little, if any, communication and harmonization between the ministry in charge of forests and rangelands and other ministries. Given the divergent approaches in countries' institutions, there is a strong need to update, revise and harmonize policies, strategies, legislations and institutional settings.

3. A study was commissioned by FAO in order to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the policies and strategies in some countries of the Region. The results of this study are summarized in this paper.

II. Analysis of Forest and Range Policies and Strategies in the NENA Region

4. NENA countries vary a great deal with respect to the existence of forest and rangelands policies and strategies and the development of their national forestry and rangelands programmes. While some countries in the NENA region have formulated their forest policies/strategies and National Forest Programs (NFP) and started their implementation some years ago, others have just started the process of formulation of their respective NFPs and related institutional and legal arrangements. On the other hand, a number of NENA countries do not have formal or detailed forest and rangelands policies per se and the protection and conservation of their forest and range resources is guided by legislative arrangements. Some forest policies and legislation created in the mid-20th Century are still in force.

5. FAO, through its regular programme, extrabudgetary projects and programmes and the NFP Facility, has contributed to the development and implementation of NFPs, policies, strategies, legislation and institutional arrangements that govern forest use and management in the NENA region. Other donor and development agencies (such as GIZ) have also contributed to the development of forest policies, strategies and action programmes.

A. Contribution to National Development Agenda

6. In some countries, the process of formulating policies, strategies and NFPs enabled the creation of national dialogues on issues related to the forest sector and the initiation of participatory processes involving all concerned stakeholders, thus leading to the promotion of a greater transparency in forest decision-making and benefit sharing. This has also fostered inter-sectoral coordination and complementarities with relevant sectors, especially of rangelands and natural resources.

7. These planning exercises have confirmed the need for better integration of forest and rangelands policies and strategies within the overall national development policies and strategies and for reinforcing the links with other policies of relevant sectors. They are also the frameworks for the dissemination of sustainable forest management principles, the establishment of criteria and indicators to monitor forest governance, the development of best practices, guidelines and technical tools, the suggestion of legal and institutional reforms, and for building capacities of all stakeholders concerned by the forest and rangelands issues.

8. Despite the efforts made, the low implementation of policies and laws has resulted in weak monitoring and governance of the forest and range sector in the NENA region. This is exacerbated by a limited implementation of sustainable natural resources management principles and practices and by inefficiencies in specific sustainable land management measures, leading to a low contribution of the forest and range sector to national economies.

9. The study has shown that this situation could be explained by the following gaps incurred during policy formulation and implementation phases. For instance,

- The objectives assigned by the line ministries at the strategic level (policy and strategy) to the forest and range sector in terms of contributions to the national economy, food security and poverty alleviation were neither considered at the programming stage (Action Programmes), nor were they translated at the operational level into targeted objectives, concrete actions, adequate budgetary allocations and specific indicators for monitoring and evaluation.
- In many countries, the line ministries did not properly assess the role of the forest and range sector and its potential in the context of the national development agenda. Such an assessment would reflect the wide variety of marketable and non-marketable goods and services, provided through both productive and protective functions and would allow for the establishment of a range of options to enhance the effectiveness of the forestry and range sector in contributing to the achievement of national development goals.
- The proposed revisions of the forestry legislation aim to involve the local populations and the private sector; however, these consultations did not take place due to the absence of law enforcement mechanisms and adequate administrative procedures.
- The funding in the forest sector remains insufficient and dependent on public funds. The few initiatives available for sustainable financing of forest and rangelands programmes and activities, including Payment for Environmental Services (PES), are still at an embryonic stage.

B. Economic Value of Forest and Rangelands Ecosystems

10. In general, there is a lack of appreciation of the economic and environmental roles of forests and rangelands in the NENA Region. Few countries of the Region have tried to assess the Total Economic Values (TEV) of forest & woodlands ecosystems and their contribution to GDP. In some countries such as Iran, Lebanon, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen, there is an official tally of the value of exported NWFPs like pistachio nuts, stone pine, Arabic gum, rosemary and honey¹. Tunisia has recently (2012-2014) conducted studies on the valuation of the TEV of the forest and rangelands resources and the cost of degradation of forests, other-wooded lands and rangelands ecosystems. Similar efforts were carried out in Jordan with support from GIZ and IUCN.

11. Although some countries have developed their own methodology for estimating the value of forest services, efforts still need to be made for a better development of the market values of such services. The inadequate recognition of the multifarious roles of forests and rangelands still dominate and has led to low investments in the sector. Forests and rangelands are often neglected in the debate on regional priorities. Food security is generally looked at from the agricultural perspective – which often misses the role of forests and rangelands in food security, the safeguard of ecosystem vitality and productivity, and their protection against land degradation

12. Recent initiatives in the NENA Region (Morocco, Tunisia) have demonstrated the opportunities for Forest and Rangelands Goods and Services (FRGS) and PES to provide economic

¹ FAO, 2012, Experience of the Near East region on utilization and processing of Non-Wood Forest Products. FAO Office for the Near East, Cairo.

incentives for governments and populations in order to develop adaptation measures for climate change.

13. Developing markets for the FRGS requires a communication strategy able to sell the forests and rangelands as an economic potential for job opportunities and a service provider for adding an additional premium to other benefiting sectors.

C. Environment Protection and Landscape Restoration

14. Forests and rangelands of the NENA region should not be seen in an isolated context. More than in other regions, they require a joint landscape approach between all concerned stakeholders, including those in: agriculture and rural development, urban societies, tourism, industry, environment, transport, etc. In most countries, there is a lack of integrated management of forest and rangeland resources and of inter-sectoral dialogue, mainly in the fields related to combating desertification and land degradation, biodiversity and environment protection and landscape restoration. Collaboration and linkages established at the policy and strategy formulation levels, need to be cascaded down to the level of institutions dealing with forestry and rangelands related issues (i.e. Al Badia Authority in the case of Syria, High Steppe Commission in the case of Algeria).

D. Climate Change

15. Forest administrations of the NENA region are aware of the different forms of overuse, competing land uses and climate change impacts, which negatively affect the forest and rangelands resources as well as other sectors. The magnitude of change and the degree of impact of these adverse effects needs to be documented. This brings to the forefront the need for regular range and forest monitoring and evaluation to determine the state and extent of change of these resources and their levels of productivity. Once established, this would generate regular and qualitative and quantitative information to guide efforts towards sustainable management of forests, other-wooded lands and range resources at the different levels of the decision-making process.

E. Green Economy

16. The role of the forest and rangelands sector in the green economy has not been reflected in the national debates nor articulated in forest and rangelands policies and strategies. Preparing the forest and rangeland sector for the green economy is fully compatible with making progress towards sustainable forest and rangeland management. This requires better knowledge on ecosystem services valuation and capacity building to ensure incorporating forest and rangeland benefits into the decision-making process, including through the dissemination of the results of existing valuation studies through different means.

F. Participatory Process

17. In most countries of the NENA Region, the involvement of the local communities, the private sector and civil society in forest and rangelands management remains limited. Looking at each sub-sector, the situation is far better in the case of forestry than in rangelands, where initiatives involving local communities in the management of range resources are either limited or non-existent. Private investment in the development of forests and range resources is also limited.

18. Public sector forestry and range institutions continue to play a dominant role in the NENA Region, however re-examination of their core values, functions and structures is needed. Appropriate changes should be made to meet the requirements of participatory process and good governance of forest and rangelands ecosystems.

G. The Impact of Major International Conventions related to Forests

19. The forest and range sectors occupy a major position within most international conventions, policies and action programmes, mainly related to the three Rio Conventions. However, only a few countries have built their forest and range strategies in synergy with these processes. Even if in some of the forest and range policies and strategies there seems to be some reference to biodiversity, climate change or desertification, such references are usually not based on the language and activities to these conventions and global processes.

20. The effective presence of foresters and of forestry institutions at all stages of the decision-making process, as well as their participation in international COP sessions, sectoral and inter-sectoral fora may offer funding opportunities for the implementation of resolutions and forest and range related activities.

21. Most of the policies and strategies in the different countries make a very shy reference, if any, to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and their implications for the forest and range sector. With the phasing out of the MDGs and the beginning of the implementation phase of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), it is of major importance to revise the forest and range policies, strategies and action programmes in order to bring up-front the contribution of these vital sectors.

III. Possible Areas of Intervention and Consideration

22. Given the weaknesses identified in the analysis of forest and range policies and strategies of the NENA Region, there is a critical need to revise them. The revisions should aim to create an enabling legal and institutional framework that ensures a sound implementation of the forest and rangelands policies, strategies and action programmes, an increased contribution of the sector to national development, and progress towards the achievement of sustainable management of silvo-pastoral ecosystems.

23. The starting point for the formulation of forest and rangelands programmes should be an objective assessment of the current role of the forest and range sector and its potential in the context of national development efforts.

A. Integrating National Development Planning/Programming

24. The objectives assigned at the strategic level (policy and strategy) to the forest and range sector in terms of their contribution to the national economy, food security and the reduction of poverty should be systemically considered at the programming stage and translated into operational actions with quantitative and qualitative targets, adequate annual budgetary allocations and specific indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

B. Enabling a Landscape Approach

25. Forests and rangelands should not only be integrated with each other, but they should also be integrated with other land uses, especially agriculture and land management. As part of this process, it is recommended to take stock of the landscape interventions, projects and initiatives which are being implemented or have been finalized and documented by FAO and other organizations, and to strengthen the regional dialogue on means and tools for regional and national collaborations on more integrated approaches to ecosystem-wide management. This could include resources assessment and monitoring, harmonization of forest and rangelands related terms and definitions as well as criteria and indicators for sustainable forest and range management.

C. Promoting Forest and Range Goods and Services and Payment for Ecosystem Services

26. A better understanding of the social and economic contribution of forests and rangelands to society is a prerequisite for a better recognition and visibility of the forest and range sector within NENA priority frameworks, and would allow that their multiple contributions are maintained and improved.

27. Initiatives will eventually have to provide realistic figures for the valuation of economic and social value of forests and range and their intrinsic relationship to other sectors, while striving to reflect the wide variety of market and non-market goods and services. This will strongly encourage the implementation of a PES system. Examples of investments in forests and range through ecotourism activities could be built upon. The establishment of forest funds with taxes paid by other sectors could be studied.

D. Synergies with Conventions and Processes

28. It is a high priority for the countries in the Region to promote synergies among the three Rio Conventions and with the forests and rangelands sectors, including the development of early warning systems, the establishment of unified national frameworks and the enhancement of cross-sectoral coordination with the stakeholders in charge of the forests and range sector. Reports produced on the forest and range sector (such as FRA exercises; report on the Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management) should be used in the reports to the different conventions.

29. The emerging concept of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) -based on the SDGs- will serve the purpose of combating desertification and land degradation while contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Implementing the LDN in the NENA Region will certainly contribute to a better integration of the forest and range sectors into climate change concerns.

30. The recent adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 15 and Goal 6, and the implementation of the Strategic Objectives (SOs) of FAO, would imply a new approach to the forest and range policies and strategies.

E. Benefiting from a Green Economy

31. Given the importance of ecosystem services valuation and its systematic application in national planning, funding and decision-making, it is essential to promote a good understanding of these concepts and the required policy measures to address them, through:

- Engaging in a dialogue with concerned parties to address the priorities in the transition to a green economy and bringing the contribution of forests and rangelands to all.
- Undertaking studies for the analysis of the role of forests and rangelands to help move to a green economy; to propose approaches and steps to strengthen the contribution of the forest and range sector to a sustainable economy; and to propose ways to raise awareness on the multi-functional role of forests and rangelands in this emerging issue.
- Identifying additional opportunities for inter-country, regional and international cooperation and synergies to build necessary capacities in forest and rangelands resources and services assessment and monitoring and to help countries effectively avail these ecosystems.

32. Specific measures and incentives (products) will need to be developed to attract private sector investments. Green investments are to become efficient in developing adapted schemes of PES.

F. Reinforcing the Participatory Process and Good Governance

33. National forestry and rangelands policies will need to facilitate the participation of people in forest and rangelands development and conservation, and to intensify and diversify the goods and services of trees, forests and rangelands. Such policies will have to place more reliance on people's participation and on the use of local organizations. Existing legislation may need to be adapted to transfer at least part of responsibilities and benefits to local people. Cost-effective systems of technical support and credit and incentive systems have to be designed to stimulate people's interest and involvement in forest and rangelands management (e.g. establishing a fair sharing of benefits for local communities and user groups in the case of Tunisia).

34. To respond to the requirements of participatory processes and good governance of forest and rangelands ecosystems, it is necessary to clarify the mission of institutions dealing with forest and range issues and to define responsibilities and roles; in particular the re-examination of core values, functions and structures of public sector forest institutions is needed and appropriate changes should be made.

35. Common adaptation measures need to be developed based on existing similarities in the NENA forests. This requires the exchange of information on strategies adopted for such measures, especially in the field of the promotion of community-based organizations (forest and rangelands user associations, pastoralist groups, etc.), community forestry planning, mechanisms and tools of natural resources co-management, forest concessions, and public-private partnerships.

G. Effective and Constructive Communication Strategy

36. An integrated communication strategy will need to be developed, in conjunction with members of the Near East Communicators Network, for promoting and marketing of the forests and rangelands and their related goods and services at the local, national and regional level. It will act as a tool for raising awareness among the different partners and stakeholders in the forest and range sector. Such a strategy could also help mobilize funds for forest and rangelands development.

H. Strengthening Cross-sectoral Collaboration

37. NENA countries possess diverse experience with respect to cross sectoral coordination within the forest and range sector as well with other natural resources. While some countries have been able to develop an integrated institutional framework under which range management and forestry are in the same department, others have quite distinct entities dealing with forests and rangelands, which makes coordination and integration of forest policies, strategies and programmes more difficult². The problem of cross-sectoral coordination and integration becomes much more difficult when other land uses such as agriculture are considered. Countries would need to explore all possible means to improve cross sectoral coordination in order to achieve sustainable management of their natural resources. This would possibly require revising and updating their forest and rangelands policies and strategies to foster better intersectoral linkages to better respond to national and global challenges in meeting national and international obligations, mainly in light of the SDGs, the LDN and other related processes.

² FAO, 2013, Challenges in adopting integrated approach to managing forests and rangelands in the Near East region. FAO Office for the Near East, Cairo.

I. Promoting Regional Collaboration

38. It is of major importance to strengthen regional collaboration and use existing regional platforms under the aegis of FAO, the League of Arab States (LAS) and other intergovernmental organizations and establish regional networks for communication and information sharing as needed, to facilitate exchange on common problems and lessons learned. Such regional cooperation will allow for scaling up of country experiences in the establishment of tools and mechanisms for translating the policy priorities such as poverty reduction and food security (as explicitly mentioned in the SGDs) into specific objectives, action plans and concrete activities.

IV. Points for Consideration

39. Countries may wish to consider:

- Revising or strengthening their forest and range policies, ensuring deep engagement of all stakeholders, to build a stronger policy and legal framework at the country level.
- Specifying the contributions of forest and range resources to national economies and their contribution to food security and poverty reduction while exploring synergies with other land uses such as agriculture.

40. Countries may wish to request the assistance of FAO to:

- Improve countries' valuation of forest and range resources, connection of forest and range policies and activities to the SDGs and the Rio Conventions, and transition to a green economy.