The Near East and North Africa (NENA) region, already exposed to chronic shortage of water, will face in the coming decades a severe intensification of water scarcity due to several drivers, including demographic growth and its related food demands, urbanization, energy demand and overall socio-economic development. Furthermore, the NENA region is experiencing more frequent, intense extreme events (in particular droughts) as a consequence of climate change.

The recently agreed 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires evidently a ‘transformational’ change in managing strategic resources, such as water, land and energy. The countries of the region need to strategically plan their water resources management and allocation, review their water, food security and energy policies, formulate effective investment plans, modernize governance and institutions and account for transboundary surface and groundwater. Good practices need to be adopted to ensure alignment with the imperatives of (i) setting the sustainable limits of water consumption and (ii) making the best use of each single drop of water, including the use of non-conventional water sources.

The adoption of an analytical framework on the water-food-energy-climate-ecosystem nexus will be instrumental to such strategic planning since agriculture, water and energy strategies and policies are still developed, to a significant extent, ‘independently’.

The project aims at supporting this transformational change and aims at setting the proper framework for implementing the 2030 Agenda for water efficiency and productivity (SDG 6.4) and define the safe boundaries for effective water sustainability.

Sources:
http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5923e.pdf

Seasonal workers harvesting cucumbers ©FAO/Marco Longari

Farmers harvesting onions in a field in Deir Alla ©FAO/Khalil Mazraawi
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The regional project “Support to the regional collaborative platform on the Water Scarcity Initiative to increase water productivity” is a contribution from FAO to the implementation of this project.

Project outcomes and outputs

The project intends to set the proper framework for implementing the 2030 Agenda for water efficiency and productivity (SDG 6.4) through four major work packages (WP):

WP 1 - Establishing a robust water accounting system providing the evidence base for the full water budgeting (supply, demand, uses and recycling, present and projected) and for monitoring progress in the achievement of the targets while assessing the institutional effectiveness to govern water resources. (WP 1 lead: Charles Batchelor, FAO)

WP 2 - Implementing a series of interventions to increase water efficiency and productivity in selected farming systems of the countries to help in achieving SDG 6.4. Interventions will include in all countries an (2a) assessment of bio-physical and economic water productivity (joint effort with the regional Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) on water productivity). In a few countries, the project will pilot (2b) the introduction/enhancement of good practices and affordable technologies using a farmer field schools (FFS) approach with a consideration of decentralized water governance, value chain rural agro-industry, gender dimensions and incentive frameworks, adapted to each local conditions. This is to promote the uptake of good practices and technologies at the farm level and to stimulate entrepreneurial initiatives along the value chain (thus generating higher income and more job opportunities). (WP 2 lead: Elias Fereres, University of Cordoba)

WP 3 - Ensuring that higher efficiency/productivity achievements for the 2030 timeline are attained within ‘safe operational boundaries of water use’ defining the conditions for ‘water sustainability’ for sustainable, socially equitable and human-rights based development. (WP 3 leads: Annette Hubert-Lee, SEI and Mark Howells, KTH)

WP 4 - Communication strategy and results dissemination. (WP 4 lead: FAO Regional Office for the Near East)

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