



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# Land & Water Days 2019

Near East and North Africa

31 March–4 April  
Cairo, Egypt

Innovation for Food and Water Security in the Near East and North Africa Region

# ■ BACKGROUND



protected agriculture.  
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Five years have passed since the first Near East and North Africa (NENA) Land and Water Days in Amman, Jordan, 15-18 December 2013.

At this event, FAO and its partners established the Water Scarcity Regional Initiative along with its Regional Collaborative Strategy and Partnership. The initiative was endorsed by the ministers of agriculture at the 32<sup>nd</sup> session of FAO regional conference for the Near East in February 2014 in Rome and by the Arab Ministerial Water Council of the League of Arab States in May 2015. Since the launch of the regional initiative, positive developments include: the prioritization of sustainable water management; dialogue around water issues and policies; innovative investments; and implementation of many new projects throughout the region.

The adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) created a comprehensive framework for countries, donors and international organizations to prioritize water management and sustainable food security in the region.

At the same time, many challenges facing the NENA region have intensified. Conflicts and protracted crises, and their spillover, are taking a heavy toll on people's lives; on food security and nutrition; on water and agriculture infrastructure; all of which are delaying or slowing the implementation of development strategies and plans. Climate change and droughts are dramatically impacting rural populations, further compounding the impacts of conflicts and leading to migration and refugee movements.

In this context the NENA Land and Water Days are being convened in Cairo during 31 March–4 April 2019, to review the progress made in addressing water scarcity in the region, foster exchange of knowledge and experience among countries and partners, and chart the way forward; taking into account lessons, new challenges and opportunities for sustainable development.

The event will focus on the NENA region but will link to the global experiences through the participation of countries and experts from other regions (Asia, Africa and Latin America) for insights and knowledge sharing.

**For registration , please visit:**  
[www.fao.org/about/meetings/land-and-water-days/en/](http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/land-and-water-days/en/)

**or write to:** [Land-Water-Days@fao.org](mailto:Land-Water-Days@fao.org)

# OBJECTIVES

1



**Take** stock of achievements of countries and development partners in the last five years and their promotion of solutions to water scarcity and land degradation, and fostering sustainable agriculture, food security and food systems.

2



**Reflect** on the outlook and perspectives for a next phase of Regional Initiatives, particularly the FAO regional water scarcity initiative, examining how to further strengthen partnerships and outlining the modalities to move forward.

3



**Share** innovations, advances in science and technology, novel methodologies, guidelines and tools supporting programmes design and implementation.

4



**Identify** a new generation of policies and investment, leading to sustainable management of water and food security in the region.



Peppers growing in a greenhouse.  
©FAO/Oman

# EXPECTED RESULTS



- ✓ **Achievements, innovations and good experiences** on sustainable management and good governance of water and land resources for food and water security.
- ✓ **Recommendations** for policies and investments in sustainable and integrated land and water resources management, to be presented to decision-makers and stakeholders.
- ✓ **Strengthening partnerships** among countries of the region and across regions to address key challenges in land and water management.
- ✓ **Joint statement by ministers of water and agriculture** on policies and investments for sustainable agricultural water management.

# THEMATIC AREAS

Land and Water Days 2019 – Near East and North Africa address key challenges to and solutions for sustainable land and water management for food security through five thematic areas:



## Theme 1

### Pathways to sustainable scarce-water-resources management

In-situ Water harvesting for olives.  
©FAO/Jordan

The degradation of land and soils is a major threat to food security, livelihoods, ecosystem services and conservation of biodiversity in the region. Priorities for this theme are innovative technologies and approaches to sustainable and integrated land management leading to reduced land degradation. Special attention will be given to regional hotspots such as salt-affected soils and lands prone to wind erosion. Successful experiences on managing agroecosystems will be showcased, as well as monitoring land degradation in the framework of the SDGs.

This theme will first provide the status, progress and prospects of the Regional Water Scarcity Initiative, followed by country interventions presenting their 'water-reform journey' towards sustainable management of water resources. The common goal of the various interventions is to discuss 'pathways' to 'cope' with water scarcity and to 'decouple' from fresh water dependency. Topics will include the need of 'accounting' for all water sources (conventional and non-conventional) and all uses (consumptive and non-consumptive), strategic planning of water resources allocation and the maximization of water productivity, among others.



## Theme 2

### Halting land degradation

A man walks sheep through the Mosul Lake basin near the Mosul Dam Pumping Station.  
©FAO/Iraq



**Theme 3**

**Impacts of climate change on regional development and prospects for increased resilience**

Water harvesting in hillside.  
©FAO/Morocco

Virtually all countries of the NENA region experience effects of climate change, which can be expected to exacerbate water scarcity, desertification and degradation of natural resources. Based on an analysis of observed and potential impacts of climate change on agriculture, livestock and food systems in the region, the theme will highlight resilient pathways to achieve food security, sustain livelihoods and protect the rural population from climatic shocks over the long-term. Special focus will be on the role of landscape approaches to sustainable land and water management in achieving adaptation and mitigation benefits at a landscape scale, including through forest and landscape restoration.

Incomplete or deficient policies and regulatory frameworks that inadequately address the interconnectedness and the complexity of land and water governance fuel the growing stress on natural resources in the region. Effective land and water governance can promote measures to protect and ensure the sustainability of water resources and optimize the services and benefits obtained; supporting economic growth, food security, poverty reduction and environmental protection. This theme will address the institutional, legal and policy frameworks which provide the enabling conditions for sustainable land and water management across sectors, with a special focus on agriculture. It will showcase tools and solutions to improve intersectoral policy coherence, land tenure, effective groundwater governance, and the gender dimension of good land and water governance.



**Theme 4**

**Land and Water Governance to achieve the SDGs in fragile systems**

A farmer working with irrigation.  
©FAO/Yemen



## Theme 5

# Scaling-up investments in water for agriculture

Open canal irrigation.  
©FAO/Syria

With growing awareness of food production challenges and climate change concerns in the NENA region, innovative solutions are needed to provide incentives for land and water projects in the agricultural sector, enhancing productivity and attracting new investments. The conference will address the need for investments in water for agriculture in the region and will analyze enabling conditions for investments at policy, legal, and institutional levels, including approaches to sound investment planning. The conference will discuss avenues to ensure that investments in water for agriculture are made a political and financial priority. Proven and innovative solutions and investment opportunities will be presented and discussed.

## ■ STRUCTURE & FORMAT

Land and Water Days 2019 – Near East and North Africa will utilize several innovative and interactive session formats to maximize participation and enable knowledge exchange. Every day of the conference will be dedicated to one of the major themes. On the last day, the conference will culminate with a high-level ministerial meeting.

### » Plenary sessions:

In the morning of each day will address key questions, highlight achievements and provide insights by eminent experts under each theme. A special plenary session will be dedicated to the potential of inter-regional cooperation to achieve food and water security through sustainable land and water management and through South-South Cooperation.

» **Technical sessions:**

Will comprise strategic and technical presentations on specific issues of concern to the region, proven approaches in land and water management, and success stories. Dialogue will be integrated to agree on recommendations for future perspectives under each theme. The sessions will be organized by partners at regional and national level, in collaboration with FAO.

» **Market place/Open space sessions:**

Include posters, exhibition booths, demonstrations of software and methods, display of cutting-edge equipment, and hands-on presentation of innovative solutions. The Market Place serves as a platform to exchange knowledge, methods, and information. The Open Space sessions allow for the organization of sessions among participants, including partner organizations, public institutions from participating countries, as well as selected actors from the private sector and researchers to take discussion deeper on topics of interest.

» **Land and water hackathon:**

Is aimed at teams of young professionals, to develop innovative IT-based solutions to actual problems of countries in the fields of land and water management.

» **Side events:**

There is an opportunity for partners to hold side events before and after the Land and Water Days. The NENA Regional Soil Partnership will be holding an assembly of its members on the sidelines of the conference.

» **High-level event:**

The 2019 Land and Water Days will culminate in a high-level political segment at ministerial level convened by FAO and the League of Arab States in cooperation with the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to

manifest the importance of sustainable land and water management for water and food security in the Arab region. Ministers of agriculture and ministers of water, as well as the highest-level representatives of the convening and partner organizations, will be invited to share and discuss their perspectives and outlook for policies and investments in the land and water sector. At this forum, the outcomes of the technical deliberations of this events will be presented. The high-level political segment session will culminate with the adoption of a joint statement (declaration).



Drip irrigated field.  
©FAO/Tunisia

# PARTICIPANTS

The target audience of Land and Water Days 2019 – Near East and North Africa are experts, project managers and decision-makers from governments, academia, non-governmental organizations, private sector, international organizations and development partners, from inside and outside the NENA region, with expertise in the themes of the conference. In total about 400 participants are expected to attend. For the high-level event convened by the League of Arab States in collaboration with FAO and other partners, ministers of agriculture and ministers of water from the Arab countries will be invited, along with regional heads of partner organizations and representatives of donor states.



Mechanized agriculture field.  
©FAO/ Egypt

# ORGANIZATION



A farmer watering crops in the targeted area supported by FAO.  
©FAO/Yemen

Land and Water Days 2019 are organized by the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa, in collaboration with the Land and Water Division and other technical divisions at FAO headquarters, FAO country, regional and sub-regional offices. Furthermore, partner organizations at global, regional and country levels collaborate in the conference through participation in preparatory events, thematic working groups, co-organization and participation in plenary and technical sessions, invitation of technical experts and facilitators, and preparation of background documents and case studies.

# PARTNERS



Organic lettuce growing inside a greenhouse.  
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# Programme 2019 | Near East and North Africa Land and Water Days

Time	SUN 31/3	MON 1/4	TUES 2/4	WED 3/4	THUR 4/4
8 h – 9 h	Registration	Debriefing session of previous day			Registration for High-level segment
9 h – 10 h 30	Opening session	Plenary session 2: Land Degradation	Plenary session 3: Climate Change & Resilience	Plenary session 4: Land & Water Governance <small>Meeting to prepare high-level segment</small>	Field Trips & Special Sessions <small>High-level segment Investment</small>
10 h 30 – 11 h	Coffee Break				
11 h – 13 h	Plenary session 1: Water Scarcity	Technical sessions LD CC WS Hackathon	Technical sessions CC GOV LD Hackathon	Technical sessions GOV WS CC Hackathon	Field Trips & Special Sessions <small>High-level segment Investment</small>
13 h – 14 h 30	Lunch Break				
14 h 30 – 16 h	Technical sessions WS LD GOV Hackathon	Market place / Open space <small>Hackathon</small>		Special Plenary session Presentation of Hackathon results <small>Meeting to prepare high-level segment</small>	Field Trips & Special Sessions <small>High-level segment Investment</small>
16 h – 16 h 30	Coffee Break				
16 h 30 – 18 h	Market place / Open space <small>Hackathon</small>		Special Plenary session Inter-Regional Cooperation Hackathon <small>16 h 30 – 18 h 30</small>	Conclusions & synthesis	Field Trips & Special Sessions <small>High-level segment Investment</small>

■ Land Degradation --> LD
■ Climate Change --> CC
■ Water Scarcity --> WS
■ Governance --> GOV



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