



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# Bulletin

FAO - Near East and North Africa



June  
**2019**

# ADG Foreword

On 25 September 2015, the 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, underpinned by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

FAO is widely recognized for its technical capacity, global reach, monitoring expertise and experience in building partnerships and shaping policy in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In the Near East and North Africa region, FAO's technical support is organized around three Regional Initiatives, which have been endorsed by FAO Member States to ensure coherent and integrated support to the countries in terms of SDG implementation.

The SDGs are beyond any of us individually, but not all of us together. They demand action by everyone and call for new ways of working together. Partnership, solidarity, and a willingness to come together across geographies, sectors, professions, and disciplines are key enablers.



I am confident that this newsletter will further strengthen communication and collaboration between FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa and all its partners, as it sheds the light on our common goals in strengthening the region's food and nutrition security and promoting the sustainable management of the environment and natural resources.

Sincerely,

**Abdessalam Ould Ahmed**  
*Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative*  
*FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa*

# Regional events

## ■ FAO's emergency plan to support Yemeni livelihoods at the high-level pledging event for the humanitarian crisis in Yemen

FAO participated in the Yemen high-level pledging conference held in Geneva on 26 February. The event organized by the United Nations and the Governments of Sweden and Switzerland aimed to garner support for the humanitarian response in Yemen and alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people.

The High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen brought together representatives of 80 Member States and International Organizations, UN Agencies, NGOs and Civil Society to raise funding to meet the humanitarian needs of people affected by the conflict.

Donors pledged a total of **USD 2.6 billion** towards the **USD 4.2 billion** 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan that is aiming to assist over 24 million people in Yemen.



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Read more: *FAO in emergencies – Yemen*



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Yemen is facing the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. More than 20 million Yemenis are food insecure, including nearly 10 million who are on the brink of famine and starvation. Two-thirds of all districts in the country are already pre-famine.

FAO's expertise in farming, livestock, fisheries and forestry is an essential part of the humanitarian response in Yemen and is not just saving lives but is securing and restoring agricultural livelihoods, which is crucial to address rising food insecurity in the country.

## FAO and Saudi Arabia renew fruitful cooperation

FAO and Saudi Arabia signed a **USD 93 million** long-standing technical cooperation in February to support the implementation of the country's Sustainable Rural Agricultural Development Programme (2019-2025).

The new contribution by Saudi Arabia puts the country among FAO's top resource partners, and number one in the Near East.

Areas of cooperation include strengthening sustainable food security, sustainable utilization of agricultural natural resources, reinforcing marine fisheries and aquaculture production and consumption, boosting capacity in animal disease prevention and control, improving plant production and protection, consolidating linkages of small farmers and agricultural producers to markets, and consolidating a results-based system for monitoring and reporting results.

*Read more: The new contribution from Saudi Arabia is a boost for sustainable rural development efforts*



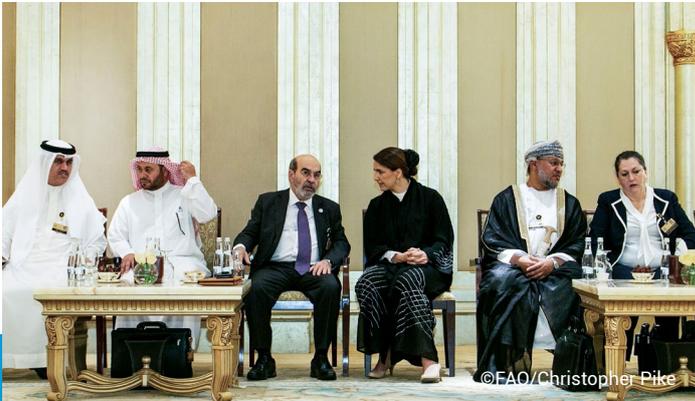
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The **USD 93 million** agreement aims at boosting production, processing and marketing of Arabic coffee, bee keeping, fruit, fish, livestock, and cultivation of rain-fed crops in the country.

## ■ Donor meeting aimed at supporting FAO's five-year regional programme to combat red palm weevil



The Red Palm Weevil, an insect originating in South East Asia that has spread rapidly through the Near East and North Africa, is the most dangerous and destructive pest of palm trees worldwide.

This invasive transboundary pest threatens the date palm that has a long heritage for sustaining human lives and livelihoods in hot and arid areas. This is particularly the case in the Arab Region, which accounts for some 77 percent of world date production as well as almost 70 percent of global date exports.

In light of this, FAO in collaboration with the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment and the Khalifa International Award for Date Palm and Agricultural Innovation organized the Red Palm Weevil Donor Meeting in Abu Dhabi on 9 March to support FAO's five-year regional programme to combat Red Palm Weevil. The meeting brought together agriculture ministers from the Near East and North Africa region and key regional and international organizations.

During the meeting, the UAE pledged a USD 2 million contribution to FAO's five-year regional programme to combat Red Palm Weevil, while Libya promised USD 250 000 and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development USD 100 000. Previous contributions include USD 2 million from Saudi Arabia and USD 100 000 from Oman.

FAO's five-year regional Red Palm Weevil programme will benefit all countries in the Near East and North Africa region and is expected to reach millions of farmers. The total cost of the programme is USD 20 million.

[Read more: The Red Palm Weevil Donor Meeting](#)

### Programme targets



**60 training courses**

10 TOT regional courses and  
50 national training courses



**3.2 million farmers**

will be provided with extension  
and training services



Over **50%** of date palm to

manage using Red Palm Weevil  
integrated pest management

## ■ Drawing the regions' plan towards achieving an enhanced food security and nutrition

The Regional Initiative on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition organized a regional workshop in Cairo during 24–26 March that brought together 40 participants.

The main objective of the workshop was to develop programmes that can strengthen the plans of the Regional Initiative. Participants discussed the evolving context and significant trends of resilience programming in the region, shared information and lessons learnt and identified essential actions and priorities to strengthen FAO's resilience programme in the region.

Click [here](#) to know how the RIFSN can act as an ENABLER to accelerate the resilience pathways in the Near East and North Africa region.



“

The Regional Initiative on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition should act as an ENABLER to accelerate the resilience interventions and pathways in all countries of the Near East and North Africa region,

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**Abdessalam Ould Ahmed**

*FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for the Near East and North Africa.*

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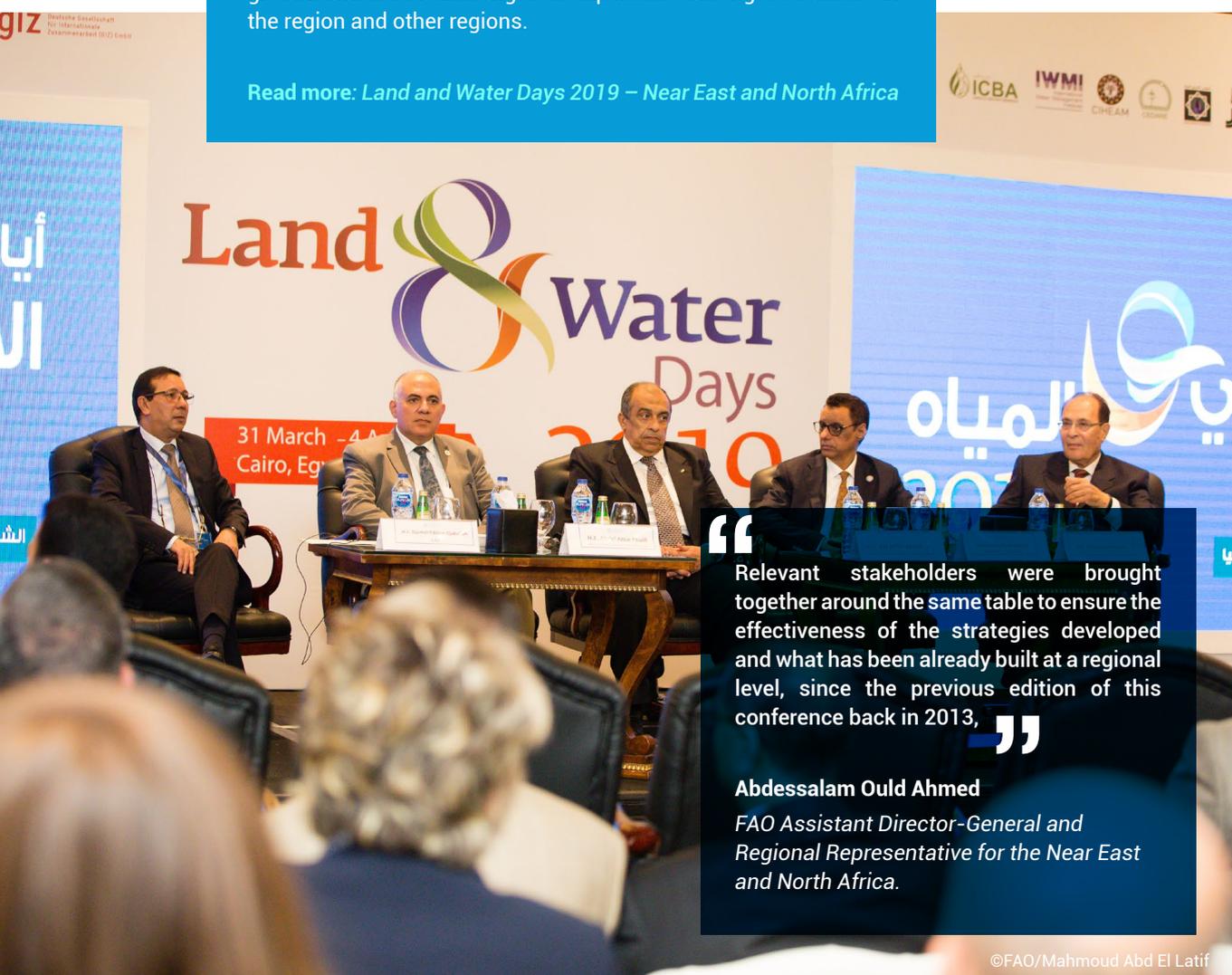
## ■ Land and Water Day 2019–Near East and North Africa

The Second, unprecedented networking platform for knowledge and experience sharing, the “2019 Land and Water Days – Near East and North Africa” were convened by FAO and 18 development partners in Cairo during 30 March–3 April, to review the progress made in addressing water scarcity in the region and foster knowledge-exchange among countries and partners.

The event welcomed around 400 experts, practitioners, government officials, policy makers and a range of development partners from countries of the Near East and North Africa and other regions that include for knowledge sharing.

The Land and Water Days 2019 aimed at reaching effective and lasting impacts for land and water actions on the ground. The event was an opportunity to review policies, technologies and approaches to secure sustained improvements in support to activities on the ground and foster exchanges of experience amongst countries in the region and other regions.

[Read more: Land and Water Days 2019 – Near East and North Africa](#)



“Relevant stakeholders were brought together around the same table to ensure the effectiveness of the strategies developed and what has been already built at a regional level, since the previous edition of this conference back in 2013,”

**Abdessalam Ould Ahmed**

*FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for the Near East and North Africa.*

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This year's edition addressed key challenges to and solutions for sustainable land and water management for food security in five thematic areas:



## ■ FAO chief visits FAO projects in Fayoum and praises farmers for using advanced agricultural technology



“ Farmers greatly contribute to improving food quality and using water efficiently, two linked issues that FAO is working to achieve zero hunger by 2030, ”

**José Graziano da Silva**  
FAO Director-General

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FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva visited FAO project “Good Agricultural Practices for Sustainable Improvement of Quality and Quantity of Horticultural Production of Small-Scale Farmers in Fayoum”, during his official visit to Egypt in April.

Farmers explained to the Director General how they apply the techniques they learned from the project, such as the production of organic fertilizers, the use of agricultural and animal waste to feed the soil, irrigation methods in the reclaimed lands, and ways to reduce water and land salinity.

Graziano Da Silva was also briefed on the impact of the modern agricultural techniques that the farmers learned from FAO experts, that helped them increasing grape, olive, tomato, and cucumber production.

The overall goal of the project is to improve the living condition of small-scale horticulture farmers in the five target villages in Fayoum governorate through increasing the competitiveness of their production and thus enhance the economic status of the rural poor especially small-scale horticultural growers.



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## Joint meeting of water and agriculture ministers

On the last day of the Near East and North Africa Land and Water Days Conference, Arab countries agreed to coordinate their efforts to address current challenges and future risks associated with water and food security in the region that hinder the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

In a Ministerial Declaration adopted in Cairo, the "Cairo Declaration" on 4 March, ministers of water and ministers of agriculture in their first ever-joint meeting, reaffirmed the critical position of water management on achieving SDG2, with all its impacts on achieving the overall sustainable development agenda.

Through a joint ministerial resolution, around 18 Arab countries adopted the declaration, which acknowledged the importance of establishing a coordination mechanism between water and agriculture sectors, as well as the need to develop a new generation of policies and innovative investments in agricultural water in the region, to achieve the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

The ministerial meeting was hosted by the League of Arab States and co-organized by the Arab Organization for agricultural Development, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

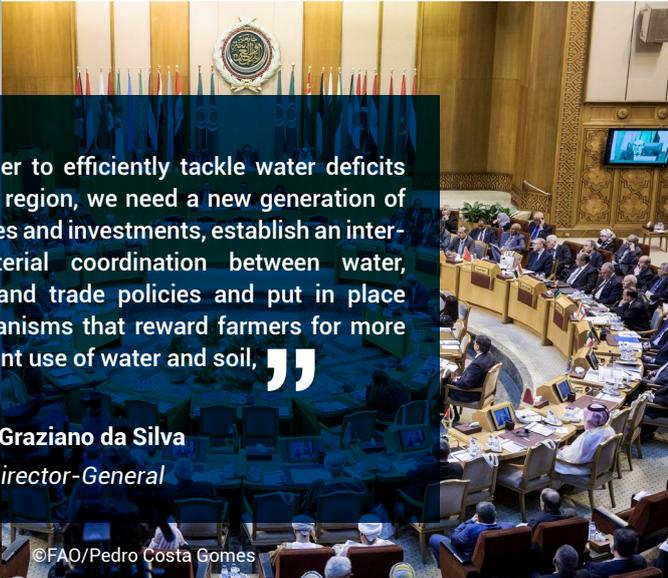
Get to know more about "Why invest in agricultural water? Case for action and investment"



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“ In order to efficiently tackle water deficits in the region, we need a new generation of policies and investments, establish an inter-ministerial coordination between water, food and trade policies and put in place mechanisms that reward farmers for more efficient use of water and soil, ”

**José Graziano da Silva**  
FAO Director-General

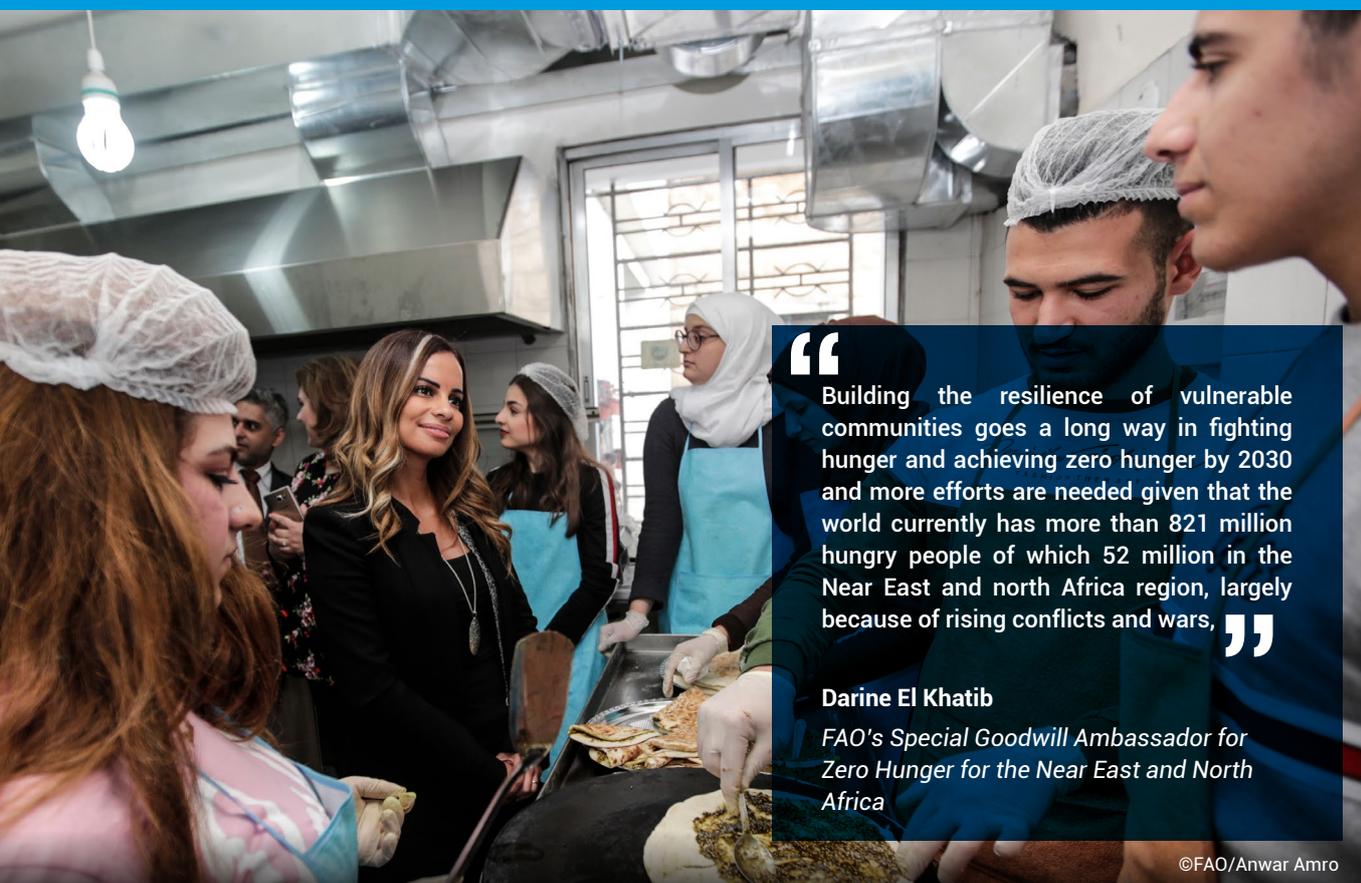
## ■ FAO's special goodwill ambassador for Zero Hunger visits resilience building projects in Lebanon

Darine El Khatib, FAO's special goodwill ambassador for Zero Hunger for the Near East and North Africa, visited Lebanon to overlook the results of on-ground projects aims at supporting the livelihoods of the most vulnerable among displaced Syrians and the poorest among the Lebanese people.

On the first day of her visit, El Khatib, accompanied by a delegation led by Maurice Saade, FAO representative in Lebanon and other FAO officials in Lebanon and the region, visited an agriculture technical school in Fanar, FAO in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, AVSI, ILO, and UNICEF are offering enrollment opportunities to young Syrian and Lebanese students. The main objective of these schools is providing Lebanese graduates to have a better chance in accessing the job market, and offering young displaced Syrians in Lebanon the necessary technical qualifications and official diplomas to use once they return to Syria and contribute to the post-conflict reconstruction of their country.

The following day, El Khatib and the official delegation travelled to Akkar north of the country, touring mountainous areas where FAO, in cooperation with the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture, supports agricultural livelihoods and job creation through investment in land reclamation and water reservoirs. The project in northern Lebanon boosts the Ministry's Green Project, which helps small-scale farmers improve their income by reclaiming arable land and using better irrigation methods.

Read more: [www.fao.org/neareast/news/view/en/c/1191310/](http://www.fao.org/neareast/news/view/en/c/1191310/)



“ Building the resilience of vulnerable communities goes a long way in fighting hunger and achieving zero hunger by 2030 and more efforts are needed given that the world currently has more than 821 million hungry people of which 52 million in the Near East and north Africa region, largely because of rising conflicts and wars, ”

**Darine El Khatib**

*FAO's Special Goodwill Ambassador for Zero Hunger for the Near East and North Africa*

©FAO/Anwar Amro

## ■ FAO and the Russian Federation renew their collaboration in Syria

FAO and the Russian Federation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and the Ministry of Water Resources, have announced the launch of a two years project entitled "Support to protect agricultural livelihoods and strengthen resilience of conflict affected households in Aleppo Governorate".

The project will improve the production capacity of 60 000 crisis-affected farmers and herders in Aleppo governorate through the implementation of three main outputs, which will contribute to boost the local economy, reduce local poverty and improve the nutritional status of the targeted groups.

The USD 3 million contribution from the Russian Federation will assist the famers in increasing the production of seasonal vegetables, support them with better access of water and enhance the livestock productivity through providing better veterinary services.

*Read more: Two-years project to support vulnerable farmers in Aleppo Governorate*

The project will improve the production capacity of 60 000 crisis-affected farmers and herders in Aleppo governorate through the implementation of three main outputs, which will contribute to boost the local economy, reduce local poverty and improve the nutritional status of the targeted groups.



©FAO/Salma Hakky

## Promoting sustainable agriculture in Egypt

FAO has actively taken part in the “Promoting sustainable Agriculture” conference convened by the Egyptian Institute of National Planning on 20 and 21 April 2019 in Cairo.

The conference aimed at presenting new visions for upgrading agricultural policies in Egypt and innovations that can benefit the development of the agricultural sector.

During the conference, FAO shed the light on pathways of transforming food and agriculture and highlighted the importance of promoting investment in these sectors to achieve the 2030 sustainable agenda.

It is worth mentioning that Egypt and FAO have a strong and longstanding partnership. FAO supported Egypt in all its agriculture development strategies for the last decades, including the Sustainable Agriculture Development Strategy 2030.

FAO reaffirmed during the conference its support to the Egyptian government to promote sustainable agriculture and enhance food security.



“

Investing in agriculture and rural development is one of the most effective ways to achieve food and nutrition security, and stimulate economic growth, improve rural livelihoods and reduce poverty.”

**Abdessalam Ould Ahmed**

FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for the Near East and North Africa

# A glimpse from the field

## ■ Khadija: Where there is a will, there is a way

Khadija Saeed Ali lost both her parents during the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Zunjubar district, Abyan governorate making her a breadwinner and provider for her family consisting of 20 members.

“ I tried to help my family through working in odd jobs; I worked as a henna tattoo artist, but it did not last for long, so I moved to starting a few projects such as cattle raising and beekeeping which failed, leading me to be unemployed for over 8 months,” reflected Khadija.

To tackle this issue, the Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen (ERRY) Joint Programme, with the fund of the European Union and the implementation of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), trained Khadija to become a trainer in the Farmers Field School and then a member of the Dairy Production Unit.

“ I joined the Enhanced Rural Resilience Joint Program in 2017 as a trainer, although I hardly knew anything about dairy production or the measures of cleanliness required while tending to dairy products and cattle, after the training course, I trained more than 725 beneficiaries on the skills I learned,” remarked Khadija.

Khadija now works in the Dairy Production Unit established in the Office of Agriculture and Irrigation in Zunjubar. In this Unit, Khadija and her 8 fellow trainers purchase milk from beneficiaries whom they have trained on how to hygienically milk their cattle, and then they start producing yoghurt, cheese, ghee and buttermilk and package them in small containers that have a special label for the Unit. These dairy products are then sold both at the Unit itself and at several mini-supermarkets in the district.



©FAO/Yemen

“ By producing and selling dairy products I make an average profit of YR 3000 on a daily basis,” explained Khadija. “Training a lot of women farmers has helped me not only learn more about agriculture extension work, but also strike up relationships that I am benefiting from in the business of dairy production,” she added.

Khadija hopes that the demand for dairy products in Abyan will go up so that the Unit will increase its production so that she can keep up a sustainable source of income and one day start her own dairy production unit.

The Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen (ERRY) programme is a joint-initiative funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by FAO, ILO, UNDP and WFP in four governorates in Yemen (Hajjah, Hodeidah, Lahj and Abyan). The three-year joint programme aims to enhance the resilience and self-reliance of crisis-affected rural communities through support to livelihoods stabilization, food security, local governance, social cohesion and improved access to sustainable energy. Khadija is one of many who have been able to sustainably benefit from ERRY JP and overcome their ordeals.

## ■ Training and intuition help an Egyptian farmer to cut losses

Growing grapes takes a mix of agricultural know-how and constant adaptation in the field. This has been the experience of Mabrook Khamees, who has been farming grapes for 20 years now – and who is still learning new techniques.

Mabrook, who prefers to be called by his nickname Rabea, recently learned new approaches to pruning, spraying and other practices through an Italian-funded FAO training programme, developed in close collaboration with the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation. The programme, which has already trained some 2 000 farmers, is designed to help them recognise and treat disease and maintain crop quality, both before and after harvest. This helps to prevent loss and waste along the food value chain, from production to sale.

The most difficult part is when Rabea waters the grapes because the sprigs, or new stems, are especially sensitive after watering. "I have to make sure there is no damage or rot," he explains.

*"I learned to avoid over-fertilization and losses on the farm. And more importantly, I now know when and how to pick the grapes," he adds.*

Rabea has learned how technology can help to improve the marketability of the grapes. For example, a refractometer can be used to test the levels of sugar in the fruit as it grows. Ideally, he says, the sugar level should be around 20 percent when grapes are ready for harvest. This is especially important in a country where half the grapes and other produce are lost through inefficient practices during production and distribution.

Rabea adapts the techniques he has learned to conditions in the field and also shares what he learns with others.

He moved to Tiba, Nubaria, from his hometown of Beheira, because he needed work to meet his expenses, especially school and medical fees.



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*"I love to be on the farm," Rabea says, "to touch the bunches of grapes, and check them carefully for problems, to examine the leaves and branches for disease. I like to bring my children to the farm, to teach them what is right and wrong, and how to do things. Food for me means my family, which is my life."*

Although Egypt is the world's fifth biggest grape producer, it imports most of the raisins it consumes.

Rabea is looking forward to the construction of a raisin-drying facility during the next phase of the FAO programme, which will allow farmers to dry grapes and add value to their products. In the past, farmers like Rabea sometimes left crops to rot instead of harvesting them due to low market prices.

By training farmers to protect and improve crops sustainably and reduce food losses, FAO is empowering them to take action and be a part of the global goal to achieve Zero Hunger.

## ■ Batoul and Aya: There is hope in a better future



Sisters Batoul, 23, and Aya, 17, had to flee to Lebanon from Aleppo when clashes in their Syrian hometown escalated. Aya had just finished middle school and Batoul was already enrolled to study History in college. However, since the situation was very dangerous in Syria, Batoul had no time to finish her paperwork that proves she completed high school.

“I did not want to repeat three years of hard work because of a piece of paper, so I changed my whole plans when I found out about this project. At least here I will not be wasting much time because I will receive an official diploma from the Ministry of Agriculture, instead of a participation certificate that is not accredited by any institution”, she says.

Aya enrolled with her sister and they are now studying together.

“

This has brought us closer after everything we have been through”, Aya continues, “and what is great too is that the official diploma that we will receive is recognized in Syria, and it paves the way for us to find jobs or maybe even continue our higher education in the future”.

In partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, AVSI, and ILO, and in collaboration with UNICEF, FAO is working on upgrading Lebanon's seven technical agriculture schools, while offering enrollment opportunities to young Syrian and Lebanese students. This will allow young Lebanese graduates to have a better chance in accessing the job market, and will provide young displaced Syrians in Lebanon the necessary technical qualifications and official diplomas to use once they return back to Syria and contribute to the post-conflict reconstruction of their country.

# Publications

## 2018 Regional overview of food security and nutrition for the Near East and North Africa

The [report](#) provides new evidence for monitoring trends in food security and nutrition within the framework of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The in-depth analysis of progress made against Sustainable Development Goal 2 Target 2.1 (to end hunger and ensure access to food by all) and Target 2.2 (to end all forms of malnutrition), as well as the state of micronutrient deficiencies, is complemented by a review on rural transformation policies aimed at addressing food insecurity and nutrition issues.

The findings of the report showed that the failure to reduce hunger in the region is closely associated with the increase in conflict and violence in several parts of the region, as also highlighted in last year's edition.

The 2018 report goes further to explore the relationship between food insecurity, economic growth and rural transformation. It demonstrates that economic growth in the Near East and North Africa region has been slow compared to other regions, and suggests that rural transformation can improve growth rates and generate decent employment through strengthening rural-urban linkages, improving agricultural productivity, and expanding the rural non-farm economy.



Read in Arabic, English and French

## The multi-faced role of soil in the Near East and North Africa

The world's soils are rapidly deteriorating due to soil erosion, nutrient depletion, loss of soil organic carbon, soil sealing and other threats, but this trend can be reversed provided countries take the lead in promoting sustainable management practices and the use of appropriate technologies.

Several scientific reports highlighted in this brief have shown the extent to which soil degradation is threatening food security and water availability, increasing social economic inequality and depleting ecosystems in the NENA region, particularly through desertification. Soil degradation is driven by multiple and complex variables. For this reason, Sustainable Soil Management (SSM) practices and the policies that support them need to fit within a broader natural resource management agenda, one that integrates water security, climate change adaptation, and domestic crop production priorities.

A harmonized soil management approach strengthened by policy is vital to creating a coherent framework towards the achievement of this goal. This document supports the aim of all NENA countries to protect soils and demonstrates the value of coordinated and targeted action to safeguard the conservation of soils within the region towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Read in Arabic, English and French

## ■ Child labour in the Arab region

The Arab region has witnessed a large wave of armed conflicts and population displacement in recent years, believed to have bought with it an upsurge of child labour – the magnitude of which is yet to be fully measured. The impact of armed conflict has exacerbated pre-existing levels of child labour found in rural and urban areas across the Arab region, typically driven by economic vulnerability, poor education and certain social norms.

Child labour has long been a feature of economic life in the Arab region, particularly in agriculture, small traditional craft shops, and informal industries such as garment and carpet making, as well as some construction-related activities.

Children have worked irrespective of times of conflict, political unrest or economic shocks. However, over the past ten years, during which the region has witnessed high levels of armed conflict resulting in the mass displacement of populations – both within and between countries – child labour has certainly worsened.

The study has been commissioned by the League of Arab States and jointly supported by the International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Arab Council of Childhood and Development and Arab Labour Organization.



**Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa**  
**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

**Address:** 11 Al-Eslah Al-Zerai street, Dokki

**P.O. Box:** 2223 Cairo, Egypt

**Telephone:** (+202) 33316000

**Fax:** (+202) 37495981

**Website:** [www.fao.org/neareast](http://www.fao.org/neareast)

**twitter:** FAOinNENA - FAOinNENA-EN



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