

May 2012

	منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة	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
---	--	--------------------	---	---	---	--

COUNCIL

Hundred and Forty-Fourth Session

Rome, 11-15 June 2012

**Report of the 31st Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East
(Rome, Italy, 14-18 May 2012)**

REPORT

Rome
Italy
14 – 18 May 2012

Thirty-first FAO Regional Conference for the Near East



FAO Member Nations in the Near East Region

Afghanistan	Kuwait	Saudi Arabia
Algeria	Kyrgyzstan	Somalia
Azerbaijan	Lebanon	Sudan
Bahrain	Libya	Syrian Arab Republic
Cyprus	Malta	Tajikistan
Djibouti	Mauritania	Tunisia
Egypt	Morocco	Turkey
Iran, Islamic Republic of	Oman	Turkmenistan
Iraq	Pakistan	United Arab Emirates
Jordan	Qatar	Yemen

Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for the Near East

First	- Cairo, Egypt, 2-14 February 1948
Second	- Bloudane, Syria, 28 August - 6 September 1951
Third	- Cairo, Egypt, 1-9 September 1953
Fourth	- Damascus, Syria*, 10-20 December 1958
Fifth	- Tehran, Iran, 21 September - 1 October 1960
Sixth	- Tel Amara, Lebanon, 30 July - 8 August 1962
Seventh	- Cairo, Egypt**, 19-31 October 1964
Eighth	- Khartoum, Sudan, 24 January - 2 February 1967
Ninth	- Baghdad, Iraq, 21 September - 1 October 1968
Tenth	- Islamabad, Pakistan, 12-22 September 1970
Eleventh	- Kuwait, Kuwait, 9-19 September 1972
Twelfth	- Amman, Jordan, 31 August - 9 September 1974
Thirteenth	- Tunis, Tunisia, 4-11 October 1976
Fourteenth	- Damascus, Syria, 9-16 September 1978
Fifteenth	- Rome, Italy, 21-25 April 1981
Sixteenth	- Nicosia, Cyprus, 25-29 October 1982
Seventeenth	- Aden, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, 11-15 March 1984
Eighteenth	- Istanbul, Turkey, 17-21 March 1986
Nineteenth	- Muscat, Oman, 13-17 March 1988
Twentieth	- Tunis, Tunisia, 12-16 March 1990
Twenty-first	- Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 17-21 May 1992
Twenty-second	- Amman, Jordan, 3-6 July 1994
Twenty-third	- Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, 26-29 March 1996
Twenty-fourth	- Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, 21-25 March 1998
Twenty-fifth	- Beirut, Lebanon, 20-24 March 2000
Twenty-sixth	- Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 9-13 March 2002
Twenty-seventh	- Doha, State of Qatar, 13-17 March 2004
Twenty-eighth	- Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 12-16 March 2006
Twenty-ninth	- Cairo, the Arab Republic of Egypt, 1-5 March 2008
Thirtieth	- Khartoum, the Republic of the Sudan, 4-8 December 2010
Thirty-first	- Rome, Italy, 14-18 May 2012

*Known as the United Arab Republic from 01/03/1958

**Known as the United Arab Republic until 02/09/1971

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
SUMMARY OF THE MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS	i–iii
	Paragraphs
I. Introductory Items	1 - 11
- Organization of the Regional Conference	1-2
- Inaugural ceremonies	3–4
- Election of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and appointment of the Rapporteur.....	5 -6
- Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable.....	7
- Statement by the Director-General of FAO.....	8
- Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council	9
- Statement by the Chairperson of the 30 th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East	10
- Statement by the Chairperson of the CFS on the Outcomes of the 37 th Session of the Committee on World Food Security and Updates of the CFS Reform.....	11
II. Regional and Global Policy and Regulatory Matters	12 - 33
A. Food Loss Prevention for Improving Food Security in the Near East	12-15
B. Actions to Adapt to and Mitigate Climate Change Impacts on Natural Resources: the Case of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Forestry and Livestock in the Near East	16-19
C. Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Global Strategy Framework for Food Security and Nutrition, including the Outcome of the Multi-stakeholder Consultation in the Near East	20-33
III. Programme and Budget Matters	34 - 56
A. Report on FAO Activities in Near East Region 2010-11, Programme of Work and Budget 2012-13 and Areas of Priority Action, for the Region for the Following Biennium 2014-15	34-44
B. Decentralization Issues	45-56
IV. Other Matters	57 - 72
A. Multi-year Programme of Work 2012–2015 for the Regional Conference for the Near East	62
B. Side events and Signing of Cooperation Agreements with FAO.....	63-65
C. Declaration	66-68
D. Concluding Items	69-72
Date and place of the 32 nd FAO Regional Conference for Near East	69
Adoption of the Report	70
Closure of the Conference	71-72
	Pages
Appendix A - Agenda	9
Appendix B – List of documents	10-11

SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Matters Requiring the Attention of the FAO Council

The Thirty-first FAO Regional Conference for the Near East:

Programme and Budget Matters

37, 38. Welcomed the Strategic Thinking Process initiated by the Director-General to determine the future strategic direction and priorities of the Organization, confirmed that the main global challenges are consistent with the conditions in the Region, and agreed with the reported regional trends and challenges;

39, 41. Confirmed the five regional priority areas for action in the region, as outlined in the Regional Priority Framework, supported the proposed sub-regional focus areas for FAO assistance, and supported taking them into account in the review of the FAO Strategic Framework and in preparing the MTP 2014–17;

40. Requested allocating an increased share of financial resources to the region through the Program of Work and Budget 2014 -15 and expressed concern about the limited share of the Near East in the Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) budget and requested that this share be increased and that FAO mobilizes additional resources to support the work of the Organization in the Region;

42, 44. Encouraged FAO to facilitate increased collaboration at regional and sub-regional levels and strengthen partnerships with development partners including regional organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs) to identify areas of synergy and to increase efficiency in delivery of programmes in the Region;

68. Took note of the Director-General's proposal for establishing a regional Trust Fund to address regional priorities in the Near East and called on FAO to assist in developing this proposal taking into account the needs of the countries and the recent developments in the region.

Decentralization Issue

45, 46. Welcomed the efforts and the vision of the Director-General to enhance FAO's effectiveness and efficiency and supported the proposals on decentralization, which were consistent with a more flexible and innovative decentralized offices network, and stressed that priority should be given to implementing decentralization reforms, which were an important part of the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal;

47. Supported proposals to make the Organization work more effective and efficient at country level through improved planning and priority setting as a means of ensuring that the Organization's work is focused and driven by Members' needs;

50. Concurred with the specific proposals for decentralization in the Near East Region with respect to decentralization and empowerment including transforming the sub-regional offices into technical hubs with appropriate skill mix where strong multidisciplinary team should be maintained to provide required technical support to country offices;

52. Agreed to the proposal to merge the Multidisciplinary Team for the Oriental Near East (SNO) into the Regional Office for the Near East (RNE), while strengthening RNE with experts in priority areas for the Region; and recommended the establishment of an additional Sub-Regional Office to be hosted by the Republic of Lebanon and to raise this matter to the FAO Conference in its next Session in 2013;

53. Noted the generous financial support provided by the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to cover the cost of the Sub-Regional Office for the GCC States and Yemen (SNG) as per the agreement with FAO and noted the need to devise suitable mechanisms to mobilize additional funding to meet the need for non-staff resources to be able to provide technical support to Member countries;

54. Took note of the idea of creating a Regional Trust Fund for FAO Regional Office which will enhance its effectiveness in responding to regional, sub regional as well as country specific requests and stressed that the proposed Regional Trust Fund, when established, should not affect the appropriations to the Region from FAO and other funding sources;

56. Recognized that the current membership coverage between Council, RNE and NERC is not fully consistent, and noted that the current coverage has some merits and can create opportunities for fostering inter-regional cooperation. Considering these conditions the delegates recommended that the current membership coverage should remain unchanged at present;

61. Recommended re-establishing the agricultural extension post in the Regional Office for the Near East.

Other Matters

57. Supported the establishment of a Regional Commission on Genetic Resources to serve as a regional platform for developing harmonized views, policies and initiatives on conservation and utilization of genetic resources, and implementation of relevant international treaties, conventions and protocols.

Multi-year Program of Work 2012-15 for the FAO Regional Conference for Near East

62. Approved the draft Multi-year Program of Work (MYPOW) 2012-15 for the FAO Regional Conference for Near East.

Matters Requiring the Attention of the FAO Conference

The Thirty-first FAO Regional Conference for the Near East:

Food loss prevention for improving food security in the Near East

15. Requested FAO to assist Member countries in addressing the key challenges of reducing food waste and losses by conducting comprehensive studies on impact of food losses and waste on food security in the region and in establishing a plan to reduce food losses and waste in the region by 50 percent within ten years;

Actions to adapt to and mitigate climate change impacts on natural resources: the case of fisheries and aquaculture, forestry and livestock in the Near East

18. Noted the need to increase participation and awareness amongst all stakeholders including Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and to harmonize monitoring tools, standards and development of vulnerability indicators to improve risk assessments, preparedness and response;

19. Requested FAO to assist Member countries in the Region in enhancing their technical capacity to deal with and tackle the impacts of climate change on forest and rangeland ecosystems, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture resources; and to address problems affecting natural resources from an integrated perspective through special studies and in-depth analyses elaborating appropriate national policies, strategies and programs to be implemented in mitigating the impact of Climate Change;

Multi-stakeholder dialogue on global strategic framework for food security and nutrition including the outcome of the multi-stakeholder consultation in the Near East

22. Supported the establishment of a regional coordination mechanism that could take the form of a regional CFS, to follow up the food security situation in the Region and to liaise with the CFS, and requested FAO assistance for Member countries in establishing this mechanism;

23, 31. Endorsed the recommendation of the 37th Session of CFS to develop a Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF) and recommended that regional perspectives be fully reflected in further drafts of the GSF and urged stakeholders to provide additional inputs through all available mechanisms;

24. Requested CFS to organize a regional food security and nutrition workshop prior to the 39th Session of the CFS in October 2012; to address issues on investment in the value chain of agricultural commodities, agro-industries, and post harvest losses and to prepare for the 39th Session of the CFS as well as setting the regional priorities to be included in the agenda of future CFS sessions;

27. Provide special attention and necessary technical support to the vulnerable communities living in areas affected by occupation, war and conflicts where food and livelihood security are compromised by limited access to natural resources - land, land cover, water, fishery resources and biodiversity;

29. Requested FAO to assist in developing a regional food security strategy complemented by an action plan which could focus on mechanisms for handling food price volatility, investment, creation of strategic grain reserves, and improving food security and nutrition information systems;

32. Welcomed the ongoing efforts by the CFS in working with appropriate stakeholders to facilitate the development of systems for mapping food security and nutrition actions to enhance coordination and alignment of the policies and programmes of government agencies and development partners;

33. Requested that a Near East side event be organized during the 39th Session of the CFS in October 2012.

Decentralization Issues

52. Agreed to the proposal to merge the Multidisciplinary Team for the Oriental Near East (SNO) into the Regional Office for the Near East (RNE), while strengthening RNE with experts in priority areas for the Region; and recommended the establishment of an additional Sub-Regional Office to be hosted by the Republic of Lebanon and to raise this matter to the FAO Conference in its next Session in 2013.

I. Introductory Items

Organization of the Conference

1. The thirty-first FAO Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC) was held in Rome, Italy, from 14 to 18 May 2012. The Conference was organized in two parts: a Senior Officers Meeting from 14 to 16 May and a Ministerial-level Meeting from 17 to 18 May.
2. The Conference was attended by 159 delegates from 25 member countries, 10 observer countries, 2 UN organizations, 6 NGOs/IGOs and 3 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Inaugural Ceremonies

3. The Senior Officers Meeting was opened with addresses by H.E. Mrs. Amira Dawood Gornass, the Ambassador of the Sudan to Italy and Mr. Moujahed Achouri, Officer-in-Charge for the FAO Regional Office for the Near East. Her Excellency the Ambassador welcomed the participants, officially and opened the meeting. Mr. Achouri thanked the delegates for their agreement to hold the 31st Session of NERC in May 2012 in order to make it possible to inform the FAO Council in June 2012 about the outcome of the Conference. He also outlined the key challenges facing the region in its efforts to reduce poverty and food insecurity, and updated delegates on the organization of the Conference and the main issues to be discussed.
4. The Inaugural Ceremony of the Ministerial Meeting was held on 17 May. Mr Jose Graziano da Silva, Director-General of FAO delivered the inaugural address. The Meeting was also addressed by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council, H.E. Mr. Luc Guyau, H.E. Mrs. Amira Dawood Gornass, the Ambassador of the Sudan to Italy, on behalf of the Chairperson of the 30th Session of NERC, and the Chairperson of CFS, Mr Yaya Olaniran. Brief statements were also made during the opening of the Ministerial Meeting by Honourable Ministers from Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen.

Election of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur

5. Delegates elected H.E. the Minister of Agriculture, Republic of Iraq to chair the session. H.E. Mr Ezzulddin Abdalla Al Dawla, Minister of Agriculture in Iraq thanked delegates for the election of his country to chair the Session and FAO for organizing the meeting. The Minister in his introductory remarks stressed the need for social and security stability in order to cope with the many challenges to agricultural development and food security in the region. The Minister also stressed the importance of the Regional Conference as an essential platform where Member Countries should discuss regional collaboration to address these concerns, and to FAO as a strategic partner in providing umbrella for closer collaboration. The Chair also pledged the full support of the Government of Iraq to the DG's initiative for enhancing FAO's efficiency and effectiveness.
6. The Conference elected all heads of delegations as Vice-Chairpersons and Head of Yemen delegation to the Senior Officers meeting to serve as the Rapporteur.

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

7. The Conference adopted the agenda and the time table for the Conference. The Agenda are given in *Appendix A*. Documents submitted to the Conference are listed in *Appendix B*.

Statement by the Director-General

8. Mr Jose Graziano da Silva, Director-General of FAO, referred in his statement to the challenges to agricultural development and food security that need to be confronted in the Near East Region. The Director-General stressed the need to address the problems of climate change and increasing water scarcity, building resilience among poor farmers and the need to shift to more sustainable production and consumption patterns to protect the environment. In order to meet such challenges the Director-General stressed FAO's commitment to assist Member Countries of the Region in building resilient agricultural and pastoral livelihoods and food systems. To do so, the

Director-General indicated the need to increase investments in climate-smart agriculture, sustainable production methods, link productive support with safety nets to boost local markets, as well as to improve the governance of water and other natural resources. In his address, the Director-General proposed the creation of a Near East Trust Fund to advance food security in the region.

Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council

9. His Excellency Luc Guyau, Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council, addressed the Conference, stressing the new role of the regional conferences as governing bodies reporting to the Council and Conference. The Independent Chairperson highlighted the mandate entrusted to him, implementation of the FAO reform plan and the outlook for the 2012-13 biennium.

Statement by the Chairperson of the 30th Session of the Regional Conference for Near East

10. H.E. Mrs. Amira Dawood Gornass, the Ambassador of the Republic of Sudan to Italy delivered the statement of the Chairperson of the Thirtieth Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Near East reminding the Conference about the recommendations of the 30th Session, and briefed the delegates on subsequent activities undertaken to bring the Conference recommendations to the attention of the 141st FAO Council and the 37th Session of the FAO Conference.

Statement by the Chairperson of the CFS on the Outcomes of the 37th Session of the Committee on World Food Security and Update of the CFS Reform

11. Mr Yaya Olaniran, Chairperson of the CFS, has reported on the progress made by the reformed CFS over the past two years and its relevance to the work of the Near East Regional Conference. He also briefed the Conference on some of the on-going key CFS activities.

II. Regional and Global Policy and Regulatory Issues

A. Food loss prevention for improving food security in the Near East

12. The Conference considered the implications of the high levels of food losses and waste on food security in terms of food availability, health and nutrition in the region and recognized the need for reducing these losses, in terms of quantity and quality and requested that the topic of food loss and waste be considered for every subsequent regional Conference in order to report progress on the subject.

13. The Conference recognized the urgent need for member countries to overcome the limitations of small-scale operations by encouraging consolidation and vertical integration among producers, processors and marketers of each food commodity or group of commodities. The Conference urged member countries to include “reduction of food loss and waste” in national policies, priorities, and strategies to improve food quality and consumer health and safety.

14. The Conference encouraged member countries to remove socioeconomic constraints, create incentives for reducing food waste and loss, increase investment in the infrastructure, technical know-how and value chains to increase value additions. The Conference also urged member countries to improve partnership, coordination and collaboration with public, private sector as well as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to enhance capacities, education and awareness of all the stakeholders, including producers and consumers, on value chain improvement, value addition, quality and safety systems.

15. The Conference requested FAO to assist Member countries in addressing the key challenges of reducing food waste and losses by conducting comprehensive studies on impact of food losses and waste on food security in the region and in establishing a plan to reduce food losses and waste in the region by 50 percent within ten years.

B. Actions to adapt to and mitigate climate change impacts on natural resources: the case of fisheries and aquaculture, forestry and livestock in the Near East

16. Delegates noted the consequences of the impact and the growing threat of climate change and climate variability on natural resources, and recognized the need to promote climate change agenda within national institutions, strengthen policy integration in all sectors, share lessons learnt and best practices to inform policies and programming.

17. The Conference urged member countries to enhance coordination among relevant institutions, share data and information on monitoring, early warning systems and contingency and response planning at national and regional levels.

18. Delegates noted the need to increase participation and awareness amongst all stakeholders including Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and to harmonize monitoring tools, standards and development of vulnerability indicators to improve risk assessments, preparedness and response. The Conference urged member countries to improve financing the livestock, fishery and forestry sectors by greening the economy, and strengthen community capacities and livelihoods to cope with and adapt to climate change.

19. Delegates requested FAO to assist Member countries of the Region in enhancing their technical capacity to deal with and tackle the impacts of climate change on the forest and rangeland ecosystems, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture resources and requested FAO to assist member countries address problems affecting natural resources from an integrated perspective through special studies and in-depth analyses elaborating appropriate national policies, strategies and programs to be implemented in mitigating the impact of Climate Change. The conference urged Member countries to have a coordinated position towards accessing the “Cancun Agreement - Climate Green Fund” for forestry and rangelands in the Near East.

C. Multi-stakeholder dialogue on global strategic framework for food security and nutrition including the outcome of the multi-stakeholder consultation in the Near East

20. The Conference reviewed recent developments and deliberations of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and considered appropriate follow-up actions in the Near East Region.

21. The Conference welcomed the outcome of the Regional Multi-stakeholder Workshop on Food Security and Nutrition for the Near East Region that took place on 3-4 October 2011 in Cairo under the CFS umbrella and encouraged Members to deal with coordination issues at both regional and national levels (CFS:2011/INF/19). The Conference took note of the recommendations of the Policy Roundtables on the implications of social and political transition in the Region for food security and nutrition, food price volatility, smallholder investment in agriculture, and gender.

22. The Conference supported the establishment of a regional coordination mechanism that could take the form of a regional CFS, to follow up the food security situation in the region and to liaise with the CFS and requested FAO assistance for Member countries in establishing this mechanism.

23. The Conference welcomed the multi-stakeholder discussion held on the first day of NERC-31 and endorsed the recommendation of the 37th Session of CFS to develop a Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF). Delegates noted the on-going multi-stakeholder preparation process in the development of the GSF and that it may improve coordination and guiding synchronized action in support of global, regional and country-led actions to prevent future food crises, eliminate hunger, and ensure food security and nutrition for all.

24. The Conference requested CFS to organize a regional food security and nutrition workshop to precede the 39th Session of the CFS in October 2012. The regional workshop could also focus on investment in the value chain of agricultural commodities, agro-industries, and post harvest losses especially of vegetables and fruit and to prepare for the 39th Session of the CFS as well as setting the regional priorities to be included in the agenda of future CFS sessions.

25. The Conference welcomed the recent endorsement of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security at the 38th (Special) Session of CFS on 11 May 2012. The Conference also pointed out the importance of starting a process of consultations on Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investments that Enhance Food Security and Nutrition.

26. The Conference recognized that achieving food security and adequate nutrition for women, men and their families are inter-linked with comprehensive development efforts and urges all stakeholders to take concrete actions to improve women's health, educational and nutritional status.

27. The Conference requested FAO to provide special attention and necessary technical support to the vulnerable communities living in areas affected by occupation especially the occupied Palestinian territory and the occupied Syrian Golan as well as other areas affected by conflict and war where food and livelihood security are compromised by limited access to natural resources (land, land cover, water, fishery resources and biodiversity).

28. The Conference expressed its appreciation of the efforts of the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) for its work on price volatility and food security and stressed the need for concerted international efforts to address the structural causes of food price volatility and ensure that its impacts do not undermine small and marginal producers and consumers' right to food.

29. The Conference requested FAO to assist in developing a regional food security strategy complemented by an action plan which could focus on mechanisms for handling food price volatility, investment, creation of strategic grain reserves, and improving food security and nutrition information systems.

30. In support of small farmers, the Conference noted the Government of Iraq's initiative to promote the agriculture sector by securing the necessary financial resources in the form of interest free loans to the smallholder farmers and shall present this experience to the forthcoming NERC.

31. Delegates noted the valuable comments and contributions to the first draft of the GSF provided by a broad range of stakeholders and made further recommendations for improving the process and enhancing the document. The Conference recommended that regional perspectives be fully reflected in further drafts of the GSF and urged stakeholders to provide additional inputs through all available mechanisms.

32. The Conference welcomed the ongoing efforts by the CFS in working with appropriate stakeholders to facilitate the development of systems for mapping food security and nutrition actions to enhance coordination and alignment of the policies and programmes of government agencies and development partners. The delegates appreciated the side event that was organized on 16 May to demonstrate tools for country-level mapping of food security and nutrition actions and requested FAO support in the mapping actions for food security.

33. The Conference requested that a Near East side event be organized during CFS-39 in October 2012.

III. Programme and Budget Matters

A. Report on FAO activities in Near East Region 2010-11, Programme of Work and Budget 2012-13 and areas of priority action for the Region for the following biennium 2014-15

34. Mr. Moujahed Achouri, Officer-in-Charge for the FAO Regional Office for the Near East reported on the major FAO activities in the region in the past biennium and actions taken on the recommendations of the previous Regional Conference. He also emphasized the important technical roles and activities of the Regional Technical Commissions in contributing to the work of FAO in the Near East Region within the context of increased challenges of food security and climate change. Mr Achouri also highlighted that the Regional Office will focus on areas of water scarcity, food

security frameworks, policy advice, and investment planning to reflect on FAO's core functions in the region.

35. Delegates appreciated the work of FAO in the region but highlighted the importance of consolidating and quantifying main outputs to be reported to the Joint Meeting of the FAO Programme and Finance Committees.

36. The Conference considered areas of priority action for FAO in the Near East Region for the current and future biennia in the context of global trends and future challenges for the work of the Organization and requested FAO to fine-tune the priorities to be in line with the newly emerging global and regional challenges and country priorities with emphasis on sustainable natural resources management.

37. The Conference welcomed the broad and inclusive strategic thinking process launched by the Director-General in January 2012 to determine the future strategic direction and priorities of the Organization. The Conference emphasized the importance of focusing the work of FAO on key challenges faced by countries so as to achieve measurable progress through the effective and efficient use of available resources.

38. The Conference confirmed that the main global challenges are consistent with the conditions in the Region, and agreed with the reported regional trends and challenges. The Conference emphasized the following main challenges: water scarcity and its efficiency use, soil degradation and desertification, transboundary animal diseases, fisheries and aquaculture sustainability, climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as increasing rural-urban migration, conflicts and occupation, youth and women empowerment. Access to veterinary services was a priority challenge to be addressed in the Region. The Conference requested FAO to give due attention to the problems of the Foot and Mouth Diseases (FMD) and to peri-urban and urban agriculture. The Conference requested that these priority areas be included in the Programme of Work and Budget 2014-15.

39. The Conference confirmed the five broad regional priority areas of action on enhancing food security and nutrition, fostering agricultural production and rural development for improved livelihoods, sustainable natural resources management including fisheries and aquaculture, responding to climate change impacts and developing adaptation strategies, and preparedness for and response to agriculture and food emergencies. The Conference endorsed the Regional Results to be attained under the PWB 2012-13.

40. The Conference requested allocating an increased share of financial resources to the region through the Programme of Work and Budget 2014-15. The Conference expressed concern about the limited share of the Near East in the Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) budget and requested that this share be increased and that FAO mobilizes additional resources to support the work of the Organization in the region.

41. The Conference supported the proposed sub-regional areas of activities within the five regional priorities and requested that these, along with the regional challenges, be taken into account by the Secretariat and the Council in reviewing the FAO Strategic Framework and preparing the Medium-Term Plan 2014-17.

42. The Conference encouraged FAO to facilitate increased collaboration at regional and sub-regional levels, including through cooperation and partnerships with public and private sector, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), particularly on investment in agriculture, and on research and development of technologies to increase productivity linked to poverty reduction.

43. The Conference took note of the recommendations agreed by the four regional Commissions (The Near East Forestry and Range Commission, the Regional Commission for Fisheries, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, and the Agriculture, Land and Water Use Commission) during their last sessions in 2010-2011, and recognized the important role they play in providing effective mechanisms for addressing specific sub-sectoral technical matters.

44. The Conference encouraged the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa to further strengthen partnerships with other development partners including regional organizations and

civil society organizations (CSOs) to identify areas of synergy and to increase efficiency in delivery of programmes in the region.

B. Decentralization Issues

45. The Conference welcomed the efforts and the vision of the Director-General to enhance FAO's effectiveness and efficiency, recognizing that further efforts are still to be made, particularly at country level.

46. The Conference welcomed the proposals on decentralization, which were consistent with a more flexible and innovative decentralized office network. It stressed that priority should be given to implementing decentralization reforms, which were an important part of the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal.

47. The Conference supported proposals to make the Organization work more effective and efficient at country level through improved planning and priority setting as a means of ensuring that the Organization's work is focused and driven by Members' needs.

48. The Conference supported the overall proposals for a more flexible decentralized office network with strong country office leadership and greater empowerment of Regional, Sub Regional and Country Representatives.

49. The Conference emphasized that the decentralization process should not be implemented at the expense of weakening the capacity of FAO's technical programmes and the provision of its global public goods, while noting that there is considerable room for improved prioritization and efficiency within these programmes.

50. The Conference concurred with the specific proposals for the Near East Region, with respect to decentralization and empowerment including transforming the sub-regional offices into technical hubs with appropriate skill mix where strong multidisciplinary team should be maintained to provide required technical support to country offices.

51. The Conference supports the efforts and decision of the Director-General for an integrated approach to programme delivery in the region, and endorsed proposals to integrate the emergency with the development programs at country level.

52. With reference to the restructuring of the decentralised offices in the Near East Region, and the request from the government of the Republic of Lebanon to establish a Sub-Regional Office, the Conference agreed to the proposal to merge the Multidisciplinary Team for the Oriental Near East (SNO) into the Regional Office (RNE), while strengthening RNE with experts in priority areas for the Region; and recommended the establishment of an additional Sub-Regional Office to be hosted by the Republic of Lebanon and to raise this matter to the FAO Conference in its next Session in 2013.

53. The Conference noted the generous financial support provided by the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to cover the cost of the Sub-Regional Office for the GCC States and Yemen (SNG) as per the agreement with FAO and noted the need to devise suitable mechanisms to mobilize additional funding to meet the need for non-staff resources to be able to provide technical support to Member countries.

54. The delegates took note of the idea of creating a Regional Trust Fund for FAO Regional Office which will enhance its effectiveness in responding to regional, sub regional as well as country specific requests and stressed that the proposed Regional Trust Fund when established should not affect the appropriations to the region from FAO and other funding sources.

55. The Conference concurred that the extra-budgetary funding opportunities exist in the region and that efforts need to be increased to address and mobilize these resources to cope with the challenges faced by the region for food security and sustainable development.

56. Delegates recognized that the current membership coverage between Council, RNE and NERC is not fully consistent and that harmonization of coverage of the Near East Office and the Regional Conference should be sought. However, it was noted that the current coverage has some merits and

can create opportunities for fostering inter-regional cooperation. Considering these conditions the delegates recommended that the current membership coverage should remain unchanged at present.

IV. Other Matters

57. The Conference supported the establishment of a Regional Commission on Genetic Resources to serve as a regional platform for developing harmonized views, policies and initiatives on conservation and utilization of genetic resources, and implementation of relevant international treaties, conventions and protocols.

58. The Conference took note of the request of the Republic of Yemen for FAO support to cope with the food security and livelihood implications of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the continuing influx of refugees especially from the Horn of Africa.

59. The conference noted the potential of Djibouti as an export hub for livestock and marine products to meat and fish deficit countries of the Region and the Government request for FAO support to enhance the country's capabilities to meet the import requirements of the Middle East countries in terms of quantity, quality and safety.

60. Delegates called on FAO and ICARDA to strengthen their collaboration in order to link research with development by enhancing extension services and supporting a broader concept of rural advisory services that involves Civil Society Organizations and the private sector for the scaling up of research outputs and translating them into innovations. Delegates also requested for capacity development and for facilitating access to innovative technologies and practices affordable to smallholders in the region in order to address agricultural development and food security challenges.

61. The Conference recommended to FAO to return back the agricultural extension post that has been abolished in the Regional Office for the Near East.

A. Multi-year Program of Work 2012-15 for the FAO Regional Conference for Near East

62. The Conference reviewed and approved the draft Multi-year Program of Work (MYPOW) 2012-15 for the FAO Regional Conference for Near East.

B. Side events and signing of cooperation agreements with FAO

63. Four side events were organized in connection with the Near East Regional Conference on: Establishing a Regional Trust Fund to advance food security; Mapping Food Security and Nutrition Actions at Country Level; ICARDA/FAO Cooperation; and National Plan for afforestation and Reforestation of Lebanon.

64. The Conference took note and supported the idea of Establishing a Regional Trust Fund to advance food security.

65. Two cooperation agreements for technical assistance were signed during the Conference with FAO: Saudi Arabia for USD 66.7 million and Libya for USD 71 million.

C. Declaration

66. The Conference declared its full support for the work of FAO in reducing hunger and improving food and nutritional security in the Near East Region and worldwide, and to the Strategic Thinking Process and decentralization launched by the Director-General to increase FAO impact at country level.

67. The Conference declared its commitment to work with FAO on its critical mandate and to engage with civil society, the private sector and other partners in this effort.

68. The Conference re-affirmed its commitment to mobilize resources to help countries address regional priorities and, taking note of the Director-General's proposal for establishing a regional Trust Fund, called on FAO to assist in developing this proposal taking into account the needs of the countries and the recent developments in the region.

D. Concluding Items

Date and place of the Thirty-second FAO Regional Conference for the Near East

69. The Conference welcomed the proposal of the Government of Iraq to host the 32nd Session of NERC in 2014 and requested the Director-General of FAO to consider this proposal when deciding on the date and venue of the next Session in consultation with member Governments in the Region.

Adoption of the Report

70. The Meeting adopted the report of the Conference after introducing some amendments.

Closure of the Conference

71. Upon conclusion of the Ministerial meeting, the Chairperson, HE Minister for Agriculture in Iraq presented the Declaration unanimously adopted by the participating countries. The Near East Group Leader for Country representatives thanked all delegates for the active participation and pragmatic recommendations made and indicated that it is time for action. Mr. Jose Graziano da Silva, Director-General of FAO, thanked all participants and indicated that the Conference ended with consensus to move forward, and reconfirmed FAO commitment to support Member countries to achieve food security. He also indicated that the declaration signed and the side event on the Regional Trust Fund are further testimony of this commitment. The Minister of Agriculture, Republic of Iraq, thanked all the delegations for their deliberations and participation in the Meeting, and the Director-General of FAO for addressing both inaugural and closing sessions of the Conference and confirmed support of the Conference to the initiatives of the Director-General to enhance FAO efficiency and effectiveness. He also thanked FAO and its Regional Office and the Conference Secretariat for preparing the documents and for the good preparation and smooth running of the Meeting.

72. H.E. the Minister of Agriculture, Republic of Iraq declared the Meeting closed at 11:00 am, on 18 May 2012.

Appendix A

Agenda

I. Introductory Items

1. Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons, and appointment of Rapporteur
2. Adoption of Agenda and Timetable
3. Statement by the Director-General
4. Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council
5. Statement by the Chairperson of the 30th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East
6. Statement by the Chairperson of the CFS

II. Regional and Global Policy and Regulatory Issues

7. Food Loss Prevention for Improving Food Security in the Near East
8. Actions to Adapt to and Mitigate Climate Change Impacts on Natural Resources: the Case of Fisheries and Aquaculture and Forestry and Livestock, in the Near East
9. Multi-stakeholder dialogue on Global Strategy Framework for Food Security and Nutrition, including the outcome of the Multi-stakeholder Consultation in the Near East

III. Programme and Budget Matters

10. FAO Activities in the Region in 2010-11, Programme of Work and Budget 2012-13 and Areas of Priority Actions for the Near East Region for the Following Biennium
11. Decentralization Issues, including the Coverage of the Near East Regional Office, and the Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices in the Near East

IV. Other Matters

12. Multi-year Programme of Work 2012-15 for the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East.
13. Date and Place of the 32nd Regional Conference for the Near East
14. Any other matters

Appendix B

List of Documents

NERC/12/1	Provisional Annotated Agenda
NERC/12/2	FAO activities in the Region in 2010-2011, Programme of Work and Budget 2012-2013 & areas of priority actions for the Near East Region for the following biennium
NERC/12/3	Decentralization issues, including the coverage of the Near East Office and the Plan of Action for the implementation of the recommendations of the Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Sub-regional Offices in the Near East
NERC/12/4	Food loss prevention for improving food security in the Near East
NERC/12/5	Actions to adapt to and mitigate climate change impacts on natural resources: the case of fisheries and aquaculture, forestry and livestock in the Near East
NERC/12/6	Multi-year Programme of Work 2012-15 (MYPOW) for the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East

INF SERIES:

NERC/12/INF/1	Information Note
NERC/12/INF/2	Provisional Timetable
NERC/12/INF/3	Provisional List of Documents
NERC/12/INF/4	Statement by the Director-General
NERC/12/INF/5	Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council
NERC/12/INF/6	Statement by the Chairperson of the 30 th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East
NERC/12/INF/7	Contribution of natural resources in forests and ranges in food security: programmes, policies and good governance
NERC/12/INF/8	Developing a regional strategy to improve agricultural statistics in the Near East Region
NERC/12/INF/9	Global trends and future challenges for the work of the Organization
NERC/12/INF/10	Reducing the negative impact of desertification on agricultural production
NERC/12/INF/11	Summary of the recommendations of Regional Commissions in the Near East on i) the policy and regulatory matters and ii) programme and budget matters
NERC/12/INF/12	FAO Renewal – transition to a more dynamic approach in 2012
NERC/12/INF/13	Committee on World Food Security: CFS in the 2012 FAO Regional Conferences – guidelines
NERC/12/INF/14	Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition – first draft
NERC/12/INF/15	Update on the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

CFS 2011 – Series

CFS: 2011/7	Mapping food security and nutrition actions at country level
CFS/2011/Inf.19	Regional multi-stakeholder workshop on food security and nutrition in the Near East

OD SERIES:

NERC/12/OD1 Order of the Day

NERC/12/OD2 Order of the Day

NERC/12/OD3 Order of the Day

NERC/12/OD4 Order of the Day

NERC/12/OD5 Order of the Day

Web Documents:

- List of Participants and Observers
- Statement by the Director-General
- Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council
- Statement by the Chairperson of the 30th Session of FAO Regional Conference for the Near East
- Statement by the CFS Chairperson on the outcomes of the 37th Session of the Committee on World Food Security and update of the CFS reform
- Declaration of the 31st Session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East