

Press Release on

**Meeting for the Official Launching of the Near East and North Africa
Regional Network for Agricultural Policies (NENARNAP).**

15 to 17 December 2003, Amman, Jordan

The FAO Regional Office for the Near East, in collaboration with the Jordanian Ministry of Agriculture held a meeting on the 15 to 17 December 2003, in Amman, Jordan for the Official Launching of the Near East and North Africa Regional Network for Agricultural Policies (NENARNAP).

On behalf of the undersecretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Eng Ibrahim AbouEitalah, the technical affairs assistant, inaugurated the meeting. The meeting was held in Amman at the Crown Plaza Hotel during the period 15 to 17 December 2003. The opening session started with an introductory statement by Dr. Ahmed ElMiniawy, the FAO representative in Jordan. This was followed by a statement of Eng. Ibrahim AbouEitalah, the technical affairs assistant to Secretary General of the Ministry of agriculture in Jordan.

The meeting was attended by representatives from Ministries of Agriculture from 12 of the Near East and North Africa members including Jordan, the host country, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.

The overall NENARNAP Network objective is to support the efforts of member countries to achieve sustainable agricultural development through the adoption of economically viable, environmentally sound and socially acceptable agricultural policies. The immediate objectives of the Network are to enhance capabilities of policy analysts, practitioners and institutions in member countries; and to collect, document, synthesize, exchange and disseminate information on agricultural policy experiences on a regular basis among Network members.

After a lengthy review and discussions, the Meeting adopted of the draft by-laws prepared by FAO, unanimously agreed that the Executive Committee would be composed of representatives of Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Oman and Tunisia and also agreed that the Secretariat of the Network shall be temporarily hosted by the FAO Regional Office in Cairo, Egypt, for the first four years following its formal establishment, renewable upon the request of the governing body of the network.

The Meeting accepted the generous invitation from the representative of Syria to hold the first biennial General Conference of the Network in Damascus, tentatively towards the end of 2005.

The Meeting also accepted the generous invitation from the representative of Tunisia to hold the next technical meeting in Tunisia tentatively towards the end of 2004. The participants agreed on a short list of potential topics/themes to be addressed by this technical meeting and requested FAO (as the Secretariat) to initiate preparations for the holding of this meeting in close consultation with the Executive Committee. It was also decided that the first annual meeting of the Executive Committee will be held in Tunisia concurrently with the technical meeting.

The representative of Oman expressed the readiness of his country to host a training workshop on policy-related issues to be organized by FAO under the umbrella of the Network, in the event that FAO decides to hold such a workshop. The Meeting requested FAO to develop the specific topic and details of such a training course in close consultation with the Executive Committee.

The Policy Assistance Branch of the FAO Regional Office in Cairo agreed to continue using its limited regular programme funds to support the above mentioned activities. It also agreed to take immediate steps to establish an electronic mail list to initiate the exchange of information and ideas among all Network members. FAO will also prepare an information letter about the Network and its planned activities to be sent to all FAO member countries in the Region as well as to interested regional and international institutions. In addition, FAO will finalize a project document to be submitted to potential donor agencies for possible funding of the Network and its activities.