

**ALAWUC/NE/00/REP**  
**March 2000**

**REPORT OF THE**

**FIRST SESSION OF AGRICULTURE, LAND AND**

**WATER USE COMMISSION FOR THE NEAR EAST**

**REGION (ALAWUC)**

**Beirut, Lebanon**  
**25-27 March 2000**

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

**Cairo - March 2000**

## **LIST OF ALAWUC MEMBER COUNTRIES**

**AFGHANISTAN  
BAHRAIN  
CYPRUS  
EGYPT  
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JORDAN  
KUWAIT  
LEBANON  
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OMAN  
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SAUDI ARABIA  
SUDAN  
SYRIA  
TUNISIA  
TURKEY  
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES  
YEMEN**

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## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations made by the First Session on Agriculture, Land and Water Use Commission for the Near East (ALAWUC) were as follows:

### Community Participation in the Management and Control of Desertification in Range Development Programme in the Near East Region

A.1 The Commission **called** upon Member Countries to:

revive traditional management institutions that were effective in conserving the resources in the past and introduce required changes and procedure in line with present conditions, OR create modern institutions with similar functions for the restoration of pastoral people's control over land resources;

delegate decision-making and planning authority to local administrative levels; in their areas; and

develop a framework to minimize the constraints of facing the participation of local communities, development agencies and NGOs.

A.2. The Commission **requested** FAO to:

develop guidelines on methods for application of participatory approaches for the development of natural resources with particular emphasis on rangeland development programmes; and

assist countries of the Region to develop and establish regional/sub-regional pilot rangeland development programmes/projects and networks using models of participatory approaches.

### **B) Water Policy Reform in the Near East: A Framework for Implementation**

B.1. The Commission, while underlining the importance of the subject, and giving high priority for its follow-up, noted that some of issues of water policy reform in the document were beyond the competence and authority of its participants. As a consequence, it was unanimously **agreed to**:

*First:* Revise the Document in line with the relevant observation of 24<sup>th</sup> FAO Regional Conference, held in Damascus, Syria 1998.

*Second:* Present the revised document in future ALAWUC meetings after sending it six months in advance to member countries which should provide in writing their views to the Secretariat for synthesization and presentation to the future Commission Meetings.

**C) Plant Nutrition Management for Intensification of Food Production in the Near East Region**

C.1. The Commission **called upon** Member Countries to:

- conduct long term field trials and establish demonstration plots on integrated plant nutrition systems and balanced fertilization on various crops, particularly in rainfed farming;
- monitor and adopt standards of sustainable fertilizer production in their respected countries, according to the “ISO 14000 series of environmental management standards”, in order to follow-up and evaluate the environmental impact of fertilizer use on soil and water in line with the environment impact assessment (EIA); in collaboration with concerned regional and international organizations;
- prepare guidelines, in collaboration with UNDO and UNEP, for uniform safety regulations for production, storage, transport and application of fertilizers, including the establishment of national and regional multi-disciplinary committees to ensure the proper adherence to these safety rules; and to mobilize funds from fertilizer producers to support research programmes towards the optimization of fertilizers efficiency;
- strengthen and develop appropriate training programme for farmers on sustainable fertilizers/use through improved extension services within the concept of the integrated plant nutrition system (IPNS); and
- provide all possible support to extension and applied fertilizer research, in collaboration with fertilizer producers for efficient and safe management of plant nutrients.

C.2. The Commission **requested** FAO to:

- continue furnishing, whenever possible, member countries with policy advice, guidelines for exchange of information and technical assistance on land, water and plant nutrient management;
- assist member countries in the preparation of a regional project to harmonize data and information on fertilizer and other plant nutrients use for developing fertilizer quality standards with the objective of enabling member countries to approach interested donor for funding; and
- provide assistance to member countries in investigating

crop responses to fertilizers including dryland farming and balanced fertilization within the Integrated Plant Nutrition Management with particular attention to encouragement of use of liquid and slow-release fertilizers.

**D) Actions for Increased Effectiveness and Sustainability of ALAWUC**

**D.1 Effective participation of Member Countries in ALAWUC.**

Noting the low participation of member countries in previous commissions including the present one, the Commission **urged** member governments to have adequate and effective participation by ensuring the attendance of the required type and number of country representative in the commission meetings including representatives of the Ministry of Irrigation and Water, whenever applicable.

**D.2 Follow-up of the Recommendations of the Commission**

- The Commission **recommended** the establishment of follow-up committee for monitoring the activities of ALAWUC particularly the preparation for meetings. The committee is to be composed of the FAO Secretariat and members from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The Committee members will pay for the cost of their travel and DSA for any meeting called for this purpose.
- In addition to the report on Action Taken by FAO on the recommendations of the last commission meeting, the Commission **recommended** that member countries prepare and present a written report on action taken on the recommendations of the previous meeting which are of concern to them. This report is to be prepared on the basis of a uniform guideline to be prepared by FAO.

**D.3 Deepening the Interaction and Involvement between the Commission and Member Countries**

- The Commission **requested**, FAO to prepare the main working documents on the basis of country papers that are to be prepared by member countries.
- To **call upon** member governments to appoint a permanent focal point to co-ordinate with the Commission at local level in matters relating to follow-up, delivery of invitations and working documents and other related matters.
- The Commission **recommended** that ALAWUC meeting to be held immediately before the FAO Near East Regional Conference in line with FAO decision

on this matter. In future, the Commission **recommended** that NERC should give consideration to presentation and adoption of the Commission Report by NERC Conference.

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#### D.4 Broadening Participation in the Commission

In line with the economic changes and the adopted general guidelines and directives of member countries and FAO, the Commission **recommended** that the private sector, NGO and other concerned civil institutions be invited to its meetings. It also **recommended** that the media information officers, who are closely concerned with agricultural, water and environmental issues in member countries, be also invited, whenever possible.

##### **E) Subjects for Discussion at the Next Session**

The Commission considered various topics for discussion for the next Session of ALAWUC and **recommended** that the Agenda Items of the forthcoming session to be selected from the following topics:

- Long-term Integrated Plans for Management of Droughts and Minimization of their Impact.
- Land and Water Resources Conservation and Management – Lessons Learnt.
- Management of Low Quality Water and its Environmental Impact.

Comprehensive Livestock Development Programmes for Improving Food Security in the Near East.



## **I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS**

### **Organization of the Commission**

1. The First Session of the FAO Agriculture, Land and Water Use Commission for the Near East was held in Beirut, Lebanon, from 25 to 27 March 2000, at the kind invitation of the Government of the Republic of Lebanon. The Commission was attended by 35 persons from 12 member countries and 14 observers. The list of participant is given as Appendix B of this report.

### **Inaugural Ceremony**

2. The Commission was inaugurated on behalf of FAO by Mr. Zohair Mubarak Abdalla who welcomed the participants conveying the wishes of the FAO Director-General Mr. Jacques Diouf and Mr. Atif Bukhari, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for the Near East for a successful meeting. He expressed his thanks and appreciation for all assistance provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, Co-operatives and Housing.

3. Mr. Abdalla indicated the significant importance of the newly founded Commission resulting from the merger of the defunct Near East Commission of Agriculture (COAG) and Near East Commission for Land and Water Use (LWUC). He drew the attention of member countries to the need for discussions and recommendations relating to effective means for making ALAWUC most useful and sustainable.

4. Mr. Abdalla went on to stress the importance of the topics selected for discussion and hoped that the participants would reach operable recommendations for the mutual benefits of all member countries.

5. Mr. Samir Abu Jawdeh on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Co-operatives and Housing welcomed the participants and expressed his thanks for holding the Commission in his country. He briefed the meeting on the situation of agriculture in Lebanon, constraints faced and progress achieved. He emphasized the relevance and importance of the topics of the agenda in furthering agriculture and rural development, and food security while optimizing the use of natural and human resources in an environment friendly atmosphere. He expressed his hope that he meeting would reach practical recommendations which could be of help to national and regional efforts for the development of agriculture in general and the fields under discussion in particular.

### **Election of Chairman, Vice Chairman and Appointment of Rapporteur**

6. The Commission unanimously elected Mr. Samir Abu Jawdeh, Head of the Lebanese Delegation as its Chairman. All other heads of delegations were elected as Vice-Chairmen. Mr. Bader Allawi from Iraq was appointed as Rapporteur.

### **Adoption of the Agenda**

7. The Commission considered and adopted the Provisional Agenda and Provisional Timetable (Appendix A) after moving to put document ALAWUC/NE/00/INF/3 as an item for discussion.

## **II. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION**

### **Action Taken on the Recommendations of the Last Land and Water Use Commission for the Near East**

8. The document ALAWUC/NE/00/INF/3 on *Action Taken by FAO on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Last Near East LWUC* was presented. The Commission commended FAO and the Regional Office for the Near East for actions taken in implementations of the recommendations of the previous session of Land and Water Commission LWUC/NE.

9. The Commission emphasized the need to address the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of irrigation schemes. The Commission further recognized the importance of establishing a regional network for research and management of water use in agriculture, including the use of low quality water.

10. The Commission stressed the need for strengthening the cooperation among national, regional and international organizations and centres on land and water use and management.

### **Community Participation in the Management and Control of Desertification in Range Development Programme in the Near East Region**

11. The Commission considered Document ALAWUC/NE/00/2, entitled *Community Participation in the Management and Control of Desertification in Range Development Programmes in the Near East Region*, which outlined the main issues, dynamics and constraints to community participation in rangelands development, and application of community participation.

12. The Commission recognized the urgency of halting the degradation of natural resources, and the necessity of continuing rehabilitation in order to preserve about 500 million ha of permanent pasture and 300 million ha of desert lands that provide the means of livelihood for over thirty million pastoralists.

13. The Commission noted that most range development projects in the Region recognized technical interventions, without due attention to the prevailing socio-economic conditions affecting the targeted communities. Therefore, it emphasized that sustainable rehabilitation of the rangelands would necessitate the involvement and participation of the pastoralists themselves in all stages of rehabilitation process.

14. The Commission noted also the growing trend to devolve the responsibility for range rehabilitation and desertification control to the pastoral communities and emphasized the need for focusing the development assistance in a manner that enhances participatory development.

15. The Commission recognized the necessity of adopting holistic and participatory approaches to ensure efficiency and sustainability of the rehabilitation efforts.

16. The Commission **called upon** Member Countries to:

- revive traditional management institutions that were effective in conserving the resources in the past and introduce required changes and procedure in line with present conditions, OR create modern institutions with similar functions for the restoration of pastoral people's control over land resources;
  - delegate decision-making and planning authority to local administrative levels in their areas; and
  - develop a framework to minimize the constraints of facing the participation of local communities, development agencies and NGOs.

17. The Commission **requested** FAO to:

- develop guidelines on methods for application of participatory approaches for the development of natural resources with particular emphasis on rangeland development programmes; and
- assist countries of the Region to develop and establish regional/sub-regional pilot rangeland development programmes/projects and networks using models of participatory approaches.

### **Water Policy Reform in the Near East: A Framework for Implementation**

18. ALAWUC/NE/00/3 on, *Water Policy Reform in the Near East: A Framework for Implementation*, was presented providing a summary of the conclusions and recommendations of three “*Expert Consultations on National Water policy Reform in the Near East*”, based on previous water policy reports prepared by water policy experts from 21 member countries in the Region.

19. The Commission, while underlining the importance of the subject, and giving high priority for its follow-up, noted that some of the issues of water policy reform in the document were beyond the competence and authority of its participants'. As a consequence, it was unanimously **agreed**, that:

*First:* Revise the Document in line with the relevant observations of 24<sup>th</sup> FAO Regional Conference, held in Damascus, Syria 1998.

*Second:* Present the revised document in future ALAWUC meetings after sending it six months in advance to member countries which should provide in writing their views to the Secretariat for synthesization and presentation to the future Commission Meetings.

## **Plant Nutrition Management for Intensification of Food Production in the Near East Region**

20. The Commission reviewed the document ALAWUC/NE/00/4 titled *Plant Nutrition Management for Intensification of Food Production in the Near East*. It noted the seriousness of soil degradation situation in the Region, which is suffering from limitation of arable land and fresh water resources. It recognized the need for sustainable increase in food production for achieving household food security particularly in resource poor areas of the Near East.

21. The Commission noted that the improper land-use and management, over-cultivation, inappropriate input use and physical, chemical and biological land and water degradation were among the causes for serious environmental problems and the decline in productivity, especially in countries or areas subjected to increased population pressure on limited and fragile lands. The Commission also expressed its appreciation to the efforts made by FAO and other organizations in identifying practical actions to ensure environmental friendly and safe use of fertilizers for increasing agricultural productivity. The Commission also noted with satisfaction the important role played by FAO in supplying member states with valuable information and guidelines on fertilizers and their efficient use and in establishing fora for exchange of information and experiences among fertilizers producers and member states with the aim of sustainable intensification of agriculture at national and regional levels.

22. The Commission **called upon** member Countries to:

- conduct long term field trials and establish demonstration plots on integrated plant nutrition systems and balanced fertilization on various crops, particularly in rainfed farming;
- monitor and adopt standards of sustainable fertilizer production in their respected countries, according to the ISO 14000 series of environmental management standards, and follow-up and evaluate the environmental impact of fertilizer use on soil and water in line with the environment impact assessment (EIA); in collaboration with concerned regional and international organizations.
- prepare guidelines, in collaboration with UNDO and UNEP, for uniform safety regulations for production, storage, transport and application of fertilizers, including the establishment of national and regional multi-disciplinary committees to ensure the proper adherence to these safety rules; and to mobilize funds from fertilizer producers to support research programmes towards the optimization of fertilizers efficiency;
- strengthen and develop appropriate training programme for farmers on sustainable fertilizers/use through improved extension services within the concept of the integrated plant nutrition system (IPNS); and
- provide all possible support to extension and applied fertilizer research, in collaboration with fertilizer producers for efficient and safe management of plant nutrients.

23. The Commission **requested** FAO to:

- continue furnishing, whenever possible, member countries with policy advice, guidelines for exchange of information and technical assistance on land, water and plant nutrient management;
- assist member countries in the preparation of a regional project document to harmonize data and information on fertilizer and other plant nutrients use for developing fertilizer quality standards with the objective of enabling member countries to approach interested donor for funding; and
- provide assistance to member countries in investigating crop responses to fertilizers including dryland farming and balanced fertilization within the integrated plant nutrition management with particular attention to encouragement of the use of liquid and slow-release fertilizers.

### III. CONCLUDING ITEMS

#### **Information Note**

##### ***Urban Food Security and Food Marketing in the Near East***

24. The Commission took note of the Document ALAWUC/NE/00/INF/5, titled ***Urban Food Security and Food Marketing in the Near East***.

#### **Any Other Business**

##### ***Actions for Increased Effectiveness and sustainability of ALAWUC***

25. The Secretary emphasized that the success of the Commission would greatly depend on the interest of its members, their active participation in its meetings and formulation of well-designed programmes that satisfy member countries' needs. He requested member countries to discuss this issue and provide practical recommendations for effective operation of ALAWUC. The Commission formulated a working group composed of the Secretariat and four member countries (Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan) to study the most effective ways of ensuring the efficiency and sustainability of ALAWUC. The working group after careful consideration, presented to the Commission a number of proposals. After lengthy and fruitful discussion, the following recommendations were **adopted** by the Commission:

#### A. **Effective participation of Member Countries in ALAWUC.**

Noting the low participation of member countries in previous commissions including the present one, the Commission **urged** member governments to have adequate and effective participation by ensuring the attendance of the required type and number of country representative in the commission meetings including representatives of the Ministry of Irrigation and Water, whenever applicable.

B. Follow-up of the Recommendations of the Commission

- The Commission **recommended** the establishment of follow-up committee for monitoring the activities of ALAWUC particularly the preparation for meetings. The committee is to be composed of the FAO Secretariat and members from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The Committee members will pay for the cost of their travel and DSA for any meeting called for this purpose.
- In addition to the report on Action Taken by FAO on the recommendations of the last commission meeting, the Commission **recommended** that member countries prepare and present a written report on action taken on the recommendations of the previous meeting which are of concern to them. This report is to be prepared on the basis of a uniform guideline to be prepared by FAO.

C. Deepening the Interaction and Involvement between the Commission and Member Countries

- The Commission **requested**, FAO to prepare the main working documents on the basis of country papers that are to be prepared by member countries.
- The Commission **called upon** member governments to appoint a permanent focal point to co-ordinate with the Commission at local level in matters relating to follow-up, delivery of invitations and working documents and other related matters.
- The Commission **recommended** that ALAWUC meeting to be held immediately before the FAO Near East Regional Conference in line with FAO decision on this matter. In future, the Commission **recommended** that NERC should give consideration to presentation and adoption of the Commission Report by NERC Conference.

D. Broadening Participation in the Commission

In line with the economic changes and the adopted general guidelines and directives of member countries and FAO, the Commission **recommended** that the private sector, NGO and other concerned civil institutions be invited to its meetings. It also **recommended** that the media information officers, who are closely concerned with agricultural, water and environmental issues in member countries be also invited, whenever possible.

**Subjects for Discussion at the Next Session**

26. The Commission considered various topics for discussion for the next Session of ALAWUC and **recommended** that the Agenda Items of the forthcoming session to be selected from the following topics:

- Long-term Integrated Plans for Management of Droughts  
Minimization of its Impact.

- Land and Water Resources Conservation and Management – Lessons Learnt.
- Management of Low Quality Water and its Environmental Impact.
- Comprehensive for Livestock Development for Improving Food Security in the Near East.

### **Date and Place of the Second Session**

27. Since it is a standing FAO decision that the Meeting of ALAWUC be held back-to-back with the Regional Near East Conference, therefore, the date and venue of the 2<sup>nd</sup> session would be specified and relayed to member countries once the date and venue of the next FAO Near East Conference is decided.

### **Adoption of the Report**

28. The Commission adopted the report after introducing minor amendments.

### **Closure of the Session**

29. The Secretary of the Commission, Mr. Zohair Abdalla, thanked the delegates and observers for their useful deliberations and contributions. He also thanked the Chairman for ably conducting the Session, the Rapporteur for preparing the report, the interpreters for potently providing an excellent job and to Savoy Hotel management for providing good facilities and services. He once again expressed his appreciation to the Lebanese Government and Ministry of Agriculture, particularly the Green Plan Project for all assistance provided. He further indicated that the FAO Regional Office would as usual take the recommendations of the Commission in consideration when preparing its future work programme for the Region.

30. Mr. Samir Abu-Judah, the Chairman of 1<sup>st</sup> Session thanked the Rapporteur and FAO Secretariat for producing a well-structured and coherent report, which reflected the deliberation of the Session and contained distinct recommendations addressed to member countries and FAO. He also thanked FAO Secretariat for well-organized meeting, well prepared documents and excellent arrangements made for effecting this meeting to its successful conclusions.

31. The Chairman after wishing all participants safe journey home declared the Session closed at 12.00 hrs. on 27 March 2000.

**AGENDA**

**I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS**

1. Opening of the Session
2. Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Appointment of the Rapporteur
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

**II. SELECTED ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO THE REGION**

4. Action taken by FAO on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the last Near East Land and Water Use Commission
5. Community Participation in the Management and Control of Desertification in Range Development Programme in the Near East Region
6. Water Policy Reform in the Near East: A Framework for Implementation
7. Urban Food Security and Food Marketing in the Near East
8. Plant Nutrition Management for Intensification of Food Production in the Near East Region

**III. CONCLUDING ITEMS**

9. Other business
10. Proposed Subjects for discussion at the Second Session of ALAWUC
11. Adoption of the Report
12. Closure of the Session

**APPENDIX B**

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**APPENDIX C**

## LIST OF DOCUMENTS

ALAWUC/NE/00/1	Provisional Agenda
3/00/2	Community Participation in the Management and Control of Desertification in Range Development Programme in the Near East Region
3/00/3	Water Policy Reform in the Near East: A Framework for Implementation
3/00/4	Plant Nutrition Management for Intensification of Food Production in the Near East Region
3/00/INF/1	Information Note
3/00/INF/2	Provisional Timetable
3/00/INF/3	Report on Action Taken by FAO on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the last Near East Land and Water Use Commission
3/00/INF/4	Provisional List of Documents
3/00/INF/5	Urban Food Security and Food Marketing in the Near East