## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A common framework for FAO action</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO Strategic Framework:</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Programme Priority Areas (PPAs)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members guiding regional action: The Near East Regional Conference, 36th Session (NERC 36)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Priority 1: Rural transformation and inclusive value chains</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENA Agrifood Innovation Days</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Digital Villages Initiative</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations Decade on Family Farming</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advancing Extension and Rural Advisory Services</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advancing agribusiness through empowering women and youth</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Priority 2: Food security and healthy diets for all</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Country One Priority Product Initiative</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing agriculture to achieve food security</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Network of Experts on Agricultural Trade</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transforming agrifood systems to ensure food security and nutrition</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards healthy diets for all</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building capacities to prevent, reduce and manage food loss and waste</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Priority 3: Greening agriculture, water scarcity, and climate action</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable management of water and land resources</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change actions</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Transformation in Fisheries and Aquaculture</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Priority 4: Building resilience to multiple shocks</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable management of transboundary plant pests</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreaming Gender Equality</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO’s commitment to mainstream gender equality and beyond</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Programme Highlights</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications (January-June 2022)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Number of households targeted under cash-based interventions from January to June 2022

FIGURES

Figure 1: Contribution to Regional Priorities (number of projects and budgets)
Figure 2: Resource mobilization trend in the first half of the year (2017–2022)
Figure 3: Contributions of Resource Partners (January–June 2022)
Figure 4: Delivery trend (1 January–31 May 2015–2022 in USD million)
FOREWORD

This report presents a summary of the main highlights and results achieved by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region from January to June 2022.

The report is organized according to the four regional priorities:

1. Rural transformation and inclusive value chains,
2. Food security and healthy diets for all,
3. Greening agriculture, water scarcity, and climate action, and
4. Building resilience to multiple shocks.

Endorsed by the 36th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East, these four Regional Priorities, are the result of extensive consultations with countries and regional stakeholders in an effort to bridge country demands and global issues under a regional umbrella, focusing on challenges best tackled at the regional level. They ensure that regional specificities are clearly reflected in FAO’s work on priority issues such as nutrition, climate change and Sustainable Development Goals, and provide a good basis for FAO to develop partnerships and facilitate resource mobilization.

The work done by FAO in the region focuses on supporting countries in transforming their agrifood systems and accelerating the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This will be achieved by addressing the four Regional Priorities (RPs) using the 20 Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) of FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031.

Abdulhakim Elwaer
Assistant Director-General/ Regional Representative – FAO
Near East and North Africa Region
A COMMON FRAMEWORK FOR FAO ACTION

The Strategic Framework 2022-2031 has been developed in the context of major global and regional challenges in the areas of FAO’s mandate. It seeks to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable, agrifood systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind.

The four betters represent an organising principle for how FAO intends to contribute directly to SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger), and SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) as well as to supporting achievement of the broader SDG agenda. The betters reflect the interconnected economic, social and environmental dimensions of agrifood systems.

Twenty Programme Priority Areas guide the programmes that FAO will implement under the four betters in order to fill critical gaps and contribute to the achievement of the selected SDG targets. Programme Priority Areas are formulated as inter-disciplinary, issue-based technical themes, representing FAO’s strategic contribution to specific SDG targets and indicators.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PPA</th>
<th>Outcome Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BETTER PRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, through efficient and inclusive food and agriculture supply chains at local, regional and global level, ensuring resilient and sustainable agrifood systems in a changing climate and environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>BP1: Innovation for sustainable agriculture production</td>
<td>Sustainable crop, livestock and forestry production systems that are productive, resilient, innovative and competitive, and create integrated entrepreneurial and business opportunities, inclusive of small scale and vulnerable producers, supported through enabling technologies and policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BP2: Blue transformation</td>
<td>More efficient, inclusive resilient and sustainable blue food systems promoted through improved policies and programmes for integrated science-based management, technological innovation and private-sector engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BP3: One Health</td>
<td>Strengthened and better performing national and international integrated One Health systems for human, animal, plant and environmental health achieved through improved pest and disease prevention, early warning and management of national and global health risks, including AMR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BP4: Small-scale producers’ equitable access to resources</td>
<td>Enhanced equitable access of small-scale producers and family farmers to economic and natural resources, markets, services, information, education and technologies ensured through improved policies, strategies and programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BP5: Digital agriculture</td>
<td>Accessible digital ICT technologies to enhance market opportunities, productivity and resilience integrated into agrifood systems policies and programmes, with particular focus on ensuring affordable and equitable access of poor and vulnerable rural communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BETTER NUTRITION</strong></td>
<td>End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition in all its forms, including promoting nutritious food and increasing access to healthy diets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BN1: Healthy diets for all</td>
<td>The right to adequate food established and transition towards healthy diets for national populations prioritized in integrated institutional, policy and legal environments that ensure and incentivize engagement of consumers and the private sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BN2: Nutrition for the most vulnerable</td>
<td>Identifying and ending food insecurity and malnutrition for the most vulnerable individuals in all contexts made the specific focus of targeted policies, strategies and programmes developed and implemented by countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BN3: Safe food for everyone</td>
<td>Integrated, multi-sectoral food safety policies and legislation across national agrifood systems adopted and implemented by governments, and capacities and awareness of value chain operators and consumers enhanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BN4: Reducing food loss and waste</td>
<td>Clear, specific and contextualized roadmaps to prompt and enable all actors in the food supply chain, the food environment and at consumer level to reduce food loss and waste put in place and implemented by governments and intergovernmental organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BN5: Transparent markets and trade</td>
<td>Improved market transparency and equitable participation in markets, global value chains and international trade achieved through policy coordination and human and institutional capacities for evidence-based decision-making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### BETTER ENVIRONMENT

**BE1: Climate change mitigating and adapted agrifood systems**
Transformation and resilience of agrifood systems to achieve sustainability and Paris Agreement goals enabled through the establishment and implementation of climate-smart agricultural practices, policies and programmes.

**BE2: Bioeconomy for sustainable food and agriculture**
A bioeconomy that balances economic value and social welfare with environmental sustainability promoted through formulation and implementation of integrated evidence-based policies and practices in micro and macro environments, using technological, organizational and social innovations.

**BE3: Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture**
Biodiversity for food and agriculture maintained and sustainable use, conservation and restoration of marine, terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, and their services promoted through adoption of targeted policies and practices.

**BE4: Achieving sustainable urban food systems**
More efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable urban and peri-urban agrifood systems transformation that addresses urban poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, enables healthy diets and catalyses inclusive and sustainable rural transformation, promoted through the adoption of supportive policies and programmes, and the initiation and scaling-up of actions and investments by national and local stakeholders.

### BETTER LIFE

**BL1: Gender equality and rural women’s empowerment**
Women’s equal rights, access to, and control over resources, services, technologies, institutions, economic opportunities and decision-making ensured, and discriminatory laws and practices eliminated, through gender-responsive policies, strategies, programmes and legal frameworks.

**BL2: Inclusive rural transformation**
Inclusive rural transformation and revitalization of rural areas ensuring equal participation of, and benefits to poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups accelerated through implementation of targeted policies, strategies and programmes.

**BL3: Agriculture and food emergencies**
Countries facing, or at risk of acute food insecurity provided with urgent livelihood and nutrition assistance and, adopting a humanitarian-development nexus and its contribution to peace approach, their populations equipped with appropriate capacities to better withstand and manage future shocks and risks.

**BL4: Resilient agrifood systems**
Resilience of agrifood systems and livelihoods to socio-economic and environmental shocks and stresses strengthened through improved multi-risk understanding and effective governance mechanisms for implementation of vulnerability reduction measures.

**BL5: Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative**
Agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development accelerated through targeting the poorest and the hungry, differentiating territories and strategies, and bringing together all relevant dimensions of agrifood systems through analysis and partnerships.

**BL6: Scaling up investment**
Transformation towards sustainable agrifood systems with large-scale impacts on reducing inequalities and eradicating poverty and hunger accelerated through increased public and private investment, and improved capacities to leverage future investments.
MEMBERS GUIDING REGIONAL ACTION: THE NEAR EAST REGIONAL CONFERENCE, 36th SESSION (NERC 36)
RECOVER AND RESTART

Innovations for better, greener, and more resilient agrifood systems to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

The Near East Regional Conference (NERC) is a regional policy dialogue held every two years to gather NENA Member States to discuss key issues and establish priorities for FAO in the region for the following two years.

NERC 36 was held in February 2022 in Baghdad, Iraq. It was the first conference in twelve years that physically took place in the region. The conference brought together 25 ministers (of which 12 were present) and provided a platform for discussion for 491 participants from 24 Member States.

Key highlights of NERC 36 discussions

1. The renewed centrality of food, and ways of food production, processing, trades and consumption;
2. Calling for peace and stability to combat hunger and poverty in the region;
3. Focusing on alleviating the risks faced by farmers, and investing in rural transformation for more productive agriculture.

Countries discussed concrete examples of approaches including insurance, social protection, subsidies, incentives and support services;

4. The fundamental role of women in food security and nutrition, and the need to empower them;
5. The importance of regional dialogue and collaboration in combating transboundary pests and diseases, addressing food and water security from a regional perspective, promoting trade for the benefit of all, and exchanging knowledge and good practices;
6. Developing regional knowledge and data platforms to benefit countries and support their decisions;
7. The urgency to develop strong partnerships with all food chain actors: the private sector, civil society, the consumers and the academic community, considering that the transformation of agrifood systems can only happen if all actors work together towards the same goals; and
8. Accelerating efforts to address extreme challenges facing the region such as water scarcity, climate change, and the degradation of the region’s ecosystems.
This priority focuses on enhancing productivity and income of small-scale farmers, focusing on youth employment, women empowerment and the development of inclusive value chains. It adopts an integrated approach focusing on boosting agricultural productivity, the promotion of decent rural employment and an inclusive economic growth that benefits farming communities in the region. For many people, particularly the young, the pull of urban areas is far stronger than that of rural areas. Thus, investing in rural areas, creating opportunities and reducing the imbalance between urban and rural areas can be a driver for rural economic growth, increasing production of healthy food, feeding cities and managing resources more effectively and sustainably.
Promoting innovation and digitalization across the region

The “MENA Agrifood Innovation Days” was a two-day event organized by the FAO Regional Office for Near East and North Africa (FAO-RNE) during the “Food for Future Summit”, an event organized by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment of the United Arab Emirates.

FAO was a strategic partner during the event and organized eight sessions on 23 – 24 February 2022. These included in-depth technical sessions on key topics, TED talk style presentations, an innovation fair showcasing success stories and innovative approaches to agrifood systems transformation, in addition to the high-level panels on trade, food security innovation and technology in the MENA region, and the implementation of the voluntary guidelines of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on food systems and nutrition. The technical sessions developed were based on the work planned by FAO-RNE for the organization of an Innovation Forum, initially scheduled for 2020 but postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
THE DIGITAL VILLAGES INITIATIVE
INSIGHTS ON IMPLEMENTATION

Fostering rural transformation through digitalization in the NENA region

FAO launched the corporate programme with the goal of converting at least 1 000 rural localities globally into digital village hubs in which a variety of ICT-based services will be offered. The Digital Villages Initiatives (DVI) is an integrated development vision that highlights digitalization at the core of rural transformation and prosperity, addressing farm and off-farm socio-economic elements. A pilot project was launched in five countries namely Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia.

Key achievements at the country level to date are:

Egypt

1. Delivery of a five-day training course on digital skills for 25 extension agents in Egypt (January 2022);
2. Introduction of a training course on the digital advisory content for citrus crops for 18 extension agents (May 2022);
3. Completion of a Facebook campaign promoting FAO’s digital app “El Mufeed in Food and Agriculture” in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, with a of total 1.162 million views (May 2022); and
4. An increase in the number of new users of “El Mufeed in Food and Agriculture” app by 69 percent in 2021, and 25 percent through the first five months of 2022.

Iraq

1. Finalizing the development process of the advisory content app “Al Rafidain for Agriculture Extension” through a participatory approach; and
2. Uploading all the content in Arabic, English, and Kurdish on the app and completing the training process of local extension personnel.

Jordan

1. Jordan introduced “Ma’ Al Muzare”, a mobile application developed by the National Agriculture Research Center (NARC) which offers five different services that change depending on the GPS location detected by the user’s device:
   - Animal husbandry;
   - Weather and crop calendar;
   - Harvest and postharvest;
   - Agri marketplace; and
   - Expert-to-farmer forum.
   The app contains information in the form of text and audio recordings, and is available in Arabic. The downloadable version is available offline.

2. The NARC Data Repository System was created to catalog and make its scientific reports publicly available. These reports provide farmers with direct access to the latest developments in agriculture, and facilitate knowledge transfer from NARC experts to users, research project outcomes and private sector experts.

3. The NARC e-Lab Automated System for Procedures and Test Results will ensure efficient
information flow with limited human error in collecting results from the lab testing machines. The system will automate data collection from labs and will be accessible via web-based and mobile applications.

4. The NARC e-Lab Services Mobile Application was created to provide users with direct, real-time recommendations and agricultural advice based on lab analysis results of their samples. The e-Lab digital system is connected directly with farmers through the Farmer Registry mobile application currently under development by the European Union Madad funded project.

Lebanon

1. The Farm records app was created as a simple way to assist farmers in calculating expenses, income and profit;
2. Rural Entrepreneurship e-Academy, an online platform offering self-paced learning courses to learners interested in developing and running viable agriculture and agribusiness projects or enterprises was established;
3. A Food Contamination Monitoring System software prototype was created. It is a user-friendly, responsive and scalable web interface that has a statistical component and security module. The software provides

a management system to integrate data from collected samples, laboratory input and contamination analyses. This integration will allow for efficient tracking and monitoring of samples from the moment of collection until the risk assessment report is received.

4. FORAS Platform, a digital platform for work-based learning and employment for youth was created.

Tunisia

FAO involvement is part of an extensive project managed by the Ministry of Commerce on value chain digitalization accompanied by advisory content via a digital application and other methods:

1. A cereal production digital conceptualization app that focuses on agricultural commodity supply chain and advisory (extension) guidelines in addition to helping farmers identify harvest storage space availability at the wholesale market so as to avoid returning to the farm with their harvest if full;
2. A business to business market supply chain platform that provides wholesale market daily prices among other features; and
3. A digitalization of the process of 100 agricultural transport units.
Leveraging the role of family farming towards more productive and resilient food systems in response to crises in the NENA region

The UN Decade of Family Farming (UNDFF) 2019–2028 was launched globally in May 2019. It serves as a framework for countries to develop public policies and investments to support family farming from a holistic perspective, thus unleashing the transformative potential of family farmers to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Regional Action Plan for UNDFF implementation in the NENA region was drafted and launched in 2021. Consequently, the regional dialogue for the UNDFF held in June 2022 aimed at assessing the emerging priority topics and discussing the way forward after analysing successful experiences conducted in the region two years after their implementation under the guidance of an International Steering Committee composed of Member States and family farming organizations with the support of FAO and IFAD.

Key results of the Dialogue

1. Endorsing the Regional Action Plan for family farming in the NENA region as a result of a joint FAO and IFAD effort to contextualize the UNDFF Global Action Plan in response to regional challenges through a wide consultation process;

2. Mapping the existing institutional, policy and legal frameworks targeted towards, or related to, family farming in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia;

3. Launching the National Action Plan (NAP) on family farming 2021–2028 in Tunisias as a participative policy dialogue at the local and national level;

4. Creating solidarity networks to support family farmers in times of crisis; and

5. Valorizing family farmers’ traditional products to support livelihoods.

Main recommendations and the way forward:

1. Promote participative policy dialogue for effective support to family farmers;

2. Reinforce socio-economic inclusion and resilience to shocks;

3. Support diversification of markets and the creation of economic opportunities for small-scale family farmers;

4. Support interventions granting women and youth access to resources and land to address structural vulnerabilities, protecting land tenure and land rights, and addressing the lack of social protection in rural areas for farmers to build resilience in a crisis;

5. Address the need for more financial support using defined mechanisms in the UNDFF framework to mobilize resources and funding opportunities;

6. Focus on the local dimension of family farming as a key to enhance resilience strategies to face crises and elaborate tailored and innovative solutions, differentiated policies and interventions supporting agribusiness; and

The main outcomes of the Dialogue were systematized and reported in the framework of the Global Forum on the UNDFF from 19 to 22 September 2022, as part of the technical discussions linked to the seven pillars of work of the UNDFF Global Action Plan.

**Countries in focus: Palestine**

*The farmers’ market of PACU*

The farmers’ market of the Palestinian Agricultural Cooperatives Union (PACU) was established in February 2022 in the city of Al Bireh in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and FAO, with financial support from the Government of Canada. The market features its own line of products called Mawares. Around 700–800 tons of at least 300 different healthy, high quality agrifood commodities produced by Palestinian cooperatives and farmers are sold at fair prices to guarantee the best value for both producers and buyers. The market’s average monthly sales from February to June 2022 was approximately USD 70 000.

**Countries in focus: The Syrian Arab Republic**

*Farmer Field Schools*

It is estimated that between January and June 2022, FAO’s Farmer Field Schools (FFS) reached more than 17 370 farm households in the The Syrian Arab Republic, thus supporting 104 220 individuals with interventions aiming to improve living conditions through improved sustainability of production. These interventions were based on innovative climate-smart solutions and community-based adoption approaches to encourage small-scale farmers to take the lead in decision-making, allowing agricultural production to become more efficient and profitable.

Support was provided by the FFS in the following categories:

1. **Animal husbandry:**
   - Sheep keepers received training on topics such as husbandry and health, and fodder production;
   - Livestock keepers with cattle received training on production and storage of fodder, and husbandry practices;
   - Artificial insemination: 14 000 livestock-keeping households in the governorates of Deir Ez-Zor, Hassakeh, Rural Damascus and Aleppo were reached during the second phase of the campaign in 2022.

2. **Plant Production:**
   - Farmers used low tunnels, transforming their practices for seedling production. The curriculum also included good agricultural practices, compost making, irrigation management, and finance (i.e. bookkeeping, as these are nascent small businesses).
ADVANCING EXTENSION AND RURAL ADVISORY SERVICES
WHY IT MATTERS FOR THE NENA REGION

Rural advisory services and pathways for inclusive rural transformation in the Near East and North Africa

NERC 36 identified rural advisory services (RAS) as a priority for rural transformation in the region. This aligns with FAO’s strengthening of rural advisory systems in the NENA region, and improving rural services for small-scale producers and family farmers in the context of Regional Priority 1 on Rural transformation.

Several achievements were accomplished to strengthen and assess RAS from a pluralistic and market-oriented system perspective including:

1. In-country assessments of extension and RAS in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Oman including national stakeholder consultations in each country;

2. A regional study on the status of RAS in Arab countries, drawing on findings from in-country assessments as well as similar FAO studies in Oman and Tunisia, and a wider review of literature. The study provides a set of policy and programme recommendations and strategic planning on leveraging RAS in the region for enhanced agriculture-based livelihoods and reduced rural poverty and food insecurity; and

3. A virtual regional consultation on Transformative Pathways for Rural Advisory Services in the Near East and North Africa was held from 29 to 30 June 2022. The consultation aimed at sharing regional study findings to inform stakeholder debate and foster exchange across countries in the NENA region while engaging them in a debate on leveraging pluralism, inclusivity and market-orientation in service provision towards more enhanced livelihoods, and effective and inclusive RAS responsive to the specific needs of small-scale farmers and vulnerable groups. It also discussed the establishment of an Arab Forum for Rural Advisory Services to promote regional networking and cooperation for advancing these services in Arab Countries.

Regional and country-based policy briefs are developed in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon in support of modernizing RAS in NENA and enhancing regional networking and cooperation linked to the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services.
A comprehensive model for an agriculture-led sustainable rural transformation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Saudi Vision 2030 sees the agriculture sector as an engine for sustainable rural development, and entrusted the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MoEWA) with translating the Vision’s aspiration into reality. With FAO’s support, MoEWA developed a flagship national Sustainable Agriculture Rural Development (SRAD) Programme that adopts a holistic value chain approach focusing on seven strategically selected commodities based on comparative advantages (coffee, rain-fed cereals, roses, sub-tropical fruits, livestock, beekeeping, and fisheries and aquaculture). Generously funded by the government (around USD 267 million a year), and coordinated by an autonomous body (Reef) overseen by the Vice Minister for Environment, Water and Agriculture, the programme aims at promoting systemic shift from direct subsidy to smallholders to an environmentally sustainable, socially and economically viable model of rural agriculture development led by smallholders.

FAO’s technical and advisory support to MoEWA has been instrumental in shaping the agriculture and food systems’ elements of the Saudi Vision 2030, and the formulation of the SRAD Programme. Therefore, the Saudi Government requested FAO to provide quality technical support and advisory services to MoEWA and to the Sustainable Rural Agriculture Programme (Reef) in all stages of the SRAD Programme aiming at strengthening the capacities of MoEWA and its sister organizations to contribute to the implementation of the Saudi Vision 2030.

In-line with the aforementioned request, FAO and MoEWA prepared the SRAD project (2019 – 2025) which was approved in 2019 with a total budget of USD 93.3 million provided by the MoEWA in the form of a Unilateral Trust Fund. The project has two interrelated pillars:

1. Sustainable development of value chains and value addition of priority products and commodities (coffee, beekeeping, roses, sub-tropical fruits, rain-fed cereals, livestock, beekeeping, fisheries) with a focus on smallholders in rural landscapes, and
2. Sustainable management of natural resources (focusing on forests, rangelands, land and national parks).

The project strongly contributes to the 4 Betters of the FAO Strategic Framework (especially Better Production, Better Environment, and Better Life), and the four Regional Priorities for FAO in NENA region (especially RP1: Rural Transformation, and RP3: Greening Agriculture). The project’s implementation strategies emphasize the following:

- Support the development of evidence-based national strategies and plans related to sustainable rural agricultural transformation
- Robust technical design of innovative interventions based on sectoral assessments, background studies, action-oriented research, and good practices from relevant contexts,
- Community-based piloting and refinement, oriented towards smallholders and rural landscapes
- Intensive capacity building of smallholders and their organizations using an integrated approach for capacity building, extension, advisory services, and institutional development of smallholders organizations,
- Capacity building support to public and private sector on issues related to sustainable value chains development and sustainable management of natural resources,
- Technical support to Reef to scale-up models developed by the project through public and private sectors following competitive tendering processes.

The project’s achievements during the first half of 2022 include the following:

National strategies, plans, and initiatives

- Provides ongoing technical, capacity building, and mentoring support to the National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification, recently established as an autonomous centre under MoEWA,
- Support the Fisheries Department of MoEWA to activity engage in regional and global strategic deliberations including
the Committee of Fisheries, UN Blue Water Initiative and Regional Fisheries authorities in Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

Technically supported the development of national sectoral strategies and work-plans including for: (a) Honeybee health, and disease control; (b) model plan and system for KSA national park management and eco-tourism development; (c) action plan for KSA sustainable rangeland management and community grazing organization; (d) work-plans for KSA sustainable forest management.

Technically supporting the implementation of the Saudi Green Initiative.

Supporting the design of the Middle East Green Initiative.

Evidence-based technical designs of interventions

Technical designs elaborated based on 19 sector reviews, situation analyses and benchmarking, and 23 technical reports and studies produced (including two published and 7 under publication).

Innovative pilots, prototypes, and business models

Establishment of eighteen (18) model demonstration farms is underway under the value chains pillar.

Introduction of twenty (20) good practices, prototype innovations across coffee, roses, beekeeping, cereals, sub-tropical fruits, livestock and fisheries components for improvement of production and post-harvest processing practices.

Digital Fisheries Statistic System developed and operationalized; including a mobile application for data collection and management and analysis.

Twelve (12) innovative best practices, technologies, and systems for sustainable management and development of forests, rangelands and national parks identified and pilot demonstration underway.

Capacity building

17 guidelines and manuals produced.

33 training programmes implemented for 804 extension workers and farmers including youth and women.

Knowledge sharing

Participated and technically contributed to five (5) International Conferences and three local festivals.

Scale-up

Based on specification of pilots, 66 complete bidding documents (Kurassa) have been developed – including detailed technical specifications and costing, to establish pilot sites, nurseries, laboratories, etc.
ADVANCING AGRIBUSINESS THROUGH EMPOWERING WOMEN AND YOUTH

GIVING A VOICE TO THE MOST CONCERNED

Promoting decent rural economic inclusion and harnessing the innovative potential of new technologies for women and youth to address the challenge of feeding more people with less resources

The agrifood sector, historically known for its low wages and precarious employment, now holds great potential to generate green and decent jobs both on and off the farm. Being one of the most youthful regions in the world with more than 28 percent of the NENA population aged between 15 and 29 (108 million), more needs to be done to address the multifaceted challenges the youth face.

In 2021, FAO partnered with Enactus, a global experiential learning organization, to advance innovative youth-led social entrepreneurship projects that promote food security and combat rural poverty in the region through 18 projects targeting university students in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. The projects offered solutions to complex problems, such as electronic pest repellents for palm weevil, locally manufactured, sustainable and nutrient-rich animal feed, and low-cost, high-quality building materials using agricultural waste. Three national agrifood entrepreneurship “boot camps” were held giving the students critical insights into key agrifood challenges and economic opportunities in hope of creating new transformative rural and agrifood system projects. Six teams were selected and invited to present their work at Agri Innovation Days at Dubai Expo.

2022 witnessed the launch of the AgriNation Startup Cup, a business competition open to youth aged 35 and below. The competition offers ten winning agrifood startups the chance to enter a customized incubation and mentoring programme to receive product testing and market research support and to gain access to new market opportunities, partnerships and funding sources. Currently, 12 national partners or “Impact Makers” support these young entrepreneurs at the country level in applying to AgriNation while also working with local partners and ecosystem actors to create an environment that nurtures and incentivizes social innovation in the agrifood sector.

Countries in focus: Palestine

Youth integration in the agrifood sector

The “Green jobs and sustainable income opportunities for Palestinian youth” project has enabled more than 150 male and female youth to access green and decent jobs through the provision of capacity building and technical and administration coaching. Partnering with the Ministry of Agriculture and four local universities, the project has strengthened the capacities of 400 university graduates from 15 academic majors (290 females and 110 males) through comprehensive training for 70 hours using virtual and face-to-face training approaches. The project has also supported 11 females and 13 males in launching 23 innovative agribusiness investments.
**Countries in focus: Lebanon**  
**Support to women’s cooperatives and associations in the agrifood sector**

“Support to women’s cooperatives and associations in the agrifood sector of Lebanon” is a project funded by the Government of Canada and implemented by FAO Lebanon in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and the General Directorate of Cooperatives. It aims to empower rural women in Lebanon and improve their livelihoods through capacity building, grants and cash-for-work.

By the end of 2021, following the conclusion of a two-year period of capacity building training, representatives of 71 women cooperatives, 38 women associations and 146 informal women groups graduated with certificates recognizing their developed capacity through Cooperative Business Schools. The trained women groups were given up to three chances to apply for a grant by submitting their business plan. The grants are used to procure machines, equipment and inputs allowing the women to move forward in the production and marketing of agriculture and food processed products. These women-led enterprises were encouraged to give job opportunities to local Syrian Arab Republic refugee women through cash-for-work vouchers. The project created sustainable income-generating small-scale projects creating much-needed job opportunities, and improved the economic and social conditions of women, their families and their communities.

**Countries in focus: Syrian Arab Republic**  
**Youth entrepreneurship and innovation**

One of FAO’s major achievements in the Syrian Arab Republic is with rural youth who benefited from agri-entrepreneurial training, paving their way towards establishing small businesses. In 2022, 187 young candidates received intensive training through FAO’s innovative entrepreneurship training programme “Nabta” which covers business basics and ideation, presentation skills, finances and more. At least a quarter of the trainees will be supported by start-up grants.

FAO also implemented an innovative digital agriculture training “boot camp” for youth with backgrounds in agriculture and IT, the first of its kind in the Syrian Arab Republic. A group of youth were selected to participate in the intensive training “boot camp” to formulate project proposals that integrated information and communication technology with agriculture in an effort to shape the future of the agriculture sector in the country. A panel of experts selected twelve innovative business proposals to be presented at the final event and awarded the top three proposals.
Countries in focus: Yemen
Youth employment and livelihoods support

Cash-based interventions such as cash-for-work schemes, cash plus agricultural inputs, and cash plus poultry gave young Yemenis, among other segments of the population, an opportunity to earn a decent wage set against the household minimum expenditure basket while engaging in production or supporting productive processes through improved infrastructure. This intervention targeted youth already engaged in agriculture and other production processes as well as unemployed or underemployed youth in other sectors of the economy.

Emergency agricultural input interventions in the form of cereal and vegetable seeds, small ruminants, livestock feed, and good practice training sessions have also contributed to improving agricultural production, livelihoods and income of the youth.

Countries in focus: Yemen
Support to value chain development

Several value chains in the country have been supported to improve production and productivity, reduce losses, improve the quality of the produce/products, and enhance the incomes of actors along the value chains. These include: (1) the dairy value chain for 1,000 households (or 7,000 individual beneficiaries) and over 60 small and medium size dairy groups of livestock producers (213 herders per group) were provided with assorted dairy equipment; (2) fattening value chain: 29,940 livestock dependent households provided with assorted feeds for fattening small ruminants to in order to fetch better price and 740 female households) provided with pregnant small ruminants for increased households’ livelihood assets and 3,750 female households provided with egg-laying hens and poultry feeds to improve nutrition and income at households level; (3) the coffee value chain, starting with an assessment of the different segments and identification of entry points for support; and (4) the fisheries value chain where fisherfolk have been supported with processing equipment (ice-boxes).

| Table 1: Number of households targeted under cash-based interventions from January to June 2022 |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Cash modality                             | Total no. of beneficiaries targeted | Males | Females | Total USD amount delivered |
| Cash + Poultry                            | 200 2                      | 894   | 306 1   | 220 036                   |
| Cash + Livestock                          | 444                        | 352   | 92      | 85 230                    |
| Cash-for-work                             | 3 755                      | 2 791 | 964     | 1 524 772                 |
REGIONAL PRIORITY 2: FOOD SECURITY AND HEALTHY DIETS FOR ALL

This Priority focuses on supporting Member States to use trade and investment as enablers for food security, promoting healthy diets, supporting regulatory harmonization of food safety, reducing food loss and waste, supporting sustainable urban food systems, and providing technical support through data and analytics for effective policies on food security.
ONE COUNTRY ONE PRIORITY PRODUCT INITIATIVE
REGIONAL LAUNCH

Global Action on Green Development of Special Agricultural Products

Supporting the transformation of agrifood systems towards more efficiency, inclusiveness, resilience and sustainability is at the heart of FAO’s strategic framework for the coming decade (2022–2031).

In line with this mandate, the Global Action on Green Development of Special Agricultural Products: One Country One Priority Product (OCOP) was launched by FAO’s Director-General in 2021. OCOP aims at greening the production, storage, processing and marketing of special agricultural products (SAPs). To help build momentum, in June 2022, FAO-RNE launched the Global Action on Green Development of Special Agricultural Products: One Country One Priority Product (OCOP) in the NENA region, encouraging countries of the region to join the initiative, developing green value chains and promoting their special agricultural products internationally.

The launch event on 20 June kick-started the regional implementation of the OCOP, sharing information on the process and providing an opportunity to hear perspectives from countries on the importance of the initiative in supporting transformation of national agrifood systems.

The event presented a comprehensive analysis of the selected value chains of the seven countries that submitted their priorities and the development of upgrading strategies and investment plans.

OCOP’s systemic approach addresses five major global challenges

1. Increasing productivity and ensuring healthy diets;
2. Reducing food loss and waste, and protecting biodiversity;
3. Saving water and optimizing land uses;
4. Minimizing agricultural chemical inputs; and
5. Mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Priority products of each Member State

- Egypt: Dates
- Jordan: Dates
- Lebanon: Pulses (chickpeas, fava beans, lentils)
- Morocco: Carob
- Syrian Arab Republic: Apricots
- Tunisia: Harissa
- Yemen: Coffee
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Coffee

A regional TCP is under development to speed up implementation of the field activities.
DEVELOPING AGRICULTURE TO ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY
SUPPORTING POLICIES

Building on the success of the 2021 Food Systems Summit

FAO-RNE and FAO Egypt provided technical support to Egypt to update its Sustainable Agricultural Development Strategy towards 2030.

- The updated strategy included Strategy, Action Plan, and M&E framework;
- The 2030 Updated Sustainable Agriculture Development Strategy clarified the link and association between achieving economic growth and the alleviation of poverty and hunger, as well as enhancing food security; and
- The Action Plan of Egypt 2030 Updated Agriculture Development Strategy clearly defines in detail realistic national agriculture projects and programmes needed to be accomplished in the framework of this Strategy in the period 2020–2025 and 2025–2030, whether for production, service, research or extension programmes and projects in areas of plant, animal, poultry or fish production, for vertical or horizontal agriculture expansion.

FAO and FAO Sub-regional Office for the Countries of the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf and Yemen (FAOSNG) supported Bahrain to develop its first Food Security and Nutrition Strategy.

- The project was initiated in 2019 and delivered the Strategy document which will be submitted to the Government Cabinet for endorsement;
- The Bahrain Food Security Strategy was jointly prepared by FAO and the Government of Bahrain, represented by the Ministry of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning;
- The core components of food diversification strategy are investment, trade, domestic production, national strategic reserve management, health, education and regulations; and
- These components exist under the overarching principles of sustainability, nutrition, and food safety and utilization.
REGIONAL NETWORK OF EXPERTS ON AGRICULTURAL TRADE SUPPORTING POLICIES

Launch of the FAO Regional Network of Experts in Agriculture Trade (RNE-AT)

- FAO Regional Office for Near East and North Africa (RNE) has launched the Regional Network of Experts in Agriculture Trade (RNE-AT) on 13 January 2022.

- Comprised of the experts from variety of stakeholders, convening in their individual capacities, the Network (RNE-AT) is intended to serve as a knowledge powerhouse on research, analysis, capacity building and policy pathways for public and private sector on issues related to agricultural trade and related policies including regional and multilateral trade agreements.

- The urge to institute this Network is due to some significant data: the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region has the highest food import dependency, on per capita basis, particularly for cereals. At present, more than 60% of caloric intake is met through the imported food. Trade, therefore, plays a key role in the food security policy of every country in the NENA region, but it does figure appropriately high on the policies and other processes.

- The Network will provide a neutral and independent platform for, i) knowledge and experience exchange on agricultural trade and related issues affecting NENA countries, ii) enhancing the quality and relevance of agricultural trade research and strengthen collaboration among experts for analysis, capacity development and other initiatives in the NENA region, iii) strengthening the capacities to provide technical advice and policy recommendations to governments and the private sector, and iv) improving communication and information sharing on agriculture trade policy issues with the wider community.

- Dr. AbdulHakim Elwaer, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for the FAO Regional Office for Near East and North Africa, formally launched the Network and highlighted the importance of a neutral knowledge platform on agriculture and food trade. “There should be a focus on establishing or strengthening regional food value chains, integrated into global ones, and find pathways for resilient food supply chains, he said. There is also a need to enhance our region and respective countries’ participation and visibility in multilateral trading system, particularly the WTO”.

- “I believe that this Network would serve as a knowledge powerhouse for our region. Intellectual input from this Network will guide not only our work on trade and related issues but hopefully be of use to policymakers across the region”, concluded Dr. Elwaer.
TRANSFORMING AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS TO ENSURE FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION SUPPORTING MEMBER STATES

Evidence-based policies on agriculture and food security

FAO-RNE has enhanced its focus towards supporting Member States in using market and trade as enablers for food security, and how to facilitate trade and establish resilient food supply chains in particular.

Addressing food security challenges faced by NENA due to the Ukraine Crisis

The Russian Federation and Ukraine are among the most important producers of agricultural commodities in the world. Both countries are net exporters of agricultural products and both play leading supply roles in global markets of foodstuffs and fertilizers where exportable supplies are often concentrated in a handful of countries. This concentration could expose these markets to increased vulnerability to shocks and volatility. Many countries of the NENA region are heavily dependent on imported foodstuffs and fertilizers from the Russian Federation and Ukraine; thus, the current conflict puts the region at risk of shortening of food supply in addition to the rise in food prices as a result of the disturbances after the COVID-19 pandemic.

FAO-RNE launched a regional overview and country information notes on “Addressing food security challenges faced by Near East and North Africa region due to the Ukraine Crisis” on the impact and response of the Ukraine crisis in support of the countries of the region providing insights on:

- Market structure, trade profiles and recent price trends;
- Risk analysis of the trade, price and logistics, in addition to energy, production and humanitarian risks; and
- Short and long-term policy recommendations to respond to the challenge posed, and to transform to a resilient agrifood system.

Regional training course on “Facilitating Trade for Food Security”

FAO-RNE organized a regional training course that was held from 29 June to 2 July 2022, in Rabat, Morocco, to strengthen the capacity of Member States to benefit from agrifood trade through easier and faster trade procedures. The course was designed to help the participants to better understand the linkages between trade, trade facilitation and food security and how to internalize these concepts in relevant policies and tools. All Member States of the NENA region were invited; all except three Member States participated. This was the first in-person training after a long gap caused by COVID-19. The main themes covered during the training included:

1. Trade and food security linkages on how to use trade as an enabler for food security;
2. Trade facilitation, the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement, best practices and lessons learned; and
3. Managing imports and exports of food and how to facilitate such trade.

Experts from FAO, WTO, International Trade Center, International Food Policy Research Institute and FAO’s Regional Network of Experts on Agriculture Trade (RNE-AT) delivered various sessions on relevant topics and country case-studies. The training was followed by the first in-person meeting and dialogue of FAO’s RNE-AT.
Countries in focus: Palestine
The first call of MAP

One hundred investments (94 male and 6 female investors) were supported under the first call of investment support launched under the Multi-donor Agribusiness Programme (MAP) “Reform and Development of Markets, Value Chains and Producers’ Organizations” funded by Denmark, the Netherlands, the European Union, Switzerland, and Spain. The call stimulated around USD 4.8 million of fresh investments by the investors themselves, and with FAO contributing USD 3.8 million.

The Regional Leadership Academy and Regional Food Security Observatory

In support of Member States with better and evidence-based policies on agriculture and food security, FAO-RNE has initiated the “Regional Leadership Academy” and “Regional Food Security Observatory”.

The leadership on agriculture of NENA regional countries can be strengthened through capacity building in order to equip them with state-of-the-art knowledge and skills in the fields of agriculture. At present, such leaderships lack the latest knowledge, real time information, and analytical capacities particularly in specialized areas such as the climate change mitigation and adaptation for agriculture, water management, soil health, plant production and protection, livestock and fisheries management, and agribusiness. FAO aims to build their capacities through specifically designed and tailored training for stakeholders at political, senior, middle, and junior levels through the Regional Leadership Academy Platform. The Regional Food Observatory will help the Member States in developing evidence-based policies through timely and tailored data and analytics.

Upgrading the Sudanese sesame seed value chain

With the overall aim of enhancing the competitiveness of small farmers’ sesame seed value chain and reinforce them to face the competition in the global market, FAO strengthened the capacity of farmers to improve compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary measures by enhancing the implementation of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

The provided support included:

1. Organizing farmers into producers’ associations and providing season-long training using the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach;
2. Training extension officers on the concepts of FFS and GAP; and
3. Introducing modern equipment to clean sesame seeds and extract the oil to increase the yield and profit of small-scale farmers with value-added sales.

Through the project support, targeted farmers gained better production, improved links with the private sector and microfinance institutions, and enhanced relations with research and extension officers;
TOWARDS HEALTHY DIETS FOR ALL
PRIORITIZING THE MOST VULNERABLE

Working jointly to accelerate action on maternal and child undernutrition in the Near East and North Africa, Eastern Mediterranean and Arab regions

On 15 June 2022, FAO-RNE, the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme in the Near East and North Africa Region convened at a high-level meeting to accelerate action on maternal and child undernutrition.

The meeting brought together senior representatives from ministries of health, agriculture, planning, social welfare and education, and a wide range of stakeholders, including academics, research institutions, civil society and regional and country office representatives from the four UN agencies.

Purpose of the meeting

1. To support low and middle-income countries facing high levels of undernutrition and food insecurity in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Lebanon, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen in particular; and
2. To issue a call for action to address maternal, infant and child undernutrition in the Near East and North Africa, Eastern Mediterranean and Arab regions based on a life-course and systems approach.

A series of commitments for action from Member States and other stakeholders were a part of the call to action on maternal and child undernutrition. This included the commitments from the countries in the region that are already engaged in the Global Action Plan on Child Wasting such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan and Yemen to accelerate the implementation of their country roadmaps for the prevention and treatment of child wasting.

Countries in focus: Syrian Arab Republic

Families across the country are facing unprecedented levels of poverty and food insecurity. More The Syrian Arab Republics are struggling to put food on their table today than ever before. It is estimated that 12.4 million the Syrian Arab Republics are now food insecure. This is an increase of 4.5 million in the last year alone, and the highest number ever recorded.

Countries in focus: Yemen

The current level of hunger in Yemen is unprecedented. Despite ongoing humanitarian assistance, 17.4 million Yemenis are food insecure. The number of food insecure people is projected to go up to 19 million by December 2022.
BUILDING CAPACITIES TO PREVENT, REDUCE AND MANAGE FOOD LOSS AND WASTE

REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

Inclusive and impact-oriented actions to reduce food loss and waste

Food loss and waste (FLW) are a manifestation of poorly functioning agrifood systems. They have negative impacts on the economy, food security, nutrition and the environment.

Therefore, FAO-RNE kicked-off a process towards a Regional Framework of Action for FLW Reduction to support Member States develop strategies, policies, institutions, and legislation capacity that aim to effectively and sustainably reduce FLW while promoting more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems.

So far, two consultations have taken place to ensure that the framework is inclusive, action and impact-oriented, and responds to the challenges and needs of the countries in the region:

1. A policymaker consultation was held on 29 March 2022, gathering senior officials from Member States across the region to discuss FLW reduction priorities and challenges. Data and quantitative measurement of FLW, capacity development for all actors in agrifood systems, institutional collaboration and coordination were emphasized as priorities. Countries identified the need to align FLW reduction with climate action, circularity, recycling and reuse, and building resilience against the impacts of crisis and risks, especially to livelihoods of vulnerable groups; and

2. A multi-stakeholder consultation on 19 April 2022 gathered over 50 experts and practitioners from the private sector, civil society, research and academia, and development partners working on FLW to lend their diverse views to the priorities around FLW reduction and share information about their experiences and initiatives.

The framework itself draws on the Voluntary Code of Conduct for Food Loss and Waste Reduction developed at the request of FAO’s Member States, and builds on the 2014 Regional Strategic Framework Reducing Food Losses and Waste in the Near East and North Africa Region, to better reflect the current context of climate change, geopolitical realities, conflict and protracted crisis on agrifood systems in NENA.

It also aligns with parallel processes that place FLW reduction at the heart of agrifood systems:

- UNFCCC climate change conferences COP27 and COP28 to be held in Egypt and United Arab Emirates;
- UN Food Systems Summit and national food systems transformation pathways put forward by NENA countries; and
- Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals especially accelerating progress towards SDG target 12.3 on FLW reduction.

Countries in focus: Syrian Arab Republic

Vouchers for food processing

The voucher scheme comes as a response to inflation and the disruption of supply chains. To date, FAO’s voucher scheme has provided more than 740 women-headed households (a total of 4,440 individuals) with the opportunity to continue or start food processing activities for income generation, to enable them to buy equipment and raw materials for transformation.
REGIONAL PRIORITY 3: GREENING AGRICULTURE, WATER SCARCITY, AND CLIMATE ACTION

This priority focuses on sustainable management of water, climate action, landscape restoration, and the sustainable management of fisheries resources. Agriculture is the biggest user of the region’s increasingly scarce water resources and it fuels biodiversity loss as well as land and ecosystem degradation. With the adoption of innovative and efficient production technologies, energy-efficient post-harvest chains, smart investments in Blue and Green Transformation, and supportive policy frameworks, it could, however, become an engine of positive change in food systems, minimizing losses. The effective management of land, water systems, forests, soils and other resources is necessary for redressing root causes and the environmental drivers of vulnerability and risks for food and nutrition security.
SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER AND LAND RESOURCES

ACTIONS ON LAND DEGRADATION AND WATER SCARCITY

Advancing the water–food–energy nexus

The scarcity and degradation of land, water and agrobiodiversity on land and in aquatic ecosystems are among the most important risks to food security, nutrition and the well-being of the region’s population. Water resources are used beyond their replenishment capacity, and arable land constitutes less than 5 percent of the total land area in the region. Climate change will have severe impacts on parts of the region and will further increase vulnerability and exacerbate productivity losses and degradation of its natural resources.

The inter-Regional Technical Platform on Water Scarcity

On 28 June 2022, FAO-RNE launched a newly established inter-regional Technical Platform on Water Scarcity which will support countries and regions in scaling-up relevant water-related actions, programmes, and policies.

The Platform offers information and material on four main themes:

1. Resilience and climate change adaptation;
2. Water productivity tools and analytics;
3. Non-conventional water resources; and

The Water Scarcity Platform is expected to bring together experts and stakeholders from different regions, drawing on their collective knowledge, in an action-oriented and result-based partnership to accelerate the achievement of water and food security and sustainable development in the various regions.

The Platform is expected to strengthen the engagement of existing Communities of Practices in water-related fields toward a more sustainable and resilient future. As a hub for partnerships, exchange, and learning, the Platform will contribute to the development and dissemination of appropriate approaches, methods and tools addressing water scarcity and water-related objectives among stakeholders and partners.

It will also support scaling-up investments by enabling interaction with donors and financiers and by promoting public-private dialogue. It will also facilitate the formation of multi-disciplinary teams to address complex topics and accelerate the achievements of the SDGs with a special focus on SDG 6 (Water and Sanitation) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and their associated targets and considering the interlinkages across other related SDGs.
Countries in focus: Yemen
Water and natural resource management

In the last six months, FAO Yemen, within Tarim district of Hadramout and Khnafer district of Abyan, focused on rehabilitating 55 water infrastructures and 1500 meters of flood protection walls benefitting 4,415 farmers and providing sufficient water to irrigate 686 hectares of land. FAO has also contributed to the achievement of a 30 percent increase in water use efficiency and a 12 percent increase in agricultural productivity through the distribution of 45 hectares of modern localized irrigation systems and 117 hectares of improved conveyance systems to 414 farmers in another area of the country.

As part of the broad interventions aimed at improving community access to, and management of, water resources for productive purposes, women have been encouraged to form and participate in Women Water User Groups and to become members of the Board of Directors of established Water User Associations (WUA). During this reporting period, 20 WUA which included women members were established. These groups promote women engagement in the management of their water resources and empower them to have leadership roles in WUAs and water conflict resolution processes.

League of Arab States and policy coherence

FAO-RNE has been offering support to the League of Arab States (LAS) on policy coherence between water and agriculture. These joint efforts have led to the following results in 2022:

1. The development and endorsement of guidelines of water allocation for agriculture, which is currently moving towards piloting the application of the guidelines in interested countries at a pilot scale;

2. The development and endorsement of an action plan to operationalize the Cairo Declaration, which was endorsed by the joint ministerial council (water-agriculture) in its first meeting April 2019; and

3. Technical and policy support in the area of non-conventional water, with focus on desalination and the reuse of treated wastewater.

Water efficiency and sustainability project in NENA countries

Field activities on the tools, methods and approaches for strategic planning of water resources such as water accounting, water productivity, water tenure and the water–energy–food nexus) are ongoing under WSI in seven countries of the region (excluding Iran) through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)-funded project. The project will come to a close at the end 2022, and FAO-RNE is working on a proposal for a follow-up phase to the project.
Countries in focus: Syrian Arab Republic
Irrigation restoration leads to reviving agriculture

Major projects completed in the reporting period include the Tal Hassel pumping station in Aleppo, and projects in Ein Al Quseir and Al Houleh in the Homs governorate. In the latter two project operations and maintenance will be handled by local Water User Associations and supported by FAO experts through training, advice, and guidance.

Rehabilitating the Tal Hassel pumping station in Aleppo enables irrigating 8,500 hectares in the southern plains of the governorate, allowing more than 2,800 households to resume their agricultural production.

In the Homs governorate projects, the work involved rehabilitating groundwater wells and field irrigation networks, which will encourage more than 2,620 farming households (2,500 in Al Houleh and 120 in Ein Al Quseir) to restart their agricultural activities by irrigating about 1,274 hectares of land.

These projects have resulted in the restoration and rehabilitation of irrigation systems for a total of 9,774 hectares belonging to 5,420 households (approximately 32,520 individuals) allowing them to resume their agricultural activities.

The state of the world’s land and water resources for food and agriculture in the Near East and North Africa

The State of Land and Water Resources (SOLAW) in the NENA region is part of a FAO flagship series launched in 2011. The publication aims at providing policy makers, institutions and other stakeholders with a comprehensive overview of the current situation for land and water and the effect of climate change and urbanization on food production, thus facilitating informed decision-making. The report also provides the latest land and water resource statistics for the region, and outlines important challenges that NENA is facing in the lead-up to 2030 and beyond. It also presents positive initiatives from the region and a range of options available to help authorities respond to the issues of land and water resources. The report, produced with several regional partner institutions was finalized and later launched at a meeting with Global Environment Facility (GEF) focal points in July 2022.
THE FAO REGIONAL WATER SCARCITY INITIATIVE (WSI)

The FAO Regional Water Scarcity Initiative (WSI) in the Near East and North Africa was established in 2013 as a Partnership Platform for strengthening coordination and collaboration among partners. During the first NENA Land and Water Days event held in Amman, the partners (ACSAD, AOAD, AWC, CEDARE, DRC, ESCWA, FAO, GIZ, ICARDA, ICBA, IFAD, IWMI, LAS, NWRC Egypt, UNESCO, WB, and WFP) signed a Partnership Pledge expressing their strong interest and willingness to work together to support the implementation of relevant collaborative strategies in the context of the Arab Water Security Strategy and the Arab Strategy for Sustainable Agricultural Development (2005–2025). The primary focus areas of the initiative include: Enhancing national capacities for strategic planning, intersectoral coordination and policy coherence;

→ Enhancing national capacities for strategic planning, intersectoral coordination and policy coherence;
→ Adopting global standards for water-accounting systems;
→ Expanding the knowledge base for irrigation efficiency and water productivity;
→ Improving groundwater governance;
→ Using non-conventional water resources;
→ Adapting for climate change;
→ Managing drought; and
→ Implementing scenario analysis, including the water-food-energy nexus approach to identify safe operational boundaries for water consumption within which achieving SDGs targets.

Within this context, the WSI contributed to the following to the NENA region: Supporting water-agriculture policy coherence

→ Water-agriculture policy coherence:

FAO RNE WSI supported the intergovernmental processes of the League of Arab States (LAS). The WSI team, in collaboration with UN ESCWA, supported the Joint Technical Secretariat of the Joint Water and Agriculture Ministerial Meetings, in planning and organizing the second Joint Meeting of the Arab ministers of water and ministers of agriculture, which was held virtually and hosted by FAO RNE on 27 January 2022. In addition, the WSI team contributed heavily to the planning and organization of the fifth meeting of the High-Level Joint Technical Committee, which was held in person on 18 October 2022.

The two cross cutting issues that have been supported are water allocation and the use of non-conventional water resources.

Guidelines on improved water allocation for agriculture:

Having supported the development and formal approval of the guidelines, the joint ministerial meeting passed a resolution inviting FAO and ESCWA to support interested countries to initiate the application of the guidelines on a pilot scale. FAO and ESCWA took the initiative to support the four pilot countries by providing advisory services and organizing a physical workshop in the LAS premises to develop national action plans. This was complemented by hosting a regional virtual meeting for all member states.

Non-conventional water resources in the Arab region:

Preparing two publications on expanding the use of non-conventional water in the Arab region, these were: a study on desalination, and a policy paper on treated wastewater reuse in collaboration with IWMI.

→ Operating and extending a regional network for field measurements of actual crop water consumption (evapotranspiration) for filling critical data, information and knowledge gaps in the NENA region.

→ Maintaining coordination and information exchange among the WSI partners through organizing meetings of the four working clusters of the WSI Regional Collaborative Platform: Resilience and Climate Change Adaptation, Water Productivity Tools and Analytics, Non-conventional Water Resources, and Water Governance.
CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIONS
OPPORTUNITIES AND GAPS

Nationally determined contributions, adaptation plans, alliances and readiness projects in the NENA region

Agriculture is one of the sectors most affected by climate change. However, as the recent FAO report Regional Analysis of the Nationally Determined Contributions in the Near East and North Africa illustrates, agriculture is also a key part of the solution to addressing the climate crisis, particularly in the NENA region, one of the most water-scarce areas in the world.

Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) represent a country’s commitment to act on mitigation and adapt to changes in climate, report on progress made, and identify needs for support as outlined by the Paris Agreement. The report is part of a series of regional-level analyses of the NDCs which provides a unique, sector-specific synthesis of the agriculture, water and land use sectors in the NDCs from the Near East and North Africa. It summarizes the substantial contributions already put forward by countries, opportunities for further action and the gaps, barriers, and needs that should be addressed in the region to raise mitigation and adaptation ambitions.

Regional analysis of nationally determined contributions in the NENA region

FAO-RNE is supporting the improved integration of agricultural priorities into national climate change policies and vice versa through knowledge sharing and exchange. FAO-RNE, together with the FAO Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment, published the Regional Analysis of Nationally Determined Contributions in the Near East and North Africa: Opportunities and Gaps this year. The publication was launched at the inaugural MENA Climate Week in March 2022. FAO-RNE supported the attendance of national representatives from Ministries of Agriculture to Climate Week.

Scaling up Climate Ambition on Land Use and Agriculture through NDCs and National Adaptation Plans (SCALA) project

FAO-RNE supported the launch of the SCALA project in Egypt in May this year. In collaboration with UNDP, the project will conduct assessments and awareness raising within the agricultural sectors on developing climate priorities and their integration with national climate change processes such as the NDCs and NAPs. Private sector engagement in climate action in the agriculture sectors will also be enhanced. The activities will be aligned with Egypt’s hosting of COP27 this year.
Countries in focus: Palestine
Approval of climate change mitigation programme “Low Carbon Olive Value Chain Development”

Funded by the Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions Facility (NAMA), this programme promotes the adoption of low carbon practices with increased capacities and access to finance along the olive value chain in Palestine, which will contribute to reducing the carbon footprint of the Palestinian olive value chain. The project will be implemented over five years with a total budget of EUR 8,088,300 in partnership with the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture and the Palestinian Agricultural Disaster and Risk Reduction and Insurance Fund in collaboration with the Palestinian Environmental Quality Authority and other olive value chain actors. The funding agreement signature is expected by the end of the year.

Countries in focus: Jordan
Monitoring land and water productivity by Remote Sensing (WaPOR phase 2)

In continuation of WaPOR1, FAOJO held several meetings with the national stakeholders (Ministry of Water and Irrigation, Ministry of Agriculture, NARC, and others) to finalize the list of activities to be implemented.

Countries in focus: Yemen
Monitoring land and water productivity by remote sensing (WaPOR)

The water and natural resources team has initiated the use of WaPOR (FAO’s portal to monitor water productivity through open access of remotely sensed derived data) in Yemen to monitor water productivity and improve water use efficiency. To date, the water and natural resources management team has used the WaPOR to update the Sana’a Basin project II baseline figures related to water productivity and irrigated area at sub-basin level.

Countries in focus: Jordan
Sustainable production and utilization of Agro-natural resources initiative in Maan governorate

An inception workshop was conducted in May to acquaint stakeholders and programme partners with the scope and outlines of the project in addition to covering the implementation strategy and work plan.
Regional Alliance of the Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture (GACSA) for North Africa

In early June, with support from FAO-RNE, the Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture (GACSA) launched the Regional Alliance of GACSA for North Africa, to be hosted at the Université de Tlemcen in Algeria.

Green Climate Fund (GCF) Readiness Projects and the first Regional GCF project

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) readiness projects include Oman, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen, with two GCF projects in Sudan and Jordan, and an implemented and completed project in the Syrian Arab Republic. These projects will enhance capacities within the countries in adaptation planning, enhancing climate information, towards developing pipelines for climate-resilient agriculture projects for financing.

The first Regional GCF project: The Middle East Green Initiative

FAO is working with Saudi Arabia to conceptualize and draft their regional initiative "The Middle East Green Initiative". An information report was prepared by FAO for building the rationale, theory of change and a proposed potential governance structure for the Initiative. The report also provided comprehensive information on land degradation in the region and its costs and highlighted some of lessons learned from other similar restoration actions in the region to build on.

Countries in focus: Palestine
GCF NAP readiness programme approval

An agreement was signed on 17 May 2022 to implement this programme for a period of three years and a total budget of USD 1,650,000. It aims to increase the local capacities to monitor, report, and verify agrometeorological data through the installation of new agrometeorological systems in key representative cropping areas across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As such, smallholder farmers will be able to access accurate information to guide farming and harvest decisions based on weather conditions, which will consequently enable them to adapt their activities to sudden weather changes in a timely manner. This will also be accompanied by the delivery of a series of tailored technical support activities designed to improve institutional capacities to generate and analyse data.
Uniting the world to tackle climate change

The annual UN Climate Change Conference advances global climate talks, mobilizes action, and can provide a significant opportunity to look at the impact of climate change as well as innovation and solutions. The Conferences, which rotate annually among the five United Nations regional groups, serve as the formal meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP) and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (the CMA).

They also include sessions of the subsidiary bodies (the SBSTA and the SBI) and any ad hoc negotiating groups. The UNFCCC secretariat supports all institutions involved in the negotiations, as well as the Bureau of the COP, CMP, and CMA, which is the executive body that advises the President of the Conference.

COP27, Egypt 2022

In anticipation of COP27 being held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt in 2022, FAO-RNE initiated a regional TCP project to support the needs of engagement of countries in the region and Egypt, the host country.

In early March, in preparation for COP27, FAO-RNE organized an official FAO mission to meet with government agencies, the League of Arab States, and the UN representation in Egypt. The objective of the mission was to identify how FAO could support the Government of Egypt in its assumption of the incoming Presidency of COP27.

FAO supported the Egyptian COP27 Presidency in the design of a Presidency initiative on agriculture and food security. Two consultations were held in Cairo in April and May this year, one of which was hosted by the regional office. FAO helped to facilitate both meetings, bringing together global, regional, and national stakeholders and partner institutions to outline the initiative, including key deliverables, a roadmap, and governance implementation arrangements. A draft concept note was developed, which was shared on 13 June 2022 at the UNFCCC conference in Bonn.
PREVENTING, HALTING AND REVERSING THE DEGRADATION OF ECOSYSTEMS IN THE NENA REGION

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed the UN Decade following a proposal for action by over 70 countries from all latitudes. The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 aims to halt the degradation of ecosystems and restore them to achieve global goals.

Led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and FAO, the UN Decade is building a strong, broad-based global movement to ramp up restoration and put the world on track for a sustainable future. This will include building political momentum for restoration, as well as thousands of initiatives on the ground.

In a joint intervention at the regional level, UNEP and FAO launched the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration in the NENA region in March 2022 with the aim of building a common understanding among stakeholders of the Decade’s objectives, ensuring active participation of each member in discussing the way forward. Ecosystems in the region are under serious threat, adding to the already existing water scarcity, aridity, and land degradation as well as climatic extremes such as drought, flash floods, and sand and dust storms—in addition to conflicts and migration which aggravate ecosystems vulnerabilities and weaken their role in sustaining livelihood of millions of people.

Decade objectives in the NENA region

1. Raise awareness of the importance of healthy ecosystems for livelihoods in the NENA region and highlight the cost the region and its people will bear if no action is taken;
2. Inform all relevant stakeholders of the UN Decade about the global appeal and opportunity for action by all; and define roles and responsibilities of each partner in achieving the Decade’s goals;
3. Discuss linkages between the UN Decade and the existing international conventions and agreements such as CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC as well as its contribution for achieving the SDGs; and
4. Deliberate on policy and technical constraints facing implementation of the Decade in the region as well as opportunities.

Restoration initiatives in Saudi Arabia

FAO is working with Saudi Arabia on conceptualizing and crafting their regional initiative “The Middle East Green Initiative.” An information report was prepared by FAO for building the rationale, theory of change, and a proposed potential governance structure for the Initiative. The report also provided comprehensive information on land degradation in the region and its costs and highlighted some of lessons learned from similar restoration actions in the region to build on.
Implementing effective management of fisheries through a Blue Transformation of aquatic food systems

The NENA region is facing a critical situation in the aquatic environment, with 672 fish species that were threatened in 2018 and only 38 percent of stocks harvested at sustainable fishing level in the Mediterranean. With the progress of technologies, aquaculture is becoming one of the most promising food producing sectors in the Near East and most countries have made its development a priority.

The African Chapter of the World Aquaculture Society

FAO supported the sector by participating in the inaugural conference of the African Chapter of the World Aquaculture Society in Alexandria, Egypt from 25 to 28 March 2022. With over 1000 participants from all over the world, including many from the Near East countries, it was a major opportunity to highlight the support that FAO can provide to countries to support their efforts in the aquaculture sector.

The Saudi International Marine and Exhibition and Conference

FAO actively participated in the Saudi International Marine and Exhibition and Conference (SIMEC) from 30 January to 1 February 2022. The Director-General was represented by Manuel Barange, Director of Fisheries and Aquaculture Division. Mr Barange participated in the opening speech, delivered a presentation on blue transformation in fisheries and aquaculture, and participated in the Ministerial panel.
Training of trainers of small-scale fishers in Safety at Sea

The virtual training of trainers of small-scale fishers in Safety at Sea from 14 to 17 February 2022 was attended by participants from 14 countries from the NENA region, namely Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. These trainers were provided with certificates to enable them to continue training in their own countries.

The purpose of this training was to enhance the fishers’ knowledge, capabilities and resilience in the region with particular attention to the impact of climate change, especially for small-scale fishers.

FAO in Egypt

The assessment of Egypt on Enhancing biosecurity governance to support sustainable aquaculture production has been finalized. This also includes the development of a National Strategy on Aquatic Animal Health, which was concluded at the end of 2021.

FAO in Jordan

A Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) on the Introduction of Aquaponics and Hydroponics in Support of Effective Use of Water was completed.

Four demonstrative modules of hydroponic systems, two aquaponics systems and a fish hatchery have been installed. The project also built the capacity of 64 unemployed fresh graduate agricultural engineers on hydroponics, aquaponics and fish hatchery. Moreover, a full aquaponics manual, a full fish hatchery manual and three sustainability plans for the hydroponics, aquaponics and fish hatchery were developed. In February, FAO Jordan conducted a field tour to a hydroponics, aquaponics, and fish hatchery project in Jerash.

The project lasted from 15 June 2019 to 31 December 2021 and supported Jordan in its effort to increase water efficiency through integrated agri-aquaculture farming systems, and the supply and installation of a demonstrative modern aquaponics and hydroponics facility.

FAO is currently working to support the formulation of a sustainable aquaculture strategy in Jordan.

FAO in Lebanon

FAO assisted in promoting sustainable fisheries with TCP titled: Assessment for Replacement of Illegal Fishing gears in Lebanon, which was concluded at the end of 2021.

The project contains the development of a General Census of the fishing fleet and gears, and the establishment of a pilot region that uses legal and sustainable fishing gear.
This priority addresses multiple shocks, protracted crises and emergency situations along the humanitarian–development–nexus. Multiple shocks and stresses in the Near East and North Africa region have significant impact on agrifood systems and related livelihoods where long-term stresses – such as scarcity of water and arable land, climate change, land degradation and increasing population growth – fuel and aggravate multiple and overlapping shocks. The region is host to some of the most dramatic humanitarian crises of the world. Conflict and economic crises have pushed millions of poor rural people into poverty. Enhancing the resilience of the region’s agrifood systems would contribute to addressing the persistence of chronic and acute food insecurity.
SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY PLANT PESTS
ADVANCING “ONE HEALTH” IN THE REGION

Adopting a One Health approach for human and animal health

Holding the first regional quadripartite meeting on advancing One Health in the Near East and Eastern Mediterranean Region

The One Health approach is essential to anticipate, prevent, detect and control diseases that spread between animals and humans, tackle antimicrobial resistance (AMR), ensure food safety, prevent environment-related human and animal health threats, as well as combat many other challenges. Advancing the implementation of One Health in the RNE and Eastern Mediterranean Region, the first Regional Quadripartite virtual meeting was held in May 2022 with the presence of FAO-RNE, the World Organisation for Animal Health Sub-Regional Representation for North Africa, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and UNEP West Asia.

FAO Virtual Learning Centre Avian Influenza Preparedness Course

FAO Virtual Learning Centre in RNE coordinated the global online Avian Influenza Preparedness Course from 18 January to 20 February 2022.

The training brought together 121 participants who participated from 18 countries from the RNE region, out of which 77 percent completed the course and received their certificates.

Development and implementation of antimicrobial resistance and antimicrobial use national action plans

The assessment of RNE countries’ status of development and implementation of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and antimicrobial use (AMU) national action plans were finalized, and the results were presented at the RNE Virtual Meeting on 4th April 2022.

Launching the Regional Programme on red palm weevil eradication in NENA

As part of the establishment meeting of the International Date Council held in Al-Ahsa Governorate, Saudi Arabia on 17 February 2022, FAO’s Regional Office in NENA officially launched the regional programme to eradicate the red palm weevil (RPW) in the NENA region.

Supporting sustainable management of the red palm weevil in NENA

FAO’s RPW Eradication Programme organized 12 coordination and training meetings with donor countries, programme committees, technical working groups, partner organizations, and project national focal points and signed LOAs with project partners.

FAO participated in many events, including the establishment meeting of the International Date Palm Council which convened in Saudi Arabia on 15 and 16 February 2022, and in the 7th International Date Palm Conference in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates on 15 and 16 March 2022. Within the 7th Date Palm Conference, the RPW programme organized a session dedicated to the regional RPW eradication trust fund programme. The baseline data needed for technical assessments of the RPW status and management capacity from Member States have been collected and analysed, and the status of RPW and plans to manage the RPW in 16 NENA countries were reviewed.
Regional RPW farmer field school master trainers and Curriculum Development Workshop

Under the activities of FAO Programme on red palm weevil (RPW) Eradication from the NENA region, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MEWA) in Saudi Arabia, the regional workshop of farmer field school (FFS) was held on from 28 February to 3 March 2022 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The workshop was attended by experts of FFS and RPW from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The training programme presented the distinguished role of FAO in establishing and implementing the FFS approach in the region.

Farmer field school manual on RPW

On 8 March 2022, during the first International Conference on Food Security and Environmental Sustainability hosted by King Faisal University from 7 to 9 March, FAO and KFU signed a Letter of Agreement to Support the Sustainable Management of the red palm weevil in the NENA region to conduct field experiments aiming at finding practical solutions in the sustainable management of the red palm weevil. The agreement is part of the Regional Funds programme to control the pest in the NENA region.

As a guideline to establish comprehensive, thorough information on the biology, ecology, damage control measures of the red palm weevil, and the ways to implement integrated pest management properly, the manual includes the difficulties faced by operators, experts, and farmers and how to eliminate the failures faced by the control workers. The second part of the manual sheds light on FFS concepts, theory, development, establishment and development of the curriculum for facilitators, trainers and farmers.

Training on combating the fall armyworm using bioproducts

The Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with FAO in Yemen, launched a campaign to combat the fall armyworm (FAW) using neem, a bioproduct, in several regions in Yemen. The farmers were trained on the spraying method and the application of the biopesticides. The use of Melia azedarach extract in the biological control of FAW was also performed during the activities of the FFSs in the Hajjah region in northern Yemen.

Strengthening capacities for FAW management in Maghreb countries

Increasing the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises in NENA countries, supporting early warning, integrated management systems, building community-level resilience as well as responding to emergencies on time, are among the objectives of a new USD 500 000 project to be implemented by FAO in Maghreb countries. The new project matches the country’s needs, priorities, and Country Programming Frameworks of all beneficiary countries (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia).

IPPC Regional Organization Committee and Plant Health Innovation for Food Security

The first meeting of the Regional Organization Committee of the International Plant Protection Convention was held virtually on 10 March 2022. The meeting was attended by 11 participants including NENA Regional and Sub-Regional Plant Protection Officers and regional partners. The draft agenda of the IPPC regional workshop highlighted the theme of “Plant Health Innovation for Food Security.”
**Countries in focus: Jordan**

**Emergency technical assistance to mitigate the impact of Foot-and-Mouth Disease**

In January 2022, FAO responded to the request of the Jordanian Ministry of Agriculture to mitigate the effect of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) on livestock in Jordan through an emergency response mission to improve the country’s ability to respond and prevent the spread of the disease. In February 2022, Pirbright shared the report of the new FMD strain circulating in Jordan as well as the vaccine matching report. An emergency response mission for the FMD report was published and shared with the Ministry of Agriculture in April 2022.

**Countries in focus: Jordan**

**MERS-CoV surveillance in dromedary camels**

In March 2022, stakeholders’ engagements were discussed with CVO and Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST), and a Letter of Agreement was prepared with JUST university in cooperation with the veterinary services at the Ministry of Agriculture in May 2022.

**Countries in focus: Jordan**

**Surveillance and Information Sharing Operational Tool**

Surveillance and Information Sharing Operational Tool (SIS OT) is used to develop a roadmap and plan to advance development of the national coordinated surveillance system for zoonotic diseases. A SIS OT workshop was conducted in January 2022, where the SIS OT module was introduced, self-assessment using the capacity building was conducted, activities for SIS OT development were identified and prioritized, and a SIS OT action plan outlining the next steps was generated.

**Countries in focus: Jordan**

**Strengthening global veterinary epidemiology capabilities and rapid regional disease surveillance information and sharing**

An online training session was conducted for veterinarians of MoA to assess their training needs in February 2022. A joint mission by FAO and experts from RVC-London was conducted to assess the training needs of the Jordanian Veterinary Services prior to delivering the field epidemiology training for veterinarians and assessing training needs results were demonstrated to CVO and relevant stakeholders in March 2022.
Countries in focus: Jordan

Inter-agency cooperation building resilience against agro-crime and agro-terrorism affecting animal health

A regional online Surveillance Evaluation Tool (SET) Training of Evaluators being acquainted with the SET tool and trained future evaluators was conducted from 28 February to 3 March 2022. In May 2022, Jordan, SET Core and SET BT2 conducted a field mission from FAO HQ to have a complete assessment of the surveillance system in place to the benefit of the veterinary services and their relationship with law enforcement agencies. This SET field mission used its bio-threat module (SET-BT) in Jordan as a pilot country.

Countries in focus: Sudan

Significant hunger challenges are posed by the large number of displaced people (including refugees from neighbouring countries), a volatile economic situation, increased climate variability, environmental degradation, disease outbreaks, malnutrition, gender inequality and the risk of relapse back into potential conflict. In 2021, 13.4 million people required humanitarian support, including 9.8 million people who are food insecure. Sudan continues to face persistently high levels of acute malnutrition and stunting, which constitutes a significant public health problem.

Countries in focus: Yemen

Innovation and digital agriculture in the surveillance and control of the desert locusts

Use of the e-locust3-M application in the surveillance and control of the desert locusts has continued across Yemen. The new application was installed on the mobile phones of 100 field technicians and has been utilized by 60 field technicians to date in the north and south of the country to transmit reports on locust movements via the internet. The eLocust3m application, which also operates in Arabic, has improved early warnings at the national and regional level through rapid detection, surveillance, and monitoring of locust outbreaks. This has allowed decision makers to improve response and expedite control measures in areas likely to be invaded.
Countries in focus: Yemen
Food security and nutrition early warning information

FAO is the lead agency for Integrated Phase Classification for Food Security (IPC) analysis in Yemen. Since 2011, IPC has been used to inform evidence-based decision-making in Yemen and enable response to target location-specific areas with high numbers of the most vulnerable households. In March 2022, FAO issued the status of food security and nutrition in Yemen, highlighting the deteriorating situation in many parts of the country, with 54 percent of the population in crisis and food security emergency. In April, FAO launched the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews assessments based on Random Digit Dialing. The assessment conducted in the month of April covered a sample size of 2,500 households to determine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other shocks on agriculture livelihoods and food security. FAO, in collaboration with the World Bank, released the Food Security Crisis Preparedness Plan (FSCPP), detailing operational arrangements to prevent and mitigate food security crises. The FSCPP has three main objectives: (1) prevent and mitigate shifts into IPC 3+ in areas that primarily experience IPC 2; (2) prevent and mitigate shifts into IPC 4 and reduce the occurrence of IPC 3 in IPC 3 and IPC 4 areas; and (3) prevent and mitigate shifts into IPC 5 and reduce the occurrence of IPC 4 in areas where populations primarily experience IPC 4.

In addition, food security information systems have been strengthened through capacity building and coordinated partnerships in generating and publishing updates on the food security situation in the country through the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster which is co-chaired with WFP. Coordinated humanitarian response to the crisis in Yemen has been implemented, including through the development and realization of the Humanitarian Response Plan 2022.

Countries in focus: Yemen
Emergency livelihoods assistance and good agricultural practices

One of the Yemen country programme priorities is to implement life-saving interventions to address immediate food and nutrition security needs of extremely vulnerable households, such as providing cash or vouchers to meet the minimum food basket needs, distributing agriculture starter packages (small ruminants, poultry, vegetables seeds, agricultural tools, rooftop water harvesting) to vulnerable households (prioritizing women) in order to relaunch backyard gardening to produce nutritious vegetables and raise small livestock at household levels and deliver agriculture starter packs and awareness training to vulnerable farmers households in order to support agriculture production at household levels. During the past six months, 27,069 households (189,000 people) benefited from this type of assistance.
MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY

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FAO’S COMMITMENT TO MAINSTREAM GENDER EQUALITY AND BEYOND
ADOPTING INNOVATIVE AND GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES

Increase of data, evidence, and knowledge generation on gender and agriculture

A comprehensive gender analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Arab region (with a focus on Iraq and Sudan) was undertaken jointly by FAO, WFP and CARE.

Gender-responsive water assessments in Egypt and Palestine, based on FAO’s methodology, were developed in the context of the SIDA project “Implementing the 2030 Agenda for water efficiency/productivity and water sustainability in the NENA countries.”

A new country gender assessment of the agriculture and rural sector in Tunisia was made, adding to the other five CGAs already completed in 2021.

A comprehensive analysis of the agrifood sector in Lebanon based on the literature review and primary data collection with more than 2 000 respondents was finalized in the context of the project “Support to Women’s cooperatives and associations in the agrifood sector of Lebanon”, funded by the Government of Canada.

A gender assessment and action plan was completed as an integral part of the Hand-in-Hand initiative in Yemen, aimed at informing the formulation of the new National Agriculture and Fisheries Strategy and the associated National Agriculture and Fisheries Investment Plan.

Implementation of women-targeted and gender-responsive projects at the country level

Solid gender action plans, with targeted interventions in support of rural women, have been developed thanks to the GCF and GEF project portfolio. Examples include new projects approved in Iraq and Yemen.

In Tunisia, a new “Joint Programme Accelerating Progress towards Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment” was approved and launched.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, an innovative pilot project entirely dedicated to transforming social norms and reducing gender-based violence in rural areas is currently being negotiated by FAO The Syrian Arab Republic with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

Advocacy and awareness raising on gender equality and women’s empowerment

The high-level panel Trailblazing women in MENA Agrifood Systems was held successfully as part of the MENA Agrifood Innovation Days in the United Arab Emirates.

FAO marked the celebration of International Women’s Day with the online event Agrifood Systems Facing Climate Change in the MENA Region: Gender Equality for Better Resilience, organized in collaboration with the Union for the Mediterranean and CIHEAM. The webinar was attended by more than 200 participants.

As part of its inter-agency commitment, FAO co-organized a session on SDG 5 at the Arab Forum of Sustainable Development in March 2022, and contributed to the policy brief, assessing the progress towards the SDG’s target indicators.

Increased capacities to implement gender-responsive projects and programmes

FAO continued to strengthen staff capacities to address gender equality and adopt gender-transformative approaches in project implementation. In February 2022, an online training session was organized for the Gender Focal Points, and technical officers in Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia were selected.
FAO’s Regional Office provides technical assistance to countries in the Near East and North Africa in their fight against hunger through its field programme. The programme provides support for the implementation of projects in food and nutrition security, emergency support of livelihoods in crisis affected areas, building resilience and greening agriculture, among others.

The field programme is active in all 19 FAO Member States in the Near East and North Africa region.

More than 215 projects are in progress in any given year, with a total volume of delivery (project expenditure) between 70 and 134 million USD.
Contributions to NENA’s Regional Priorities

The projects launched during the reporting period fully align with four Regional Priorities for FAO in the NENA region, and contribute to these Regional Priorities (RPs) in varying degrees as shown in Tables 7 and 8, and Figure 8.

The majority of the projects contribute to Regional Priority 4 (Resilience) and Regional Priority 3 (Greening agriculture) where half of the projects (47.1 percent of the total budget) are aligned with Regional Priority 4 while 16.7 percent of the projects (40 percent of the budget) are aligned with Regional Priority 3. This reflects some of the unique characteristics of the region where structural vulnerability to shocks and emergencies, including those induced by conflicts, scarcity of water and arable land, and climate change, are among the most common challenges. On the other hand, the shares of Regional Priority 1 (Rural transformation) and Regional Priority 2 (Healthy diets for all) are significantly low compared to the respective needs and opportunities related to these two Regional Priorities.
Resource Mobilization Trend (2017–2022)

Analysis of the resource mobilization trend during the first six months of the year for the period 2017–2022 revealed the following (Table 2 and Figure 2):

**Figure 2:** Resource mobilization trend in the first half of the year (2017–2022)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>$23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>$33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>$142.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>$34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>$134.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>$69.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resource Partners**

Eight Resource Partners contributed to 98 percent of the total resources with the top-four being the Green Climate Fund, UN (mainly UNOCA but also IFAD, UNDP and WFP), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America contributed 96 percent of the total resources.

**Figure 3:** Contributions of Resource Partners (January–June 2022)

- Belgium: 0.7%
- Kuwait: 1.5%
- Italy: 1.8%
- The Green Climate Fund (R&P): 2.2%
- United States of America (the): 5.9%
- United Kingdom of Great Britain (the): 20.4%
- United Nations: 30.8%
- The Green Climate Fund (AMA): 36.7%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Partner</th>
<th>USD million</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Green Climate Fund (AMA)</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Green Climate Fund (R&amp;P)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>68.1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of USD 95.7 million was delivered during the first half of 2022 which represents 66 percent above the average for the same period since 2015.

**Figure 4:** Delivery trend (1 January–31 May 2015–2022 in USD million)
The State of Land and Water Resources in the Near East and North Africa

Addressing food security challenges faced by Near East and North Africa region due to the Ukraine crisis - Country information notes

Addressing food security challenges faced by Near East and North Africa region due to the Ukraine crisis - Regional overview

Regional analysis of the nationally determined contributions in the Near East and North Africa

Research, technology and innovation platform for the Date Palm Integrated Production System in Near East and North Africa region - Info sheet

The Global Action for Fall Armyworm Control: A resource mobilization guide
Report of the minimum data reporting regional database workshop to support the strengthening of RECOFI’s statistics and information capacity through its working group on fisheries management (WGFM)

L’agriculture pluviale face aux changements climatiques en Afrique du Nord: Impact et perspective avec l’agroécologie

Élaboration d’une vision commune pour renforcer la performance, l’équité, la gouvernance et la gestion de l’organisation professionnelle – Guide pratique
FAO IN THE NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

MID-YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY – JUNE 2022

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Cairo, Egypt