



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

REPORT

Amman,
Jordan
10-13 September 2023
(Hybrid)

Near East Forestry and Range Commission

Twenty-sixth Session

PREVIOUS SESSIONS OF THE COMMISSION

First session	Tehran, Iran (Islamic Republic of)	24–29 September 1955
Second session	Cairo, Egypt	27 October–1 November 1958
Third session	Adana, Türkiye	30 April–5 May 1962
Fourth session	Beirut, Lebanon	15–22 June 1964
Fifth session	Amman, Jordan	25–30 September 1967
Sixth session	Tehran, Iran (Islamic Republic of)	25–30 April 1970
Seventh session	Baghdad, Iraq	30 November–December 1974
Eighth session	Khartoum, Sudan	23–28 February 1978
Ninth session	Nicosia, Cyprus	6–10 June 1983
Tenth session	Tunis, Tunisia	29 June–3 July 1987
Eleventh session	Ankara, Türkiye	15–19 October 1990
Twelfth session	Cairo, Egypt	21–24 October 1996
Thirteenth session	Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic	6–9 December 1998
Fourteenth session	Tehran, Iran (Islamic Republic of)	1–4 July 2000
Fifteenth session	Khartoum, Sudan	28–31 January 2002
Sixteenth session	Beirut, Lebanon	24–27 May 2004
Seventeenth session	Larnaka, Cyprus	5–9 June 2006
Eighteenth session	Khartoum, Sudan	18–21 February 2008
Nineteenth session	Hammamet, Tunisia	5–9 April 2010
Twentieth session	Antalya, Türkiye	29 January–2 February 2012
Twenty-first session	Amman, Jordan	26–30 January 2014
Twenty-second session	Tlemcen, Algeria	13–17 December 2015
Twenty-third session	Beirut, Lebanon	11–14 December 2017
Twenty-fourth session	Antalya, Türkiye	25–29 November 2019
Twenty-fifth session	Cairo, Egypt, (Virtual)	19–21 November 2021
Twenty-sixth session	Amman, Jordan (Hybrid)	10–13 September 2023

REPORT

of the

TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

of the

NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION

Amman, Jordan
10-13 September 2023
(Hybrid)

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Regional Office for the Near East

Cairo 2023

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Summary of Recommendations for the attention of Member Nations of the Commission

The Commission:

- (a) *acknowledged* FAO support to the Region;
- (b) *encouraged* Members to:
 - i. further develop cross-sectoral programmes aiming at combatting land degradation, enhancing ecosystem health, preserving and mainstream biodiversity in agricultural sectors, and empowering forest and pastoral-dependent communities, including women;
 - ii. strengthen equitable and inclusive gender-sensitive planning and management to improve livelihoods and mitigate the impacts of drought on vulnerable populations by using available guidelines such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT);
 - iii. further strengthen the policy and institutional environment to women's economic empowerment in the Region and develop an enabling environment that would support women and enhance their contribution to the sustainable management of Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs) and pastoral value chains;
 - iv. consider collecting gender-disaggregated data and statistics in surveys and assessments related to the forestry and rangeland ecosystems services, in order to analyze the gender-differentiated perceptions and knowledge in terms of NWFPs and pastoral product collection, valorization and management;
 - v. further strengthen regional collaboration in implementing regional initiatives such as the Middle East Green Initiative (MGI), launched by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia;
 - vi. continue to actively support the Regional Forestry Commissions as the main instruments for the forestry sector to link the global and regional levels under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031;
 - vii. attend the 27th Session of the Committee on Forestry, to be held from 22 to 26 July 2024 in Rome, Italy and recommended that the Committee on Forestry consider the following topics in developing its next session's agenda:
 - agriculture and forestry linkages, with a special focus on strengthening forest and rangeland resilience through restoring silvopastoral systems for better drought and economic management;
 - sustainable wood production and planted forests in drylands.
- (c) *called* for the need to improve the cross-sectoral coordination on forests, rangelands, food production, land use, and rural development policies for more effective drought resilience and management of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems.
- (d) *welcomed* the governance review of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission,
- (e) *invited* countries to strengthen partnerships and collaboration with regional organizations and programmes;
- (f) *invited* countries to explore the possibility of co-funding technical events organized within the Near East Forestry Week. In this regard, the Commission encouraged countries to consider the possibility of Member Nations providing in-kind contributions for regional events hosted by the country. This will strengthen countries' engagement in, and commitment to, the NEFRC inter-sessional work programme.

Summary of the Recommendations for the attention of FAO

The Commission *requested* FAO to:

- (a) *support* countries in terms of resource mobilization and facilitating access to sources of climate and environmental finance;
- (b) *continue to support* Member Nations with the formulation of development projects that integrate forest and rangelands and that strengthen cross-sectoral work through activities that promote inclusive and sustainable management of agrosilvopastoral ecosystems and that contribute to achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- (c) *consider* the Near East as a priority region for accelerating action on the ground for combatting desertification and restoring ecosystems;
- (d) *conduct* a stocktaking exercise on the contribution of women and youth to the value chain of pastoral and Non-Wood Forest Products in the Near East Region. The objective of the assessment is to facilitate the collection of gender-disaggregated data and relevant information on women's formal and informal contribution to the Non-Wood Forest Product and pastoral value chains in the Near East Region, focusing on women and youth's access to productive resources, to extension services and capacity-building programmes, financial services, to market and to decision-making bodies;
- (e) *continue implementing* the activities of the Near East Network on Wildlands Forest Fire (NENFIRE) and the Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS) and to strengthen regional collaboration on forest/rangeland protection; and to
- (f) *continue to support* the engagement of women and Indigenous People in FAO project implementation processes as appropriate;

The Commission *invited* FAO to:

- (a) *support* Member Nations in developing innovative forestry and rangeland programmes for the restoration of forests and agrosilvopastoral ecosystems and the valuation of goods and services provided by pastoral ecosystems;
- (b) *support* countries to contribute to conserving and restoring biodiversity while improving nutrition, food security, and livelihoods through the identification of opportunities, challenges and specific technical support requirements for the sustainable use of NWFPs and pastoral value chains;
- (c) *support* countries in assessing the contributions of women and youth in climate-smart agriculture, NWFPs, and pastoral value chains;
- (d) *conduct* - subject to available extra-budgetary resources - a stocktaking exercise on the inclusion of integrated silvopastoral management in land-use and planning-related policies and regulations for better drought management;
- (e) *support* countries in strengthening their forest and rangeland monitoring systems to measure silvopastoral, social, economic and environmental values in response to accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as other pledges, such as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Commission:

- (a) *requested* the Secretariat to share the conclusions of this session with the Second Session of the COAG Sub-Committee on Livestock (to be held in May 2024), and the Thirty-Seventh Session of the Near East Regional Conference (to be held in February and

March 2024) and, to the Twenty-seventh Session of the Committee on Forestry (to be held on 22–26 July 2024) for their consideration.

INTRODUCTION AND OPENING OF THE SESSION (Item 1)

1. The 26th Session of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC 26) and the 5th Near East Forestry Week (NEFW 5) were held in Amman, Jordan, from 10 to 13 September 2023, at the kind invitation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The NEFRC 26 was organized in conjunction with the 3rd Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems from 11 to 13 September 2023.

2. The NEFRC 26 was attended by 70 representatives from 19 Member Nations and sixteen representatives from global and regional intergovernmental organizations¹. Both sessions were conducted in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

3. The NEFRC 26 and the 3rd Session of the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems strived to emphasize the importance of restoring agrosilvopastoral systems and of forest and pastoral value chains for the sustainable management of natural resources. The sessions aimed to provide an opportunity for the participants of the NEFRC - and a wide spectrum of other stakeholders with an interest in forest and rangeland issues - to strengthen South-South Cooperation and share knowledge and innovative actions for improved socio-economic management of dryland ecosystems in the Region.

4. The NEFW 5 was organized in parallel with the Commission session². Five side events³ were held: (i) Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS): Strengthening Regional Collaboration for Healthy Forests, (ii) Restoration Initiatives in the Mediterranean Region: the Flagship program under the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and other initiatives, (iii) Challenges and opportunities for climate change adaptation with drylands forests, (iv) The role of urban forests and trees in adaptation to climate change in dryland cities, as well as (v) a side event on Saudi Green Initiative (SGI).

5. During the high-level opening ceremony, Mr Serge Nakouzi, Deputy Regional Representative, expressed - on behalf of the Assistant Director-General of the Regional Office of the Near East and North Africa - FAO's gratitude to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for their support to the Near East Forestry and Range Commission, noting that this Session is being organized jointly with the third session of the Committee on Forestry Working Group on Drylands and Agrosilvopastoral systems. He highlighted the importance of strengthening the linkages between forests and agriculture in the Region and thanked both the Chairperson of the Committee on Forestry and the Chairperson of the Committee on Agriculture Sub-committee on Livestock for supporting the region in this regard.

6. His Excellency Mr Günter Walkner, Minister Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Austria to FAO and to the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and Chairperson of the Committee on Forestry, thanked FAO for its support to Member Nations. He noted the ongoing collaboration between the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) and COFO on the linkages between agriculture, forestry and the COFO-COAG joint roadmap. He called for strengthened collaboration and cooperation within the Region towards the sustainable management of forests and rangelands.

7. His Excellency Mr Carlos Cherniak, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Argentina to FAO and Chairperson of the Sub Committee on Livestock in the Committee on Agriculture (COAG-LI) extended his sincere thanks and appreciation for FAO's efforts in supporting Member Nations. He emphasized the importance of developing an enabling environment that would support cross-sectorial work towards the socioeconomic empowerment of local communities.

8. Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Bint Ali of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and FAO Goodwill Ambassador for the Near East, called for the further strengthening of regional and interregional collaboration amongst Member Nations to ensure the sustainable management of

¹ *Annex 1* provides a full list of NEFRC participants.

² www.fao.org/neareast/events/details/Twenty-sixth-session-of-the-Near-East-Forestry-and-Range-Commission/en

³ *Annexes 4-7* provide the concept notes and reports of the side events.

forest, rangelands, and agrosilvopastoral systems for the socio-economic empowerment of forest-dependent communities.

9. His Excellency Mr Khaled Hneifat, Minister of Agriculture of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, opened the Twenty-sixth Session of the Commission; the Third Session of the Committee on Forestry Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems; and the Fifth Near East Forestry week, on behalf of the Prime Minister of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. His Excellency expressed the Government of Jordan's pleasure in being the host of these sessions and recognized FAO's support to Jordan and Member Nations in their efforts to develop strategies and programmes that ensure the sustainable management of forests and rangelands. His Excellency mentioned that the outcomes of these Sessions should include specific recommendations that take into account the specificity, fragility and importance of the region, contribute to formulating innovative policies to reduce the effects of climate change and develop forests and pastures, and present pioneering initiatives that have a direct and effective impact on forests and pastures and on the people of the region.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Item 2)

10. Mr Alaa Azouz (Egypt), outgoing Chairperson of the Commission, welcomed participants and expressed his appreciation for the close collaboration with, and support from the NEFRC Secretariat to carry out his tasks.

11. Under the guidance of Mr Azouz, the provisional agenda (NEFRC/2023/1) was adopted (see *Annex 2*). The documents considered by the Commission are listed in *Annex 3*.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (Item 3)

12. In accordance with the provisions of Rules II-1 and II-5 of its Rules of Procedure, the Commission elected the Chair, three Vice-Chairs and one Rapporteur. The composition of the Bureau is as follows:

Chairman:	Mr Mohamed Al Hyary, Jordan
1 st Vice-Chairperson:	Ms Samira Bouzayani, Morocco
2 nd Vice-Chairperson:	Mr Mohamed Naoufel Ben Haha, Tunisia
3 rd Vice-Chairperson:	Mr Najeeb Hamed Al Subhi, Saudi Arabia
Rapporteur:	Mr Reem Ahmed Al Hazim, Kuwait

13. Mr Nabil Assaf, FAO Representative in Jordan, served as Secretary *ad interim* of the Commission. Ms. Malek Hayder, Forestry and Rangeland consultant, FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa, served as alternate Secretary. The Forestry Division (NFO) team at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy, provided technical inputs to the Session.

FAO AND COUNTRY ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION AND FOLLOW-UP ON REQUESTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 25th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION (Item 4)

14. The Secretariat introduced document NEFRC/2023/2, thus presenting the activities carried out both by the NEFRC Members and FAO's forestry and rangelands unit in follow-up to the recommendations of the 25th session of the Commission.

15. The Commission acknowledged the activities carried out and encouraged Members to further develop cross-sectoral programmes aiming at combatting land degradation, enhancing ecosystem health, preserving and mainstream biodiversity in agricultural sectors, and empowering forest and pastoral-dependent communities including women.

16. The Commission recommended FAO to:

- (a) *support* countries with regard to resource mobilization and facilitating access to sources of climate and environmental finance;
- (b) *continue to support* Member Nations with the formulation of development projects that integrate forest and rangelands and strengthen cross-sectoral work, through activities that promote inclusive and sustainable management of agrosilvopastoral ecosystems and that contribute to achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

17. The Commission welcomed the activities implemented under the framework of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and - given that the Near East Region is particularly susceptible to land degradation and desertification - requested FAO to consider the Near East as a priority Region for accelerating action on the ground for combatting desertification and restoring ecosystems.

18. The Commission also invited FAO to:

- (a) *support* member countries in developing innovative forestry and rangeland programmes for the restoration of forests and agrosilvopastoral ecosystems and the valuation of goods and services provided by pastoral ecosystems;
- (b) *continue implementing* the activities of the Near East and North Africa Regional Forest Wildland Fire Network (NENFIRE) and Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS), and to strengthen regional collaboration on forest/rangeland protection.

GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF THE NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION (Item 5)

19. The Commission:

- (a) *took note* of the document NEFRC/2023/03 presented in support of the discussions;
- (b) *welcomed* the governance review of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission;
- (c) *encouraged* countries to strengthen partnerships and collaboration with regional organizations and programmes; and
- (d) *invited* the Members to explore the possibility of co-funding technical events organized within the Near East Forestry Week.

20. In this regard, the Commission:

- (a) *encouraged* countries to consider the possibility of Member Nations to provide in-kind contributions for regional events hosted by the country. This will strengthen countries' engagement in, and commitment to, the NEFRC inter-sessional work programme.

UPDATE ON GLOBAL POLICY PROCESSES AND INITIATIVES OF RELEVANCE FOR THE COMMISSION (Item 7)

21. The Commission:

- (a) *thanked* the Secretariat for providing an overview of key global developments of relevance to forests and the forest sector, and that of interest to the Commission;
- (b) *welcomed* the progress made on the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and appreciated FAO's contributions to international policy processes and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Conference on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the United Nations Forum on Forests, as well as FAO's leadership

role in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests;

- (c) *welcomed* the theme of the State of the World's Forests Report 2024: Forestry Innovations for a Better World.

INPUT TO FAO GOVERNANCE AND FAO FORESTRY STRATEGIC PLANNING (Item 8)

22. The Commission:

- (a) *took note* of the status of preparation of the 27th Session of the Committee on Forestry and highlighted the need for the Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs) to have a more policy-relevant role in the FAO Regional Conferences.
- (b) *encouraged* members to continue to actively support the Regional Forestry Commissions as the main instruments for the forestry sector for linking the global and regional levels under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031.
- (c) *recommended* that the Committee on Forestry consider the following topics in developing its next session's agenda:
- i. agriculture and forestry linkages, with a special focus on strengthening forest and rangeland resilience through restoring silvopastoral systems for better drought and economic management; and
 - ii. sustainable wood production and planted forests in drylands.
- (d) *welcomed* the development of the new framework document for FAO's work on Forestry 2024-2031 and took note of the process as presented in the Secretariat note NEFRC/2023/6.1.
- (e) *encouraged* Member Nations to further strengthen regional collaboration in implementing regional initiatives such as the 'Middle East Green Initiative' launched by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- (f) *encouraged* countries to attend the 27th Session of the Committee on Forestry, to be held from 22 to 26 July 2024 in Rome, Italy.

FOREST AND AGRICULTURE LINKAGES: STRENGTHENING FOREST AND RANGELAND RESILIENCE THROUGH RESTORING SILVOPASTORAL SYSTEMS FOR BETTER DROUGHT AND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT (Item 6)

23. The Commission:

- (a) *acknowledged* the multiple linkages between the agriculture and forestry sectors in dryland ecosystems and underscored the need to achieve better synergies between them, highlighting the potential role of the silvopastoral approach in addressing drought management and restoring dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems.
- (b) *called for* the need to improve cross-sectoral coordination on forests, rangelands, food production, land use, and rural development policies for more effective drought resilience and management of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems.
- (c) *encouraged* its members to strengthen equitable and inclusive gender-sensitive planning and management to improve livelihoods and mitigate the impacts of drought on vulnerable populations by using available guidelines such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT).
- (d) *recommended* that FAO conduct - subject to available extra-budgetary resources - a stocktaking exercise on the inclusion of integrated silvopastoral management in land-use and planning-related policies and regulations for better drought management. This would contribute to FAO's biennial theme for 2024-25 'Water resources management for the four

betters: better production, better nutrition, better environment, and better life to achieve the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)'. The Commission will submit a progress report on this point to the Twenty-seventh Session of COFO.

- (e) *invited* FAO to support countries in strengthening their forest and rangeland monitoring systems to measure silvopastoral, social, economic and environmental values in response to accelerating the achievement of the SDGs as well as other pledges, such as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
- (f) *requested* the Secretariat to share the conclusions of this session with the Second Session of the COAG Sub-Committee on Livestock (to be held in May 2024), and the Thirty-Seventh Session of the Near East Regional Conference (to be held in February and March 2024) and, to the COFO 27 (to be held on 22–26 July 2024) for their consideration.

IN-SESSION SEMINAR: ENHANCING SOUTH-SOUTH KNOWLEDGE-SHARING AND COOPERATION FOR BETTER DRYLAND FORESTS AND AGROSILVOPASTORAL RESTORATION (Item 7)

24. The Near East Forest and Range Commission and the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral systems acknowledged the joint informative seminar and underscored the need to achieve better synergies between forest and agriculture in drylands through inter-sectorial approaches, for more sustainable agrifood systems.

25. The participants welcomed the importance of South-South knowledge and of sharing lessons learned between and among countries in the global South, including through the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and other related global initiatives and processes.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN NON-WOOD FOREST PRODUCTS AND PASTORAL VALUE CHAINS IN THE NEAR EAST REGION (Item 10)

26. The Commission:

- (a) *took note* of the document NEFRC/2023/07, which presents the results of the regional assessment on women's participation in the non-wood forest products and pastoral value chains in the Near East Region.
- (b) *recognized* women's role in the valorization of these products and their importance for the sustainable management of forests and rangelands and invited members to:
 - i. Further strengthen the policy and institutional environment to women's economic empowerment in the Region and develop an enabling environment that would support women and enhance their contribution to the sustainable management of NWFPs and pastoral value chains.
 - ii. Consider collecting gender-disaggregated data and statistics in surveys and assessments related to the forestry and rangeland ecosystems services, in order to analyze the gender-differentiated perceptions and knowledge in terms of NWFP and pastoral product collection, valorization and management.

27. The Commission *requested* FAO to:

- (a) *support* countries to contribute to conserving and restoring biodiversity while improving nutrition, food security, and livelihoods through the identification of opportunities, challenges and specific technical support requirements for the sustainable use NWFPs and pastoral value chain;
- (b) *conduct* a stocktaking exercise on the contribution of women and youth to the value chain of pastoral and non-wood forest products in the Near East Region. The assessment would help collecting gender-disaggregated data and relevant information on women's formal and informal participation in non-wood forest products and pastoral value chains in the Near

East Region focusing on women and youth access to productive resources, to extension services and capacity building programmes, to financial services, to market and to decision-making bodies;

- (c) *support* countries in assessing women's and youth contribution to climate smart agriculture and NWFP and pastoral value chains;
- (d) *continue to support* engagement of women and indigenous people in FAO project implementation as appropriate.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Item 11)

28. The Commission noted the importance of the regional collaboration for wildfire prevention and management and recalled FAO support continue implementing the activities of the Near East and North Africa Regional Forest Wildland Fire Network (NENFIRE) and Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS).

DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION (Item 12)

29. The Commission welcomed the proposal of the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to host the 27th Session of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission. The Commission requested the NEFRC Secretariat to consider this proposal when deciding on the date and venue of the next Session in consultation with member Governments in the region.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT AND CLOSURE OF THE SESSION (Item 13)

30. The Commission adopted the report as amended by consensus.

31. Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Bint Ali thanked the participants, the Ministry of Agriculture and FAO for the Organization of the Session. His Excellence Mr Mohamed Al Hyary, Secretary General of the Minister of Agriculture of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan delivered closing remarks and thanked the participants for their active participation. He also reminded Members on the importance of follow-up on the implementation of NEFRC recommendations within their countries and to report back about the actions taken at the next session of NEFRC.

32. Ms Vähänen, Deputy Director of Forestry Division, thanked in her closing remarks the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for the hosting of the Session, the participants for their participation and the Chairman for his leadership to the session, indicating that time has come to translate the Session recommendations into actions.

33. The closing ceremony of NEFRC 26 was organized jointly with the 3rd Session of the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral systems. The Session was closed at 16.30 (AST).

ANNEX I

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ANNEX 2

**NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION
TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION
10-13 September 2023
PROVISIONAL AGENDA**

1. Opening of the Session
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Election of Officers
4. FAO and Country Activities in the Region and Follow-up on Requests and Recommendations of the 25th Session of the NEFRC
5. Governance review of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission
6. Forest and Agriculture Linkages: Strengthening forest and rangeland resilience through restoring silvopastoral systems for better drought and economic management
7. Enhancing South-South knowledge sharing for better dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems restoration in- the Near East region
8. Update on global processes and initiatives of relevance for the Commission
9. Input to FAO governance and FAO Forestry strategic planning
10. Women's participation in non-wood forest products and pastoral value chains in the Near East Region
11. Any Other Business
12. Date and Place of Next Session
13. Adoption of the Report and Closure of the Session

ANNEX 3

Near East Forestry and Range Commission
Twenty-sixth Session
10-13 September 2023
LIST OF DOCUMENTS

NEFRC/2023/1	Provisional agenda
NEFRC/2023/2	FAO and Country Activities in the Region and Follow-up on Decisions and Recommendations of the 25 th Session of the Commission
NEFRC/2023/3	Governance review of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission
NEFRC/2023/4	Forest and Agriculture Linkages: Strengthening forest and rangeland resilience through restoring silvopastoral systems for better drought and economic management - <i>Joint document-</i>
NEFRC/2023/5	Update on global processes and initiatives of relevance for the Commission
NEFRC/2023/6.1	FAO Forestry strategic planning
NEFRC/2023/6.2	Input to FAO governance
NEFRC/2023/7	Women's participation in non-wood forest products and pastoral value chains in the Near East Region
NEFRC/2023/Inf.1	Information note
NEFRC/2023/Inf.2	Provisional timetable
NEFRC/2023/Inf.3	List of documents
NEFRC/2023/Inf.4	<i>Silva Mediterranea</i>
NEFRC/2023/Inf.5	Enhancing South-South knowledge sharing for better dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems restoration in- the Near East region - <i>Joint document-</i>

ANNEX 4

**CONCEPT NOTES OF SIDE EVENTS UNDER THE NEAR EAST FORESTRY WEEK
(10-13 September 2023)**

**I. Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS)
Strengthening Regional Collaboration for Healthy Forests**

Date: 10 to 13 September 2023 from 16.00 to 17.30 UTC+3

Room: Mars

Regional Priority 4: Building Resilience to Multiple Shocks

Background: Forests in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) have faced significant impacts from various invasive species and diebacks, including the Western conifer seed bug, insect defoliators, pine diebacks due to climate change, bark beetles (*Tomicus* sp.), and invasive insect pests affecting cactus pear plantations.

The Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS) serves as a collaborative platform for national institutions, scientists, professional organizations, and stakeholders to address forest health and invasive species challenges in the region.

Through this workshop the NENFHIS will foster knowledge exchange, collaboration, and expertise sharing among stakeholders dedicated to safeguarding forest health and combatting invasive species in the Near East region. Through dedicated efforts, the Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species aims to contribute to the preservation of healthy forests and the mitigation of invasive species impacts.

Agenda	September 10 (Day 1)	September 11 (Day 2)	September 12 (Day 3)	September 13 (Day 4)
	Departure day			
Morning	Opening ceremony NEFRC	NENFHIS session: Member Nations forest health status & discussion	Field visit	NENFHIS focal point meeting & work plan for 2024-2025.
				NEFRC SESSION: closing ceremony and adoption of report.
Lunch break				
Afternoon	NENFHIS' welcoming session	NENFHIS technical session: Tree diebacks (Saudi Arabia)	Field visit	COFO WG - Closing ceremony
	Technical session: Forest health surveillance – Lessons from Morocco.	Technical session: Cactus pest management (Tunisia)		

**II. Restoration Initiatives in the Mediterranean Region: the Flagship program under
the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and other initiatives**

Date: Sunday, 10 September 2023 - from 16.00 to 17.30 UTC+3

Room: AlReem Ballroom

Regional Priority 4: Building resilience to multiple shocks

Background: Under increasing threat from large and intense forest fires, effective post-fire restoration practices have been established in the Mediterranean region. These practices can represent a model for worldwide stakeholders and advance the Agadir Commitment, which aims to restore 8 million hectares by 2030 in the region.

With the aim to highlight the role of the Mediterranean in this context and be an inspiration for other countries, the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - *Silva Mediterranea* applied for the Restoration Flagship Initiatives under the framework of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 (UN Decade) and was selected to receive a contribution from the Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

The collection of effective good practices in post-fire restoration in the Mediterranean will provide a knowledge-sharing and learning opportunity for all stakeholders dealing with wildfire management in the region.

Main Objectives

- Highlight successful case studies of degraded forest ecosystems restoration.
- Inspire other Mediterranean countries to conceive restoration interventions as nature-based solutions to build resilience in the area and to increase the generation of incomes for local stakeholders.
- Increase the political will to seek a joint regional effort to restore more resilient landscapes prone to wildfire risk.

Agenda

Time	Content	Speaker
16.00 – 16.10	Introduction: an overview of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and key achievements of the FAO led taskforces on Monitoring and Best Practices	Giovanbattista de Dato, Secretary of <i>Silva Mediterranea</i> , FAO
16.10 – 16.25	Rangeland restoration plans in Lebanon	Chadi Mohanna, Director of Rural Development and Natural Resources, Lebanon
16.25 – 16.40	Restoration plan in the Maamora forest and integration of restoration targets in the Nationally Determined Contribution of Morocco	Hajar El Katrani, Head of the Forestry and Silviculture Department
16.40 – 16.55	Restoration ongoing efforts in Tunisia and brief presentation of the upcoming Mediterranean Forest Week to be held in Sousse in April 2024	Mohamed Naoufel Ben Haha, Director of the Directorate-general for Forests, Tunisia
16.55 – 17.10	Post fire restoration initiatives in Türkiye	Ümit Turhan, Deputy Head of Department, General Directorate of Forestry, Türkiye
17.10 – 17.25	Discussion to be facilitated by Giovanbattista de Dato	
17.25 – 17.30	Wrap up and way forward for Flagship implementation	Giovanbattista de Dato, Secretary of <i>Silva Mediterranea</i> , FAO

III. Challenges and opportunities for climate change adaptation with drylands forests

Date: Monday, 11 September 2023 - from 16.00 to 17.30 UTC+3

Room: AlReem Ballroom

Regional Priority 3: Greening agriculture, water scarcity and climate action

Background: Forests have been high on the climate change agenda mainly for their contributions to climate change mitigation. However, forests and trees do more than sequester and store carbon. They provide a host of ecosystem services that help people and ecosystems adapt to climate change. Forests and trees are already affected by climate change, including through more frequent and intense climate impacts. The role of forests and trees in mitigating climate change and buffering its impacts depends on their ability to adapt and maintain resilience in a changing environment.

Covering five per cent of the land area of the region of Near East and North Africa, dryland forests provide crucial ecosystem services and livelihoods for communities engaged in sustainable forest management, non-wood forest value chains, and silvopastoralism. The specific challenges in the region with regards to land and water management call for discussions on opportunities and benefits from the conservation and sustainable management of dryland forest systems for enhancing food security under additional constraints of increasing population, climate change, conflicts and migration.

This technical workshop will highlight the contributions of forests to climate change adaptation, as well as the challenges climate change presents to dryland forests. This event contributes to the *FAO Regional Priority 3: Greening agriculture, water scarcity, and climate action*.

Main objectives

- Highlight good practices in adaptation of dryland forests and their contributions to livelihoods.
- Share with country stakeholders FAO's offer of support and discuss entry points for integrating forest-based adaptation into national and sectoral adaptation and resilience policy documents.
- Explore interlinkages between dryland forests, biodiversity, and resilient agrifood systems.

Agenda

Time	Content	Speaker
16.00 - 16.05	Welcome and housekeeping	Facilitator (FAO)
16.05 - 16.10	Opening remarks	FAO
16.10 - 16.30	Opening presentation: Dryland forests and climate change adaptation	CIFOR-ICRAF
16.30 - 17.10	Panel: Challenges and opportunities in dryland forests adaptation	
17.10 - 17.20	Q&A and collaborative discussion	Facilitator
17.20 - 17.30	Discussant's remarks	FAO

Speakers

Serge Nakouzi - FAO Deputy Regional Representative

Houria Djoudi - Senior Scientist, Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry

Shahbano Tirmizi - United Arab Emirates COP28 Presidency task force on Nature, Land use and Oceans

Mohammed Alrababa - Jordan University of Science and Technology

Khalid Khawaldeh - World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP), Jordan

İsmail Belen - Chamber of Forest Engineers, Türkiye

Alaa Azzouz Salama Abdel Maqsood - Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, Egypt

Theresa Wong - Natural Resources Officer, FAO.

This side event is funded by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF).

IV. The role of urban forests and trees in adaptation to climate change in dryland cities

Date: Monday, 11 September 2023 from 16.00 to 17.30 UTC+3

Room: Pluto

Regional Priority 4: Building Resilience to Multiple Shocks

Background: Home to about 2 billion people, 90 percent of them in developing countries, drylands host just 1 percent of the world's built-up land, but have 35 percent of its largest cities and are home to 27 percent of the world's forests. Scarce rainfall and water supplies compound the negative impacts of rapid urbanization on drylands, leading to overexploitation of limited resources, increased land degradation and greater fragility for urban communities.

This is particularly true in hot drylands, where high temperatures and projected temperature increases will more significantly affect evapotranspiration. The implications of growing urbanization for public health in a dryland context are severe. With temperatures rising due to climate change, the effects are particularly acute in an urban setting, resulting in higher rates of respiratory and cardiovascular disease, with air pollution as an exacerbating factor.

Urban forestry and urban greening present valuable opportunities for ensuring more sustainable development of dryland cities. Evidence has shown that incorporating green spaces, trees and forests into the urban fabric can support the provision of ecosystem goods and services that are critical for the livelihoods, health and well-being of urban populations, while increasing their resilience to global shifts, such as climate change. Nowhere is this potential more pronounced than in arid environments. In fact, in dryland cities where trees have been preserved or introduced as part of a deliberate urban planning policy, they have been shown to have a strong beneficial effect on the lives and health of people who live there.

This event will bring together actors who are interested in how cities address climate change impacts and supporting urban climate resilience in drylands.

Main Objectives

- Highlight good practices in activities being carried out to increase resilience and people's health in the Near East Region.
- Share lessons learned, approaches and capacity building activities that can strengthen the role of cities in adaptation to Climate change in the Near East and dryland cities.

Agenda

Time	Content	Speaker
16.00 – 16.10	Introductory remarks and objectives	Simone Borelli, Urban Forestry Officer, FAO
16.10 – 16.25	Rewilding Amman: Introducing Native Micro-Forests	Deema Assaf, Director, Tayyun Urban Research Lab, Jordan
16.25 – 16.40	Lebanon restoration initiative: urban forestry activities	Fadi Al Nahri, Lebanon Restoration Initiative
16.40 – 16.55	The Green Riyadh Programme	Faihan Alotaibi, Royal Commission for Riyadh City

16.55 – 17.25	Discussions	Participants
17.25 – 17.30	Closing	Simone Borelli, Urban Forestry Officer, FAO

ANNEX 5

Annex 5.1

NEFRC recommendations for the attention of COFO (issues to be considered for preparations of the Agenda)

Priority issues for COFO to consider	Expected outcome	Reference to other RFC's recommendation
<i>Accelerating</i> action on the ground for combatting desertification and restoring ecosystems;	Guidance	
The NEFRC Secretariat to share the conclusions of this session with the 2nd Session of the COAG Sub-Committee on Livestock (to be held in May 2024) and the 27th Session of the Committee on Forestry (to be held on 22-26 July 2024) for their consideration.	Information	

Annex 5.2

NEFRC recommendations for the attention of the Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC)

Priority issues for the NERC to consider	Expected outcome	Reference to other NERC as appropriate
The Commission <i>requested</i> the Secretariat to <i>share</i> the report of this session with the 37th Session of the Near East Regional Conference (to be held in February and March 2024) for their consideration.	Information	
<i>Support</i> countries in strengthening their forest and rangeland monitoring systems to measure silvopastoral, social, economic and environmental values in response to accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as other pledges, such as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.		
<i>Support</i> countries to contribute to conserving and restoring biodiversity while improving nutrition, food security, and livelihoods through the identification of opportunities, challenges and specific technical support requirements for the sustainable use NWFPs and pastoral value chain	Discussion	

Annex 5.3**NEFRC recommendations for the FAO Programme of Work in Forestry related to the agenda of the current session**

Area/ action for FAO programme of work	Priority	Type	Level of action	Reference to the relevant PPA	Reference to Global Forest Goals of the UNSPF
<i>Support</i> countries with regard to resource mobilization and facilitating access to sources of climate and environmental finance.	Medium	Continued	Regional		
<i>Continue to support</i> Member Nations with the formulation of development projects that integrate forest and rangelands and strengthen cross-sectoral work, through activities that promote inclusive and sustainable management of agrosilvopastoral ecosystems and that contribute to achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).				RP3	
<i>Conduct</i> a stocktaking exercise on the contribution of women and youth to the value chain of pastoral and non-wood forest products in the Near East Region. The assessment would help collecting gender-disaggregated data and relevant information on women's formal and informal participation in non-wood forest products and pastoral value chains in the Near East Region focusing on women and youth access to productive resources, to extension services and capacity building programmes, financial services, to market and to decision-making bodies.	High	New	Regional	RP3 and RP1	

<i>Continue implementing</i> the activities of the Near East and North Africa Regional Forest Wildland Fire Network (NENFIRE) and Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS), and to strengthen regional collaboration on forest/rangeland protection.	Medium	Continued	Regional	RP4	
<i>Continue to support</i> engagement of women and indigenous people in FAO project implementation as appropriate.	High	Continued	Regional	All	
<i>Support</i> Member Nations in developing innovative forestry and rangeland programmes for the restoration of forests and agrosilvopastoral ecosystems and the valuation of goods and services provided by pastoral ecosystems	High	Continued	Regional	RP3	
<i>Conduct</i> , subject to available extra-budgetary resources, a stocktaking exercise on the inclusion of integrated silvopastoral management in land-use and planning-related policies and regulations for better drought management	High	New	Regional	RP3	
<i>Support</i> countries in assessing women's and youth contribution in climate smart agriculture and NWFP and pastoral value chains	Medium	Continued	Regional	All	