



# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

## Thirty-third Session

Rome, Italy, 9-13 May 2016

### Summary of the Progress Made in the Implementation of the Recommendations of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Near East and North Africa region has witnessed further deterioration in the overall food security situation as a result of conflicts, instability and adverse economic conditions. In line with the recommendations of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC), FAO has stepped up its support to countries in the region ensuring that the vast majority of the recommendations have been implemented or initiated; in particular, that the Regional Initiatives have been launched and regional programmes are being piloted under each of these Initiatives; and regional dialogues on key strategic issues, such as food security and nutrition, sustainable management of water resources and sustainable development of small-scale agriculture have been initiated. Visibility of FAO in the region has also increased and partnerships have been expanded, and the capacities of the offices in the region and in countries have been strengthened.

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. This paper provides an update on progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC).

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<b>II. REGIONAL AND GLOBAL POLICY AND REGULATORY ISSUES</b>	
<b>A. State of Food and Agriculture in the Near East and North Africa Region</b>	
<b>Recommendations<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Actions Taken</b>
<p>a. noted the high number of chronically-undernourished people in the Region and the high incidence of obesity;</p> <p>b. noted that conflicts and/or civil insecurity were major driving factors leading to increased food insecurity in the Region in 2012-13;</p> <p>c. endorsed the Regional Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition, and encouraged Member Nations to accelerate efforts to develop improved and coherent policy frameworks for food security and nutrition at the national and regional levels;</p> <p>d. emphasized the potential importance of regional cereal reserves;</p> <p>e. noted the utility of existing market information systems such as AMIS, and requested FAO to continue its efforts in supporting data, information and knowledge sharing on food security and nutrition;</p> <p>f. reiterated its support for the</p>	<p>2. In its 32nd Session, NERC noted that conflict and civil insecurity were major driving factors leading to food insecurity in the region. The Regional Conference endorsed the regional strategic framework for food security and nutrition and underscored the importance of coherent national policy frameworks and food security information systems.</p> <p>3. In 2015, FAO produced, for the first time, a "Regional Overview of Food Insecurity - Near East and North Africa". The report confirmed the fast deteriorating food security and nutrition situation, largely because of the spreading of conflicts and instability. The report called for collective action to build resilience for food security and nutrition in the region.</p> <p>4. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p> <p>5. RNE provided detailed comments on the Study on Food Reserves for the KSA.</p> <p>6. FAO carried out different types of country assessments to provide accurate data to inform FAO and other UN agency programmes. The assessments include the FAO/World Food Programme (WFP) Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) in Sudan and Syria and the Damage Needs Assessment (DNA) in Iraq and the West Bank and Gaza Strip.</p> <p>7. Advocacy and outreach initiatives targeting donors</p>

<sup>1</sup> This section refers to the recommendations endorsed by the 32nd Session of NERC found in the Session's report at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/030/mj875e.pdf>

<p>Regional Initiative on "Building resilience for improved food security and nutrition in the NENA" as a vehicle through which the proposed framework for food security and nutrition at country and regional levels should be promoted, and called on FAO and Member Nations to exert efforts to mobilize extra-budgetary funding for this purpose, and</p> <p>g. welcomed the two Regional Multi-stakeholder Workshops on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) that had already taken place, and requested FAO to study with Member Nations options for their appropriation of the Food Security and Nutrition Forum proposed by the Thirty-first Session of the Regional Conference.</p>	<p>were intensified in 2014–2015, leading to mobilizing USD 109 million for countries in crisis from different donors including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a regional donor.</p> <p>8. FAO convened, in 2015, the fourth Regional Multi-stakeholder Workshop on Food Security and Nutrition jointly with the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the League of Arab States (LAS), WFP and other members of the Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Food Security and Nutrition</p>
<b>B. Reducing Food Losses and Waste in the Near East and North Africa Region</b>	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions Taken</b>
<p>a. noted the direct link between the proposed Regional Strategic Framework for the Reduction of Food Losses and Waste in the Region and FAO's "Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction", and recognized the unique characteristics of the Region in the recommended actions;</p> <p>b. endorsed the Regional Strategic Framework for the Reduction of Food Losses and Waste in the Near East and North Africa, and called on Member Nations in the Region to collaborate with FAO and partners in developing evidence-based national action plans for food losses and waste reduction, with clear objectives, baselines, indicators and targets;</p> <p>c. encouraged Member Nations in the Region, funding institutions, and the private sector to accord high priority to investments in improving food chain</p>	<p>9. Support has been provided in the implementation of regional Strategic framework for food losses and wastes (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p> <p>10. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p> <p>11. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p>

<p>efficiency, as well as other actions crucial in reducing food losses and waste;</p> <p>d. requested FAO to assist Member Nations in developing advocacy and communication materials to address food losses and waste reduction in the Region, and</p> <p>e. noted the importance of including all stakeholders in efforts underway to reduce food losses and waste.</p>	<p>12. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p> <p>13. Advocacy material to sensitize the public on the importance of reducing food losses and waste were developed, published in print media and broadcasted online and on regional TV stations. The Subregional Office for the Gulf Cooperation Council States and Yemen (SNG) co-organized, with the UAE Ministry of Environment and Water, an awareness campaign to reduce losses in fruits and vegetables, while the Subregional Office for North Africa (SNE) worked with caterers for the promotion of food waste reduction.</p>
<p><b>C. Regional Water Scarcity Initiative: Towards a Collaborative Strategy</b></p>	
<p><b>Recommendations</b></p>	<p><b>Actions Taken</b></p>
<p>a. recognized the critical importance of agricultural water management for sustainable development in the Region;</p> <p>b. endorsed the Regional Initiative on Water Scarcity and commended the efforts and actions undertaken by FAO and Partners to develop a Collaborative Regional Strategy on Sustainable Water Management for Food Security;</p> <p>c. recognized this Regional Initiative as complementary to existing national and regional initiatives to create mechanisms in addressing water scarcity beyond national level and to provide an agricultural water lens through the 'Arab Water Security Strategy' (2010-2030) and other initiatives in the Region;</p> <p>d. stressed the importance of implementing priority areas for action under the Regional Initiative on Water Scarcity;</p> <p>e. invited Member Nations to formulate National Action Plans and support the formulation of a Regional</p>	<p>14. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p> <p>15. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p> <p>16. The Regional Initiative on "Water Scarcity for the Near East and North Africa" (RI-WS) achieved a major political milestone in May 2015 when it was officially endorsed by the Arab Water Ministerial Council.</p> <p>17. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p>

<p>Action Plan to implement the Regional Collaborative Strategy;</p> <p>f. urged FAO and its partners to assist Member Nations in developing their National Water Strategies by providing needed technical assistance, and by preparing relevant feasibility studies;</p> <p>g. requested FAO to document and share successful stories, good practices and lessons learned from the Region;</p> <p>h. requested FAO to undertake an assessment of institutional capacities in the Region dealing with climate change and its impact on agriculture and food security, and to establish a mechanism for promoting collaboration in this area, that would include combating drought and desertification, and</p> <p>i. called on Member Nations of the Organization to respect international treaties and agreements related to water resources, and to ensure individual rights of access to water.</p>	<p>18. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p> <p>19. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p> <p>20. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p> <p>21. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p>
<p><b>D. Addressing the Gender Gap in Agriculture and the Rural Sector in the Near East and North Africa</b></p>	
<p><b>Recommendations</b></p>	<p><b>Actions Taken</b></p>
<p>a. recognized the importance of gender-sensitive agriculture and rural development policies by strengthening rural institutions, developing the human capital of women and youth, and promoting the economic empowerment of vulnerable men and women;</p> <p>b. underlined the importance of addressing the needs of rural women and men through gender mainstreaming;</p>	<p>22. Country gender assessments were conducted in Algeria, Lebanon and Sudan, and two case studies on social protection with a gender perspective were completed in Egypt and Lebanon.</p> <p>23. Women entrepreneurs in the UAE and Egypt have been encouraged to establish agrofood business enterprises through events held in collaboration with the General Women's Union of UAE and the Arab Women Investors Union. Capacity building of rural institutions in gender mainstreaming through a gender-sensitive value</p>

<p>c. welcomed FAO's approach in mainstreaming gender in its programme of work and related activities in the Region.</p> <p>d. requested Member Nations to collect, analyse and disseminate statistics that allowed accurate assessments of the situation of women in the agriculture and rural sector, and requested FAO to provide technical support for Member Nations of the Region in these areas.</p>	<p>chain analysis on medicinal and aromatic plants in Fayoum, Egypt, has been undertaken.</p> <p>24. Gender is being mainstreamed into activities within the Regional Initiatives; and promotion of activities on gender and agriculture through regional and subregional gender networks is ongoing.</p> <p>25. Gender disaggregated information and statistical data has been completed in Algeria, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia in 2015, and is being extended to Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Iraq in 2016.</p>
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<b>III. PROGRAMME AND BUDGET MATTERS</b>	
<b>A. Priorities for FAO Activities in the Near East and North Africa</b>	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions Taken</b>
<p>a. acknowledged that there were shared challenges and common areas of development work despite the geographic and economic differences among the Member Nations of the Region;</p>	<p>26. Following their endorsement by the 32nd Session of NERC, the three Regional Initiatives were launched as planned, delivery teams established, focus countries identified and work plans at the country and regional levels developed and were operationalised during 2014</p>
<p>b. appreciated the major actions implemented by FAO in addressing regional priorities during 2012-2013, including actions undertaken in response to the recommendations of the previous Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East;</p>	<p>27. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p>
<p>c. endorsed the priorities for FAO's work in the Region as outlined in paragraph 19 of document NERC/14/2, which drew on country priorities reflected in Country Programming Frameworks and recommendations of the Regional Commissions;</p>	<p>28. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p>
<p>d. supported the three Regional Initiatives in the Near East and North Africa: i) water scarcity; ii) building resilience for enhanced food security and nutrition; and iii) sustainable small-scale agriculture for inclusive development, as a means to further focus FAO's work for country-level impact and for resource mobilisation within the Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2014-2015 and Medium-Term Plan (MTP) 2014-2017;</p>	<p>29. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p>
<p>e. underlined the need for continuity in the strategic direction and leadership of the Organization in order to realize the full impact of the reviewed Strategic Framework;</p>	<p>30. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)</p>

<p>f. expressed concern with the level of extra-budgetary resources planned for the Region, and requested FAO to exert more efforts in mobilising the required extra-budgetary resources to support country-level actions and the three Regional Initiatives;</p> <p>g. requested FAO to formulate multi-country projects under the three Regional Initiatives that could be presented to Member Nations of the Region for funding;</p> <p>h. emphasized the need to mobilize resources in the Region and between Regions, including through South-South Cooperation and partnerships, in implementing the Regional Initiatives and the Country Programming Frameworks;</p> <p>i. highlighted the importance of also addressing issues of inter-regional nature at the Regional Conference, particularly with Africa on transboundary matters;</p> <p>j. welcomed and appreciated the contribution of Iraq to the Regional Solidarity Trust Fund;</p> <p>k. urged Member Nations in the Region to contribute to the Regional Solidarity Trust Fund as a means of supporting the Regional Initiatives, and</p> <p>l. called on FAO and the Chairperson of the Regional Conference to take the lead in appropriate follow-up with Member Nations towards this end.</p>	<p>31. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev. 1 Results and Priorities)</p> <p>32. Multi-country projects have been formulated for Jordan and Lebanon in the context of the Syria crisis A multi-country project has also been formulated to support ‘water sustainability’ in NENA countries and implementing the 2030 Agenda for water-related Sustainable Development Goals in Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, Yemen. Dialogue is ongoing with donors.</p> <p>33. South-South Cooperation agreements have been signed with Egypt and Morocco, and an agreement has been signed with Iran (Islamic Republic of). A concept note for South-South action plans of collaboration has been presented to several recipient countries for potential funding considerations.</p> <p>34. Interregional issues, such as transboundary plant pests and animal diseases have been partially addressed in particular in the context of Regional Commissions and through workshops addressing MERS CoV and FMD.</p> <p>35. Projects proposals for Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Sudan, Syria and WBGs have been submitted to donor countries in the region.</p>
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<b>B. Decentralization and the Decentralized Offices Network</b>	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions Taken</b>
<p>a. highlighted the progress made in strengthening Decentralized Offices (DOs) in the Region;</p>	<p>36. Efforts to strengthen the capacities of the Regional Office have been intensified. The number of professional staff and long-term consultants at RNE has registered an increase of 7 percent approximately. New areas of expertise covered include resilience, small-scale agriculture, farmer field schools, social protection, results-based management and communication.</p>
<p>b. endorsed the measures pursued to reinforce capabilities within the Regional Office and the Decentralized Offices Network, as well as to secure the optimal utilization of existing capabilities at the regional, sub-regional and country levels;</p>	<p>37. The FAO Representative positions in the region have been filled. A fully fledged FAO Representative has been appointed in Jordan. Deputy FAO Representative positions in Sudan, Syria and Yemen have been established throughout 2014–2015.</p>
<p>c. supported actions taken to strengthen the capacity of Country Offices, including a review of their current structures;</p>	<p>38. An organogram model has been established and discussed with Country Offices, and partially implemented in Mauritania and Sudan.</p>
<p>d. agreed to support a methodological review of the organizational design of Country Offices to strengthen their capacity by aligning their respective programmes and structures;</p>	<p>39. (Cf. paragraph 38)</p>
<p>e. encouraged funding from Region-to-Region, including funding through the Regional Solidarity Trust Fund;</p>	<p>40. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia provided USD Millions 19,5 to support FAO interventions in Iraq and Yemen.</p>
<p>f. welcomed the actions taken to strengthen cooperation with regional organizations, particularly ICARDA, and enhanced collaboration efforts that would promote more coherent and integrated work on Food Security and Agricultural Development across the Region;</p>	<p>41. Collaboration with partners has been reinforced and institutionalized through regional Memoranda of Understanding with ICARDA and ICBA. The partnership with ICARDA includes the support to the introduction of new techniques to improve water efficiency in pilot sites in rainfed and dryland systems in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. FAO is partnering with ICBA and ICARDA to support the establishment of the Agricultural Innovation Center (AIC) of the UAE as a regional centre of excellence for research and development on the</p>

<p>g. recognized the importance of the Unilateral Trust Fund (UTF) programmes as a means for bilateral collaboration between FAO and Member Nations, such as the cooperation programmes between FAO and Saudi Arabia and FAO and Libya;</p> <p>h. welcomed progress made on making the Sub-regional Office for the Gulf Cooperation Council States and Yemen operational, and thanked the United Arab Emirates for its generosity;</p> <p>i. welcomed progress made in integrating emergency and development activities, appointing Deputies to the FAO Representative in some Member Nations, and the process of aligning Country Programming Frameworks with FAO's reviewed Strategic Framework;</p> <p>j. stressed the importance of strengthening FAO Representations to enhance coordination and leadership and supporting Member Nations to strengthen information sharing on lessons learned and partnerships.</p> <p>k. appreciated the role of FAO in supporting the resilience of Palestinian producers in agricultural sector, and called upon FAO to continue in providing its support for such programmes.</p>	<p>potential of protected agriculture. Agreements with other regional partners are under consideration.</p> <p>42. Recognizing the importance of the Unilateral Trust Fund (UTF) modality as a means to respond to middle- and high-income country priorities and in order to give visibility to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia–FAO Cooperation Programme, RNE organized the Saudi Arabia Agriculture Week in Cairo in April 2014, back-to-back with the UTF joint committee meeting in April 2014.</p> <p>43. The Subregional Office for the Gulf Cooperation Council States and Yemen has been strengthened during the biennium and achieved important results, including the formulation of a sustainable agriculture development strategy for the UAE, the initiation of pilot projects for water saving in the UAE, the organization of several technical meetings addressing major challenges for the subregion, including MERS-CoV and the support to the formulation and implementation of fisheries and aquaculture projects in Yemen and Oman.</p> <p>44. The decentralization and integration of emergency and development has been completed. Multidisciplinary country support teams have been established to support the implementation of the CPFs and facilitate the mobilization of technical expertise to help Country Offices achieve their targets.</p> <p>45. (Cf. paragraph 37).</p> <p>46. In response to the NERC recommendations, FAO strengthened its support to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A Letter of Intent was signed between the Palestinian Minister of Agriculture and the Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for the Near East and North Africa. An appeal for USD 117.5 million for the reconstruction of the agriculture sector was launched.</p>
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	47. Following the Gaza crisis, FAO stepped up its humanitarian support to farmers in Gaza and to the Bedouins, and implemented projects in value chain development, irrigation and capacity building to control transboundary animal diseases, including Avian Influenza. FAO is supporting the Ministry in the formulation of a sustainable agriculture development strategy.
<b>IV. OTHER MATTERS</b>	
<b>A. Multi-year Programme of Work for the Regional Conference for the Near East</b>	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions Taken</b>
a. The Regional Conference reviewed the previous document (NERC/14/8) of Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW), and approved the revised MYPOW 2012-15 for the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East.	48. The agenda of the 33rd Session of NERC was developed in full consultation with the Rome-based Permanent Representative Group for the Near East. Meetings with the Chair of NERC as well as regular video conferencing with the Group for the Near East were arranged to brief them on the progress achieved in implementing the recommendations of the 32nd Session of NERC and the preparations for the 33rd session.
<b>B. Family Farming</b>	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions Taken</b>
a. The Regional Conference appreciated the efforts made by FAO on promoting family farming and noted the recommendations of document NERC/14/INF/12 on Family Farming.	49. (Cf. NERC/16/2/Rev.1 Results and Priorities)
<b>C. The Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)</b>	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions Taken</b>
a. The Regional Conference noted the importance of the active participation of Member Nations in the upcoming FAO/WHO Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), to be held in Rome in November 2014, in order to improve diets and raise levels of nutrition.	50. RNE provided technical support to countries for reviewing country nutrition papers (Egypt, Lebanon, Oman, Sudan) and for organizing pre-ICN2 national workshops/events (Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, UAE).

<b>D. Global Commission on Statistics</b>	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions Taken</b>
<p>a. The Regional Conference took note of the presentation made by the Secretariat on the proposal of the establishment of a global commission on Statistics to address the information gaps in food security, nutrition and Agriculture and coordinate global efforts in this area.</p>	
<b>E. Side Event on Yemen</b>	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Actions Taken</b>
<p>a. The Regional Conference took note of the Side Event on “The impact of protracted crisis on agriculture and food and nutrition security” in Yemen and expressed concern over the dire situation of food security and nutrition in the country. The Regional Conference supported the Director-General’s Initiative of establishing a Multi-Donor Programme for supporting Yemen in its effort to address food security and nutrition and welcomed the call of the Director-General to organize a pledge conference for this purpose.</p>	<p>51. FAO Director-General has intensified advocacy efforts for Yemen.</p> <p>52. A "Plan of Action: Towards Resilient and Sustainable Livelihoods for Agriculture and Food and Nutrition Security 2014–2018", with funding requirements totalling USD 145 million, was developed for Yemen. USD 33.7 million were mobilized against the Plan of Action up to the end of December 2015.</p> <p>53. A USD 5.8 million worth Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 10 September 2015 between FAO and the King Salman Center of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to support food security and local food production in crisis-affected districts in Yemen.</p>