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Food and Agriculture
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Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
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منظمة
الغذية والزراعة
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CONFERENCE

Forty-first Session

Rome, 22-29 June 2019

**Report of the 34th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East
(Rome, Italy, 7-11 May 2018)**

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Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

NERC/18/REP Rev.1

REPORT

Rome

Italy

7-11 May 2018

Thirty-fourth Session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East

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FAO Member Nations in the Near East Region

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Algeria	Kyrgyzstan	Somalia
Azerbaijan	Lebanon	Sudan
Bahrain	Libya	Syrian Arab Republic
Cyprus	Malta	Tajikistan
Djibouti	Mauritania	Tunisia
Egypt	Morocco	Turkey
Iran, Islamic Republic of	Oman	Turkmenistan
Iraq	Pakistan	United Arab Emirates
Jordan	Qatar	Yemen

Date and place of the Sessions of the FAO Regional Conferences for the Near East

First	- Cairo, Egypt, 2-14 February 1948
Second	- Bloudane, Syria, 28 August – 6 September 1951
Third	- Cairo, Egypt, 1-9 September 1953
Fourth	- Damascus, Syria*, 10-20 December 1958
Fifth	- Tehran, Iran (Islamic Republic of), 21 September – 1 October 1960
Sixth	- Tel Amara, Lebanon, 30 July – 8 August 1962
Seventh	- Cairo, Egypt**, 19-31 October 1964
Eighth	- Khartoum, Sudan, 24 January – 2 February 1967
Ninth	- Baghdad, Iraq, 21 September – 1 October 1968
Tenth	- Islamabad, Pakistan, 12-22 September 1970
Eleventh	- Kuwait, Kuwait, 9-19 September 1972
Twelfth	- Amman, Jordan, 31 August – 9 September 1974
Thirteenth	- Tunis, Tunisia, 4-11 October 1976
Fourteenth	- Damascus, Syria, 9-16 September 1978
Fifteenth	- Rome, Italy, 21-25 April 1981
Sixteenth	- Nicosia, Cyprus, 25-29 October 1982
Seventeenth	- Aden, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, 11-15 March 1984
Eighteenth	- Istanbul, Turkey, 17-21 March 1986
Nineteenth	- Muscat, Oman, 13-17 March 1988
Twentieth	- Tunis, Tunisia, 12-16 March 1990
Twenty-first	- Tehran, Iran (Islamic Republic of), 17-21 May 1992
Twenty-second	- Amman, Jordan, 3-6 July 1994
Twenty-third	- Rabat, Morocco, 26-29 March 1996
Twenty-fourth	- Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, 21-25 March 1998
Twenty-fifth	- Beirut, Lebanon, 20-24 March 2000
Twenty-sixth	- Tehran, Iran (Islamic Republic of), 9-13 March 2002
Twenty-seventh	- Doha, State of Qatar, 13-17 March 2004
Twenty-eighth	- Sana'a, Republic of Yemen, 12-16 March 2006
Twenty-ninth	- Cairo, the Arab Republic of Egypt, 1-5 March 2008
Thirtieth	- Khartoum, the Republic of the Sudan, 4-8 December 2010
Thirty-first	- Rome, Italy, 14-18 May 2012
Thirty-second	- Rome, Italy, 24-28 February 2014
Thirty-third	- Rome, Italy, 9-13 May 2016
Thirty-fourth	- Rome, Italy, 7-11 May 2018

**Known as the United Arab Republic from 01/03/1958*

***Known as the United Arab Republic until 02/09/1971*

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SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Matters for the Attention of the Council

- *Results and Priorities for FAO in the Near East and North Africa Region* (Paragraphs 37 and 38)
- *Decentralized Offices Network* (Paragraph 40)

Matters for the Attention of the Conference

- *Agroecology: Adapting to Climate Change in Semi-arid Areas for a Sustainable Agricultural Development* (Paragraph 17 b), c) and d), and 18)
- *Agricultural Transformation in the Near East and North Africa Region and the Challenge of Youth Employment and Migration* (Paragraphs 21 and 22)
- *One Health: Addressing Transboundary Plant, Animal and Fish Pests and Diseases: A Case for Regional Cooperation* (Paragraphs 24 and 25)

I. Introductory Items

Organization of the Conference

1. The 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC-34) was held in Rome, Italy, from 7 to 11 May 2018. The Regional Conference was organized in two parts: a Senior Officers' Meeting from 7 to 9 May and a Ministerial-level Meeting from 10 to 11 May.
2. The Regional Conference was attended by 144 participants of which 19 ministers and deputy ministers. This included delegates from 25 out of 30 Members of the region, three observer Members and two other observers, and by representatives from seven organizations of the United Nations, five intergovernmental organizations, one non-governmental organization, one research institution and six civil society organizations.

Inaugural Ceremony

3. The Senior Officers' Meeting was opened with a statement by Mr Louis Lahoud, Director-General of the Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon, and Mr Abdessalam Ould Ahmed, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative, FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa.
4. Mr Lahoud welcomed participants and officially opened the meeting. Mr Ould Ahmed welcomed participants and highlighted the importance of this meeting in light of the emerging threats and challenges facing the region and its resilience, and the opportunities presented by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
5. Mr Ould Ahmed indicated that FAO continued delivering its support to countries of the region in particular in countries riddled by conflicts and protracted crises to advance the resilience agenda, supporting both emergency and sustainable livelihoods, capacity building and sustainable management of natural resources. He added that conflicts were also driving massive population displacement across the region that required attention in food and nutrition security. Furthermore, he underlined that the immensity of the challenges facing the region required bold and multidimensional partnerships, indicating that FAO was addressing most of these challenges through the programme of work of the three Regional Initiatives in the Near East and North Africa.

Election of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur

6. The Chairperson of the 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference thanked the Organization for the good preparation of this Session.
7. The Regional Conference elected Mr Sid Ahmed M. Alamain Hamid Alamain from the Sudan as Rapporteur.
8. The Regional Conference elected His Excellency Fuad bin Ja'afar Al-Sajwani, Minister for Agriculture of the Sultanate of Oman, as Chairperson, and Kuwait as Vice-Chairperson of the 35th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East.

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

9. The Regional Conference adopted the Agenda (*Appendix A*) and a revised Timetable. Documents submitted to the Regional Conference are listed in *Appendix B*.

Statement by the Director-General

10. The Director-General thanked the Chairperson of the Regional Conference, His Excellency Ghazi Zaieter, Minister for Agriculture of Lebanon, and the Government of Lebanon for their invaluable support. He then emphasized that the number of undernourished in the world was on the rise. Deterioration had been observed most notably in situations of conflict, often compounded by droughts or floods. The Director-General highlighted that overweight rates for children and obesity rates for adults were also rising in nearly all regions of the world, with a serious impact on the health and well-being of millions of people. He indicated that in the Near East and North Africa region, conflicts and protracted crises were the leading drivers of the deterioration of food security in the region and in the world. As long as conflicts continued, there could be no food security and no sustainable development. Therefore, it was imperative to end conflicts for the region to embark on peace, stability and a development agenda. He concluded that the 2030 agenda provided an extraordinary opportunity to advance the goals of FAO, and to bring to the forefront the challenges mentioned and address them in a comprehensive manner and with enhanced partnership. He finally asked countries not to miss the opportunity of the SDG agenda reiterating FAO's continuous support in addressing regional challenges.

Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council

11. Mr Khalid Mehboob, Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council, addressed the Conference, emphasizing the unique role of the Regional Conference in defining FAO policies and priorities, and the opportunity for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of FAO's Decentralized Offices within the framework of the Strategic Objectives of the Organization and the SDGs. He also emphasized that the FAO Decentralized Offices network offers guidance and support for implementing policy recommendations emanating from the Committee on World Food Security.

Statement by the Chairperson of the 34th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East

12. His Excellency Ghazi Zeaiter, Minister for Agriculture of the Lebanese Republic, delivered the statement of the Chairperson of the 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East. In doing so, he highlighted the recommendations of the 33rd Session, and briefed the Delegates on activities undertaken and achievements by the Regional Office as a follow-up to these recommendations.

13. The Chairperson pointed out that the region continued to be a hotspot in terms of food insecurity, water scarcity and climate change, and that malnutrition and overweight continued to be the major challenges in the region. He also called for coordinated efforts between UN agencies and Members to address the challenges of hunger and malnutrition, stressing the importance of developing a regional framework for cooperation in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG2. He then thanked FAO for the continuous support provided to the countries in the region.

Statement by the Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on the Outcomes of the 44th Session of the CFS

14. His Excellency Mario Arvelo Caamaño, Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), reported on the accomplishments of the CFS over the past two years and the relevance of its work to the FAO Regional Conference. He highlighted in particular the endorsement of the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems and the Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises, as well as policy recommendations on food losses and waste, and fisheries. He pointed out the importance of the participation of the countries of the region in the ongoing negotiations on nutrition and food systems. The SDGs could only be achieved by addressing the issues of hunger and malnutrition, especially SDG2: zero hunger.

Statement by the Spokesperson of the Civil Society Organizations

15. A statement summarizing the conclusions and views of the civil society consultation was provided to the Regional Conference, emphasizing the need to respect the rights and interests of small family farmers, landless farmers, rural women, fishers, agricultural workers, pastoralists and herders, artisans, consumers and youth in all aspects of agricultural development. The spokesperson also highlighted the implementation of the recommendations of the Civil Society Consultation for the Near East and North Africa, convened in Beirut (Lebanon) in April 2016.

II. Regional and Global Policy and Regulatory Issues

A. Agroecology: Adapting to Climate Change in Semi-arid Areas for a Sustainable Agricultural Development

16. The Regional Conference reviewed the document on agroecology: Adapting to Climate Change in Semi-arid Areas for a Sustainable Agricultural Development (NERC/18/4).

17. The Regional Conference:

- a) recognized the contribution of agroecology to support adaptation to climate change in semi-arid areas for a sustainable agricultural development, food security and nutrition;
- b) called upon governments to identify and provide incentives to agricultural producers particularly small-scale farmers to foster transitions to more sustainable agriculture and food systems, based on agro-ecological practices;
- c) invited stakeholders to establish national and regional platforms for exchange of knowledge and experiences on agroecology;
- d) encouraged Members to promote the adoption and scaling up of agroecology, which requires mobilization of resources and cooperation between countries that share common agro-ecological concerns.

18. The Regional Conference requested FAO to:

- a) integrate agroecology into the existing Regional Initiatives and strengthen its work on agroecology in the context of the United Nations (UN) Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028), the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) and the Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs);
- b) support countries to build on the successes achieved under the South-South and Triangular Cooperation experience for enhancing cooperation and experience sharing in the area of agroecology;
- c) support countries to better work together with the other active partner organizations and international and regional research organizations for promoting and upscaling agroecology;
- d) build countries capacities in the areas of relevance to agroecology for climate adaptation for food security and nutrition, including support to rehabilitation of degraded lands, monitoring and assessment of land degradation and taking a proactive role in rangelands management and the conservation of biodiversity.

B. Agricultural Transformation in the Near East and North Africa Region and the Challenge of Youth Employment and Migration

19. The Regional Conference reviewed the document on Agricultural Transformation in the Near East and North Africa Region and the Challenge of Youth Employment and Migration (NERC/18/5).

20. The Regional Conference:

- a) highlighted the importance of new technologies and value added packaging to encourage youth engagement in agriculture and related rural income generating activities;
- b) noted the importance of Small and Medium Enterprises on crop and animal-related products that were successful in many countries.

21. The Regional Conference requested countries to:

- a) adopt and implement evidence-based agricultural transformation strategies with the support of FAO and international and regional development entities and other stakeholders;
- b) prioritize coherent policies aimed at closing the rural-urban gap, thereby contributing to the reduction of both rural and urban poverty and unemployment in particular for youth, while accounting for migration's drivers, impact and trends;
- c) foster public and private investment and financing to support agricultural transformation and generate economic opportunities, particularly for the young generation;
- d) prioritize value chain development and related service sectors to support economic growth and generate off-farm rural employment;
- e) leverage the food system for inclusive rural transformation through territorial, location-specific approaches;
- f) encourage countries to increase the share of agriculture in their national budget.

22. The Regional Conference requested FAO to:

- a) document, exchange knowledge and share best practices/success stories from within and outside the region on limiting rural migration and creating job opportunities, including through South-South Cooperation;
- b) adopt policies to ensure that land is not fragmented, identify solutions for addressing the rural-urban gap, and considering the issue of decent jobs in agriculture to limit rural migration of youth, women and men;
- c) support countries in adopting modern agricultural technologies such as hydroponic and organic agriculture for attracting youth;
- d) support the establishment and strengthening of agricultural cooperatives;
- e) support regional initiatives on mobilizing and upscaling investments for agriculture.

**C. One Health: Addressing Transboundary Plant, Animal and Fish Pests and Diseases:
A Case for Regional Cooperation**

23. The Regional Conference considered the document on One Health: Addressing Transboundary Plant, Animal and Fish Pests and Diseases: A Case for Regional Cooperation (NERC/18/6).

24. The Regional Conference:

- a) welcomed the efforts and actions undertaken by Members, FAO and partners in developing strategies and programmes for combating transboundary plant, animal and fish pests and diseases;
- b) called on countries to develop collaborative strategies and plans to manage risks of transboundary plant, animal and fish pests and diseases in times of crisis, including through monitoring and strengthening of cross-border surveillance and dialogue;
- c) considered the need for speedy action to prevent the spread of transboundary diseases and underscored the need for greater synergy and enhanced partnership between existing

intergovernmental, international institutions and United Nations organizations. The Regional Conference also stressed that South-South and Triangular Cooperation are valuable instruments in supporting One Health.

25. The Regional Conference requested FAO to:

- a) support countries in the Near East and North Africa region in developing a regional cooperation programme in line with the One Health Approach, aiming at i) coordinating regional efforts to combat the transboundary pests and diseases; and ii) improving the performance of national plant, animal and fish health services for better and timely control of transboundary diseases, particularly those that seriously affect the rural poor;
- b) assist countries affected by crises and conflicts to establish/rebuild and strengthen the plant and animal quarantine systems destroyed by wars;
- c) assist Members in addressing the issue of fish mortality due to contamination and climate change impact, pointing out the source of contamination and the importance of addressing illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;
- d) support countries in implementing the regional programme for the Red Palm Weevil, and in establishing similar regional programmes to control Fall Armyworm and other emerging pests and diseases, and mobilizing countries' efforts for their successful implementation;
- e) support the use of certified plant propagation materials as a tool to counter the spread of transboundary pests and pathogens.

D. Summary Report of Recommendations of FAO Regional Bodies and Major Meetings in the Near East

26. The Regional Conference noted the recommendations of FAO Regional Bodies and Major Meetings in the Near East (NERC/18/INF/6).

27. The conclusions and recommendations of the Regional Commissions and other relevant regional meetings in the Near East are related to: i) policy and regulatory matters; and ii) programme and budget matters. This includes regional fora such as the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI), the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC) and the Commissions for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central and Western Regions (CRC and CLCPRO). This also includes summaries of the outcomes of high-level meetings.

28. The Regional Conference:

- a) took note of the main outcomes of the Regional Commissions' sessions and major meetings held in the Near East region in the 2016-2017 biennium;
- b) called upon Members and FAO to implement key recommendations arising from these meetings in relation to policy and regulatory matters as well as programme and budget matters.

E. Summary of the Progress made in the Implementation of the Recommendations of the 33rd Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East

29. The Regional Conference considered the document on Summary of the Progress made in the Implementation of the Recommendations of the 33rd Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC/18/INF/5).

30. The Regional Conference noted the implementation of the recommendations on:

- a) improved resilience to food security and nutrition threats through interventions to combat plant and animal pests and diseases, and implementation of food security information and early warning systems;
- b) sustainable conservation of animal, plant and fish genetic resources;

- c) reduction of food losses and waste; and raising community awareness in this regard;
- d) development of social protection systems to increase resilience of small-scale family farmers. In addition, countries have been supported towards the improvement of sustainable water resources management, climate change adaptation and drought management. The current summary also includes updates on the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and information on the Decentralized Offices Network.

31. The Regional Conference requested the Secretariat to present a detailed report on progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of the previous Conferences.

F. FAO Support to Countries for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

32. The Regional Conference considered the document on FAO Support to Countries for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (NERC/18/INF/7).

33. The Regional Conference:

- a) welcomed FAO's efforts to align programmes and policies with the SDGs and to support Members in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs;
- b) encouraged FAO to continue working with Members to achieve the SDGs through the three Regional Initiatives and Strategic Programmes;
- c) highlighted the need for capacity building in countries affected by conflicts and protracted crises.

Strengthening Gender Equality in Agriculture and Rural Development in the Near East and North Africa Region

34. The Regional Conference considered the document on Strengthening Gender Equality in Agriculture and Rural Development in the Near East and North Africa Region (NERC/18/INF/8).

35. The Regional Conference:

- a) took note of the gaps in achieving gender mainstreaming in agriculture and rural development and the implications this has on achieving SDGs;
- b) supported mainstreaming gender equality in national programmes to ensure better impact of development initiatives;
- c) supported mainstreaming gender equality in the SDG nationalization processes;
- d) supported the development and implementation of a regional project to strengthen gender statistics for agriculture and rural development;
- e) noted that governments are expected to make a commitment to strengthen gender statistics at national level, including allocating resources to create an enabling environment and to support the production and use of gender-related data;
- f) acknowledged the progress made in improving capacities for gender mainstreaming and gender analysis, and encouraged further capacity building at regional and national levels in order to improve economic opportunities for rural women and men of different socio-economic conditions, and move them towards increased labour market participation and better working conditions.

III. Programme and Budget Matters

A. Results and Priorities for FAO in the Near East and North Africa Region

36. The Regional Conference considered the report on Results and Priorities for FAO in the Near East and North Africa Region (NERC/18/2 and annexes), covering achievements in 2016-17 and

proposals for 2018-19 and beyond, and expressed appreciation for the work of the FAO offices in the region.

37. The Regional Conference:

- a) recognized the importance of the Strategic Framework in guiding FAO's technical work in order to address priorities in the region and ensure effective delivery of results at national level;
- b) recognized the work completed through the Strategic Programmes and the results achieved by FAO in 2016–2017 under the Regional Initiatives and other key areas of work in responding to the main priorities identified at the 33rd Session of the Regional Conference;
- c) underscored the relevance of the three Regional Initiatives and supported their continuation in the 2018-19 biennium to help focus and guide FAO actions on priorities of the region, namely Water Scarcity Initiative, Small-Scale Family Farming, and Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition;
- d) recognized that the Special Fund for Development Finance Activities (SFDFA) was an effective tool to enable the Organization to engage proactively with the global funds and International Financial Institutions (IFIs), including regional development banks, to meet the growing technical assistance needs of Members;
- e) noted the importance of ensuring FAO's technical expertise is in line with the needs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, also in order to achieve the FAO Strategic Objectives, including rejuvenating and re-profiling its workforce in terms of skills, gender parity and geographical representation.

38. The Regional Conference requested FAO to:

- a) support Members to step up action to promote adoption of new technologies in agricultural practices and new crops to support rainfed agriculture;
- b) support countries in crises to implement programmes to address food security and nutrition;
- c) consider transboundary pests and diseases as one of the most pressing priorities in the region and for the Regional Initiatives.

B. Decentralized Offices Network

39. The Regional Conference considered the document on Decentralized Offices Network (NERC/18/3).

40. The Regional Conference:

- a) recognized the need to review FAO's global coverage in order to direct more effective support to Members with particular regard to countries affected by economic and social challenges, as well as conflicts and protracted crises;
- b) supported the proposed principles and general criteria for reviewing FAO's decentralized network coverage through the adoption of flexible arrangements;
- c) welcomed the review of Country Offices staffing models to increase flexibility and to adjust to emerging needs of the countries;
- d) reiterated the need to strengthen the technical capacity of the Organization at country, subregional and regional levels;
- e) underlined the continuing need to prioritize partnerships and resource mobilization at the decentralized level, with emphasis on South-South and Triangular Cooperation and closer collaboration with Rome-based and other UN agencies;

- f) appreciated the efforts to ensure a geographical balance of the workforce in the recruitment exercise, whilst retaining merit as the principal criterion for recruitment, and encourage the Management of the Organization to take necessary actions in this regard;
- g) acknowledged efforts made by the Organization in the region to strengthen national and international partnerships with key stakeholders for more effective normative and field support;
- h) emphasized the importance of the internal control systems and the continued efforts to seek efficiencies and savings, and expressed appreciation for Management's efforts in this respect;
- i) noted with appreciation the strong focus and work of the Organization at country level through achievements highlighted in the celebration of the 40th anniversary of many FAO Representations in the region as an opportunity to renew the Organization's commitment to its long-term presence in the field while assuring flexibility, efficiency and a high level of technical capacity;
- j) acknowledged the efforts made by the Regional Office regarding its attention to the creation of the subregional office in Lebanon;
- k) requested enhancing the capacity of the Regional Office to better respond to growing needs.

IV. Other Matters

A. Multi-year Programme of Work for the Regional Conference for the Near East

41. The Regional Conference reviewed the document (NERC/18/7) regarding the Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) for the Regional Conference for the Near East, and approved its MYPOW 2018-2021.
42. The Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) for 2018–2021 was developed for consideration by Members and endorsed by the 40th Session of the FAO Conference in July 2017, in Rome. The MYPOW was aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and built on the ongoing efforts to translate into action the vision of a food secure and sustainable world. The FAO Regional Conference in 2016 considered the achievements of the three current Regional Initiatives and identified priority areas to be considered for the Regional Initiatives in the next biennium. In the Near East and North Africa region, the three Regional Initiatives would be maintained, namely (i) Water Scarcity Initiative; (ii) Small-Scale and Family Farming; and (iii) Food Security and Nutrition Resilience.
43. The Regional Conference agreed that the Report of future Regional Conferences would be reviewed by a Drafting Committee composed of Members of the region.
44. Member countries welcome regular reports on the work of the regional and subregional offices through the established channels.

B. Follow-up on the International Scientific Consultation and High-Level Meeting on Red Palm Weevil Management

45. The Regional Conference reviewed the document (NERC/18/INF/9) on Follow-up on the International Scientific Consultation and High-Level Meeting on Red Palm Weevil Management and endorsed its conclusions. It took note of the progress made during the International Scientific Consultation and High-Level Meeting on Red Palm Weevil Management, and welcomed the proposed Framework Strategy and its three components for the eradication of Red Palm Weevil.
46. The Regional Conference requested FAO to:
- a) provide more support for the control of the red palm weevil through immediate national projects and technical assistance;
 - b) transfer practical experiences between countries to get a quick impact on the ground;

- c) use an inclusive strategy for better work between countries;
- d) strengthen the synergy between regional and international organizations, and regional and national research institutions for the implementation of the agreed framework and regional strategies to control and eradicate red palm weevil;
- e) develop accurate maps showing the areas affected by the Red Palm Weevil;
- f) encourage research work for early diagnosis and warning of the pest to control its spread.

C. Ministerial Declarations

47. The Regional Conference adopted a Ministerial Declaration, the text of which is in *Appendix C*.

D. Date and Place of the 35th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East

48. The Regional Conference accepted the gracious offer of the Sultante of Oman to host the 35th session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East, in 2020.

E. Concluding Items

Adoption of the Report

49. The Regional Conference unanimously adopted the report as presented by the Rapporteur.

Closure of the Conference

50. The Director-General thanked the Government of Lebanon and His Excellency Ghazi Zaieter, Minister for Agriculture of the Lebanese Republic, for his leadership and chairpersonship, and congratulated both Oman and Kuwait for their election as chair and vice-chair of the 35th Session of the Regional Conference. He recognized the utmost importance of the matters brought to the Regional Conference and the quality of the debate. The Director-General took note of the guidance of the Regional Conference and assured delegates and Members that every effort would be undertaken to implement the recommendations of the Regional Conference.

51. On behalf of the Government of Lebanon, His Excellency the Minister for Agriculture of Lebanon thanked the participants for their positive contributions, which had led to the success of the 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East. He then declared the session closed.

52. Participants expressed their heartfelt appreciation to the Government of Lebanon and FAO for the efficient arrangements, preparation and organization of the Regional Conference at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy.

APPENDIX A**AGENDA****I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS**

1. Appointment of the Rapporteur
2. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

II. REGIONAL AND GLOBAL POLICY AND REGULATORY ISSUES

8. Agroecology: Adapting to Climate Change in Semi-arid Areas for a Sustainable Agricultural Development
9. Agricultural Transformation in the Near East and North Africa Region and the Challenge of Youth Employment and Migration
10. One Health: Addressing Transboundary Plant, Animal and Fish Pests and Diseases: A Case for Regional Cooperation

III. PROGRAMME AND BUDGET MATTERS

11. Results and Priorities for FAO in the Near East and North Africa Region
12. Decentralized Offices Network

IV. OTHER MATTERS

13. Multi-year Programme of Work for the Regional Conference for the Near East
14. Any Other Matters

Information Notes

- Summary of the Progress made in the Implementation of the Recommendations of the 33rd Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East.
- Summary Report of Recommendations of FAO Regional Bodies and Major Meetings in the Near East
- FAO Support to Countries for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Strengthening Gender Equality in Agriculture and Rural Development in the Near East and North Africa Region
- Follow-up on the International Scientific Consultation and High-Level Meeting on Red Palm Weevil Management

V. MINISTERIAL MEETING

10–11 May 2018

- 3) Statement by the Director-General
- 4) Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council
- 5) Statement by the Chairperson of the 34th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East
- 6) Statement by the Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

7) Statement by the Spokesperson of the Civil Society Consultation

15) Prioritization of Country and Regional Needs: Statements by Heads of Delegations

16) Date and Place of the 35th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East

17) Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the 35th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East

Review and endorsement of the Report of the Conference

APPENDIX B**LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

(<http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/regional-conferences/nerc34/documents/en/>)

Discussion Items:

NERC/18/1 Rev.2	Provisional Annotated Agenda
NERC/18/2	Results and Priorities for FAO in the Near East and North Africa Region
NERC/18/2 Web Annex 1	Overview of FAO's Strategic Objective Programmes
NERC/18/2 Web Annex 2	Contribution of Results in the Near East and North Africa Region to FAO Strategic Objectives in the 2016-17 Biennium
NERC/18/2 Web Annex 3	Planned Contribution of Results in the Near East and North Africa Region to FAO Strategic Objective Output Targets in the 2018-19 biennium
NERC/18/3	Decentralized Offices Network
NERC/18/4	Agroecology: Adapting to Climate Change in Semi-arid Areas for a Sustainable Agricultural Development
NERC/18/5	Agricultural Transformation in the Near East and North Africa Region and the Challenge of Youth Employment and Migration
NERC/18/6	One Health: Addressing Transboundary Plant, Animal and Fish Pests and Diseases: A Case for Regional Cooperation
NERC/18/7	Multi-year Programme of Work for the Regional Conference for the Near East

INF SERIES

NERC/18/INF/1	Information Note
NERC/18/INF/2 Rev.3	Provisional Timetable
NERC/18/INF/3 Rev.3	Provisional List of Documents
NERC/18/INF/4	Statement by the Director-General
NERC/18/INF/5	Summary of the Progress made in the Implementation of the Recommendations of the 33rd Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East
NERC/18/INF/5 Web Annex	Detailed List of FAO Activities in the 2016-17 Biennium towards the Implementation of the Recommendations of the 33rd Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East
NERC/18/INF/6	Summary Report of Recommendations of FAO Regional Bodies and Major Meetings in the Near East
NERC/18/INF/7	FAO Support to Countries for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
NERC/18/INF/8	Strengthening Gender Equality in Agriculture and Rural Development in the Near East and North Africa Region

NERC/18/INF/9	Follow-up on the International Scientific Consultation and High-Level Meeting on Red Palm Weevil Management
NERC/18/INF/10	Statement by the Chairperson of the 34th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East
NERC/18/INF/11	Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council
NERC/18/INF/12	Statement by the Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)
NERC/18/INF/13	Statement by the Spokesperson of the Civil Society Consultation

OD SERIES

NERC/18/OD/1	Order of the Day
NERC/18/OD/2	Order of the Day
NERC/18/OD/3	Order of the Day
NERC/18/OD/4	Order of the Day
NERC/18/OD/5	Order of the Day

WEB DOCUMENTS

List of Delegates and Observers

APPENDIX C

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

We, the Ministers of Agriculture and Environment, Heads of Delegations and Participants of the 34th FAO Regional Conference of the Near East held in Rome, Italy, during the period from 7 to 11 May 2018;

Taking stock of the progress made and lessons learned in achieving food security and improving nutrition, promoting sustainable agriculture and addressing water scarcity, climate change and the rural-urban development gap in the Near East and North Africa Region;

Remaining deeply concerned about the rising trend of hunger and malnutrition in the region, given the continuous confrontation with challenges resulting from occupation, conflicts, climate change and water scarcity,

Acknowledging the importance of better nutrition and food safety in the region to address the triple burden of food loss and waste, undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies,

Mindful of the intricate relation between food security, stability and global peace,

Recognizing the importance of addressing the issues of conflict and security, peace building and climate change as drivers of food insecurity in the NENA region,

Recognizing the need for adoption of comprehensive and multidisciplinary regional approaches for the formulation and implementation of effective policies, strategies and programmes and the implementation thereof to achieve the SDGs and in particular SDG2,

Conscious of stability and peace being primary pre-conditions for sustainable development

We, the Ministers of Agriculture and Environment, and Heads of Delegations:

- *Acknowledge* the vital role exerted by the FAO to develop strategies and policies to eradicate food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition, and to build resilience to shocks, crisis and conflicts as a means to achieve stability and peace in the Region.
- *Value* the process of decentralization at the organization as a means to make the organization more responsive to the needs of member countries and more accountable.
- *Recognize* the benefits of the FAO Strategic Framework and regional initiatives to address the challenges of Food Security and Nutrition, Water Scarcity, Climate Change, Agriculture, Youth Employment and Migration, and Gender Equality.
- *Stress* the importance of the continuity of the strategic Framework and the Three Regional Initiatives.
- *Reiterate* the importance of inclusive and sustainable development, that fully encompasses the agricultural and rural sectors and gives equal job and development opportunities to the youth, the women and the vulnerable populations, in the framework of promoting peace and stability in the Region
- *Call* on FAO to step up and update its programmes in the region to support the implementation and achievement of the SDG2: *End hunger, ensure food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*
- *Call* on FAO to give priority to the eradication of hunger and malnutrition in conflict-affected countries
- *Reaffirm* our commitment to work hand-in-hand with FAO towards achieving the common goals and objectives, globally and in the Region;
- *Recognize* the importance of the special account of the development funding activities, being an important working tool in dealing proactively with global accounts and international finance organizations in view of meeting the growing technical needs of the members, particularly in the area of Climate Change.

- *Call on* the FAO to provide assistance to the States in the Near East and North Africa Region to formulate projects and mobilize the resources and funding thereof through the Green Climate Fund (GCF) , the Global Environment Fund (GEF), and the international and regional finance institutions to support the countries in the Region in facing Climate Change and other challenges of the Region.
- *Reiterate* the importance to move forward in strengthening the technical and specialized capacity at the FAO Regional Office in Cairo and the FAO Sub-regional office in Tunis in order to meet the increasing claims and needs of the countries in the Region.
- *Highlight* the importance of South-South cooperation and the tripartite cooperation, being an important tool in achieving sustainable development.
- *Call on* the FAO to pursue its collaboration with the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), both on country and regional level, in order to support the national efforts exerted for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- *Call on* the FAO to take additional steps to achieve equitable geographical distribution in employment at the FAO and the accreditation of consultants at the FAO.
- *Emphasize* the importance of peacebuilding as a fundamental prerequisite for achieving sustainable agricultural development and achieving the 2030 Agenda.
- *The Ministers of Agriculture and Environment in the States of the Region commended* the selection of the Sultanate of Oman to convene the thirty fifth session of the Regional Conference in 2020; and it was agreed that the Sultanate of Oman will chair the session and the Kuwait was selected as Vice-Chair.
- *Express appreciation for* the vision and leadership demonstrated by Professor Graziano da Silva and his vision throughout his tenure as the FAO Director-General, and the reforms he carried out at the FAO seeking to achieve its mandate to establish a world without hunger.

Rome, 11 May 2018

APPENDIX D

SIDE EVENTS REPORTS

Title of the side event: A High Level Side Event on “Challenges to attaining Zero Hunger in Conflict/Crisis Areas in NENA Region with highlights on Yemen and Somalia”

The speakers for the event were guided by the following discussion themes:

1. The big picture: The global and FAO commitments to achieve Zero Hunger by 2030
2. Leaving no one behind: Challenges of achieving Zero Hunger in countries affected by conflict and protracted crises
3. What needs to be done to achieve Zero Hunger in conflict contexts/ recommendations

In conclusion, the moderator, Mr Laurent Thomas Deputy Director-General (Operations), provided a background of the global hunger challenges, the role of conflict as a major driver of hunger and provided some examples of the impact of conflict on food insecurity, livelihoods and economies in conflict-affected countries.

Mr Abdessalam Ould Ahmed, FAO Assistant Director General and Regional Representative for FAO NENA acknowledged the level of consensus among the panelists and the floor about the impact of conflict on hunger and food security. He further noted the following conclusions and recommendations:

- In addition to emergency support, there was a need to focus on the importance of addressing root causes and paving the way for sustainable resilience and development solutions.
- Taking the lead of the Rome Based Agencies experience , there was a need to scale up and expand partnerships through engagement with other technical agencies and civil society.
- Learn from each other’s work and contribute to enhancing individual and collective action.

Title of the side event: The Challenge of Sand and Dust Storms in the Near East Region and North Africa

Context: Sand and Dust Storms (SDS) were highly complex global environmental phenomena, governed by both human-induced and natural factors. The driving force for the production of dust storms was the surface wind associated with cold frontal systems sweeping across arid and semi-arid regions and lifting soil particles in the atmosphere. The phenomenon has gained growing attention in past decades due to its transboundary impacts on the environment, climate, health, livelihoods, agriculture and socioeconomic well-being of societies. There was an increasing concern that the threat of SDS may undermine the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in developing and developed countries.

Objective: The objective of the side event was to: i) raise awareness on the multifarious effects of SDS on the region’s ecosystems, livelihoods and well-being of its people and sustainable development of the countries ii) enhance dialogue between SDS-affected countries on the collective actions that countries can take to mitigate the effects of SDS; and, iii) encourage regional and inter-regional cooperation, networking and sharing information, experiences and best practices for managing and mitigating SDS effects.

Conclusions and the way forward

SDS was a growing global problem that needs immediate actions. Experience from within and outside the region shows that in order to address the problem long-term planning, interventions and investments were needed for countries to be prepared for the challenge, which in the context of climate change is likely to further enhance. There was an urgent need to support countries in creating further awareness, bringing the SDS issue higher on the international agenda, and assist countries in addressing the challenge through immediate and long-term actions.

The session was then wrapped up by the moderator with the following conclusions:

- Urgent need to act with growing recognition for the impacts of SDS
- Call for an agriculture perspective: agriculture had a key role in addressing both the causes and effects of SDS
- Raise awareness on a global, regional and local scale; put SDS on the international agenda
- Build on existing initiatives and enhance regional and multi-agency cooperation
- Advance integrated strategies that promote sustainable land and water management in cropland, rangelands, deserts and urban areas as well as climate change mitigation
- Promote sharing of information, experiences and best practices for managing and mitigating the negative effects of SDS
- Further research needed: increase the evidence base both on causes of and solutions for SDS; collect sector-specific impact data
- Integrate SDS in overarching multi-hazard and resilience building initiatives

Title of the side event: FAO Strategic Programme: Delivery through Three Regional Initiatives

The Near East and North Africa (NENA) region faces a series of interconnected challenges that limit food security and sustainable agricultural development. To effectively address these, FAO had been channelling its work through three Regional Initiatives (RIs) since 2014 to effectively identify pan-regional issues and solutions. These Regional Initiatives focus on “Water Scarcity”, “Small-scale Family Farming”, and “Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition”. These served as the main mechanism to ensure effective delivery in a coordinated way and demonstrate impact of FAO’s work on the key priorities of the region, guided by FAO’s Strategic Programmes.

This side event was organized to illustrate how the Strategic Programmes and the Regional Initiatives have assisted countries to achieve results in the NENA region within the context of agreed priorities.

The Side Event has gathered high-level representatives, ministers and senior officers of NENA member countries, regional bodies and technical and resource partners.

Following two presentations (one on ‘FAO Strategic Programmes’ and one on the “Three Regional Initiatives”), two Country panelists (from Egypt and Lebanon) illustrated their assessment and perspective of the Regional Initiatives, their respective results, and how the Strategic Programme of FAO had helped in achieving higher impact. On panelist, from the League of Arab States (LAS), highlighted the regional dimension of the cooperation with FAO and the benefits for the Arab countries. The panelist from International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Area (ICARDA) highlighted the great added value of the partnership promoted by the Regional Initiatives to achieve impact-at-scale.

Questions from the audience to the panelists further enriched the understanding of the relevance of the Strategic Programmes and the Regional Initiatives in assisting countries to achieve results.

The side-event was then concluded by the Strategic Programme Leader in charge of the Resilience programme, highlighting how the new FAO Strategic Programme and its Regional Initiatives allows FAO to work in a more programmatic and multidisciplinary way, leading to higher-impact results.

Title of the side event: Fostering Agricultural Investment in the Near East and North Africa Region

Session 1: Opportunities and constraints to investment in food & agriculture in the NENA Region – Perspective from the main IFIs

Panel discussion: Mr Mohamed Manssouri initiated the panel discussion giving examples from FAO's nature of support to investments in the agricultural sector and reemphasising the private investments significance in today's world. A participant informed the audience on the inclusive business models FAO uses to optimize returns from the investment, selecting the commodities to invest. Another participant explained that in a fragile context like in Somalia with very weak public authorities, there was no public institution to do the coordination and mobilize them even if the resources existed. The issue of the private sector's difficulties in obtaining financial means from local banks and international organizations was also raised. Mr Boulanouar replied that the AFDB was working in Africa to facilitate the access of private sector to infrastructure. Digital technology's interactions with family farming and rural employment was also questioned. Mr Lampietti in return gave AliBaba as an example and their ability to assess credit worthiness in seconds, access to the repayment history was very easy due to digitalization. This could increase the options for smallholders, as only one example. With regard to jobs, agricultural transformation decreased the number of employed in agriculture but increased the returns to the land. Digital technologies speeded-up these processes, moving workers from primary agriculture to other parts of the food chain.

Session 2: FAO Investment support at Country level - Examples

Panel Discussion: Mr Fantinent raised the question of the need for enhancement of FAO interventions, described by Mr Hidier, earlier in the Session. Mr Hidier informed the audience of the establishment of a transparent platforms of discussion, giving the grain traders association, in Egypt, as an example which includes large actors such as Bunge and Cargill. One participant told about the main finding of a World Bank report: "From privilege to competition", which was the private sector making use of the public sector to get around the competition, which was of particular relevance to NENA region, he inquired about the ways to overcome that. Another participant reminded the audience on the former status of Egypt and Jordan as wheat exporters raised her question to Dr Shalaby on any possibility of improving the current wheat trade. She also reminded of the demining lands for reuse in agriculture in Egypt. Dr Shalaby informed about the efforts on increasing the productivity by each feddan, building silos around Egypt to store and not waste agricultural products. Cleaning the lands that were polluted/mined was all part of the solution. A representative from Jordan mentioned that olive trees had cultural value in Jordan but that the sector needed similar support to that provided in Tunisia and Morocco. The issue of agricultural technical training was raised once more by the audience and the lack of technical, academic capacity of FAO in its interactions with farmers was mentioned.

Session 3: Other FAO work to support agricultural investment

Panel Discussion: A participant mentioned that the development efforts in agriculture, including land investment was perceived negatively by the smallholders as these usually result in loss of their land. He raised a question on how to better incorporate these smallholders into responsible investment schemes. Mr Liu replied that protecting smallholders were indeed at the heart of responsible investment principles, as the trend of large scale land acquisitions leaving smallholders out of their lands were already observed by FAO and other organizations. He also asked to receive information on the volume of intra-regional agricultural trade and if there were ways to scale it up. Ms Gadhok answered that intra-regional trade was related to the location of producing regions and receiving, demanding regions and the market access conditions among the region's countries. Countries that acquired observer statuses at WTO were still observers after tens of years and the participant asked the panellists to inform on the mechanisms to access WTO. Ms Gadhok indicated that the question of progressing in the negotiations to become a member to the WTO was in most part related to the countries' own initiatives; however, FAO's support to smooth such cases was also available. Mr Schmidhuber added that in addition to being non-members, not all countries regularly reported to the WTO so it was not easy to gauge the extent of intra trade working with available data. He advised that the FAO was ready to work in detail with any member country requesting detailed information on FAO support to investment and trade areas.

Title of the side event: Celebrating 40 Years of FAO's country Representations**SUMMARY**

In the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region, nine country representations were commemorating their 40th anniversary between 2017 and 2019: Lebanon, Jordan, the Sudan, Egypt, Mauritania, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq and Yemen.

This side event was an opportunity to highlight major achievements made through country-level cooperation, to promote new forms of representation as well as partnerships, and to encourage renewed commitment to collaboration in the future, thereby increasing support to countries' achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Excerpts from the ceremony:

"The Near East and North Africa region hosted the first ever FAO regional office in Egypt, sub-regional office in Tunisia and country office in Lebanon; and for 40 years, fighting hunger, poverty and malnutrition have been at the heart of our work. FAO's cooperation with member countries and support in the field are crucial in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, in particular, food security and nutrition,"

Abdessalam Ould Ahmed, FAO Assistant Director- General and NENA Regional Representative during the opening of the exhibition.

"So many of the issues FAO works on are very dear to my heart; such as nutrition, food loss and waste, water and resources waste. In addition, through its other programmes FAO is continuously supporting people displaced by conflict, strengthening livelihoods, creating youth employment and helping farmers adapt to climate change,"

Darine El-Khatib, Special Goodwill Ambassador for Zero Hunger for NENA.