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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

## Thirty-sixth Session

10-13 January 2022 and 7-8 February 2022

**Building resilience for food security and nutrition**

### Executive Summary

Multiple shocks and stresses have significant impact on agrifood systems and related livelihoods. This impact is evident in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region where long-term stresses, such as scarcity of water and arable land, climate change, land degradation and increasing population growth, fuel and aggravate multiple and overlapping shocks. Conflicts, climate related disasters, biological disasters (e.g. transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases and COVID-19 pandemic) and economic shocks have exacerbated high levels of acute food insecurity and malnutrition, including communities of populations in famine like conditions in the region.

Evidence shows that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the region would not be possible without building inclusive and resilient agrifood systems that address structural fragility, long-term stresses as well as multiple and colliding shocks. This necessitates a systemic approach in building the capacities and resources of systems, institutions and people to prevent, anticipate, absorb, adapt and transform in the face of multiple and often colliding shocks, stresses and crises.

This paper analyses some of the major shocks affecting the region's agrifood systems and their impact on food security, nutrition and livelihoods of the related actors especially the most vulnerable. The paper proposes the adoption of a holistic risk management approach to strengthen a set of five resilience capacities (preventive, anticipative, absorptive, adaptive and transformative). It offers five strategic action areas aiming at: (a) understanding multiple risks; (b) strengthening disaster risk and crisis governance; (c) reducing risks and vulnerabilities; (d) strengthening One Health approach against all biological threats; and (e) enhancing anticipatory actions, emergency preparedness and response.

These strategic action areas would accelerate progress towards achieving nine SDGs targets (1.3; 1.5; 2.1; 2.2; 2.3; 2.4; 13.1; 13.3; and 16.1) and would inform FAO's work in the region during the period 2022-2025 and beyond. The paper also formulates two sets of recommendations to be considered by the countries of the region and the FAO.

Documents can be consulted at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

### **Suggested action by the Regional Conference**

The Regional Conference is invited to call upon Members to:

- a) Adopt a holistic and multi-hazard approach for agrifood systems' risk management, including through:
  - establishing or strengthening a multi-hazard set-up that cuts across different ministries and entities involved in agriculture and food sectors;
  - formulating effective, evidence-based, inclusive (including gender, youth and most vulnerable groups) and risk-informed policies, strategies and plans;
  - establishing or strengthening actionable thematic and multi-hazard early warning systems;
  - expanding the coverage and effectiveness of social protection systems as well as crop and livestock insurance systems, ensuring that they are shock-responsive, gender and age, nutrition and risk-sensitive.
- b) Adopt a One health approach to effectively manage biological hazards and risks within and across the human-animal-plant sectors.
- c) Strengthen regional collaboration to address transboundary pests and diseases, with a particular focus on desert locust, including through establishment of regional trust funds.
- d) Allocate adequate resources for holistic risk management into the agrifood systems including for the actions herein proposed.
- e) Increase investment in science and research targeting the development, dissemination and adoption of innovations (technological, institutional, social, financial and policy) to strengthen resilience.

The Regional Conference is invited to call upon FAO to:

- a) Generate evidence to inform holistic management of multiple risks.
- b) Pilot and promote innovative approaches and practices for effective management of multiple risks, including those related to disaster risk reduction and climate smart agriculture good practices on-farm and off-farm including early warning systems, anticipatory actions, conflict-sensitive and peace-responsive programming, shock-responsive, gender and age-, nutrition and risk-sensitive social protection and crop and livestock insurance.
- c) Support countries of the region in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, in formulating and implementing One Health strategies, plans and programmes and addressing transboundary pests and diseases.
- d) Build the capacities of the countries of the region in holistic approaches for managing risks and strengthening resilience.
- e) Increase resource mobilization efforts to support high quality resilience building programmes.

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## Introduction

1. The Near East and North Africa (NENA) region is threatened by serious, complex and overlapping shocks and stresses of diverse origins that have severely undermined food security and nutrition of millions of people. Conflicts, climatic extremes (particularly localized drought and flash floods), environmental hazards (especially sand and dust storms), transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases (including zoonotic diseases) and economic shocks (including price volatility), are among the most significant shocks that drive risks and vulnerabilities throughout the agrifood systems. Moreover, climate change, political instability, demographic pressures, degraded natural resources and heavy dependence on food imports are serious long-term stresses that further aggravate risks and vulnerabilities and weaken existing capacities. The COVID-19 pandemic is the most recent in a series of shocks that increase vulnerabilities, especially in countries already experiencing multiple colliding crises.

2. The impact of the aforementioned shocks and stresses on chronic and acute food insecurity is quite serious. In 2020, seven<sup>1</sup> of the region's countries were among the 55 countries and territories suffering from food crises in the world. Afghanistan, the Sudan, Syria and Yemen<sup>2</sup> were among the top ten largest food crises with 48.6 million people (over 31 percent) of the 155 million people in crisis or worse (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification/*Cadre Harmonisé* (IPC/CH) Phase 3 or above).<sup>3</sup> The NENA region also accounts for more than a quarter of people internally displaced by conflict and violence globally.

3. In NENA countries, the number of people affected by hunger has increased between 2015-2017. The 2019 estimates show that before the COVID-19 pandemic, 51.4 million people (12.2 percent of the population) were hungry, an increase of 1.1 million people from the previous period. The numbers affected by moderate or severe food insecurity also showed an upward trend with an estimated 137 million people in 2019 who did not have regular access to sufficient and nutritious food. The region is not on track to reach the SDG target of Zero Hunger as the number of people suffering from hunger will surpass 75 million by 2030 if recent trends continue.<sup>4</sup>

4. The paper argues that enhancing the resilience of the region's agrifood systems would not only contribute to addressing the persistence of chronic and acute food insecurity as well as contribute to recovering from COVID-19 impacts, but will also accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs (particularly 1, 2, 13 and 16) and fostering sustainability. The paper proposes some strategic options for effective risk management, which would strengthen the five interrelated resilience capacities, namely, anticipative, preventive, absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacity which are in line with the UN Common Guidance on resilience. These options will shape FAO's regional priorities for the period 2022-2025 and beyond.

### I. Status and trends of shocks and stresses in the Near East and North Africa region

5. Structural fragility of the NENA region is largely attributed to pervasive and chronic long-term stresses and fragile agro-silvo-pastoral and natural ecosystems. With 0.3 ha of agricultural land per capita and per capita water availability at 10 percent of the global average, the region is the most agricultural land and water-scarce in the world. Soil fertility of the region is naturally low with only 17 percent categorized as highly productive land. The multidimensional impact of the region's high population growth includes, partially, the massive reduction of 63 percent of per capita cropland

<sup>1</sup> Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Somalia, the Sudan, Syria and Yemen

<sup>2</sup> Yemen (13.5 million people equivalent to about 40 percent of the total population and; the second after Congo), Afghanistan (13.2 million equivalent to 42 percent of the total population), Syria (12.4 million people equivalent to 60 percent of the total population), and the Sudan (9.6 million people)

<sup>3</sup> 2021 Global Report on Food Crises, Global Network Against Food Crises and Food Security Information Network

<sup>4</sup> The Near East and North Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition: Enhancing resilience of food Systems in the Arab State, 2020, FAO

during the period 1961 to 2018 (from 0.442 ha/per person to 0.163).<sup>5</sup> The region's climate is predominantly arid to semi-arid with high temperatures and low precipitation, making the region prone to adverse impacts of climate change with its cohort of climate extremes and slow onset events.

6. Multiple, complex and overlapping shocks of various origins characterize the region. Exacerbated by long-term stresses and low resilience capacity,<sup>6</sup> these shocks are seriously affecting the region's agrifood systems and related actors, particularly the rural poor and their agriculture dependent livelihoods<sup>7</sup> with its heavy reliance on the climate and natural environment. Between 2008 and 2018, agriculture, including crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, absorbed 26 percent of the overall impact caused by medium to largescale disasters in low and lower-middle-income countries.<sup>8</sup> Conflict, climate related and biological disasters (pest and disease outbreaks) and economic shocks are the major ones.

7. Apart from the immediate mortality and morbidity that result from war, conflicts lead to profound long-term consequences that impede the full realization of sustainable development. On average, conflicts cost a country an accumulated loss of 15 percent of GDP growth, reduce life expectancy by about one year, increase infant mortality rates by 10 percent and undernourishment by 3.3 percent.<sup>9</sup> For about a decade, conflicts remained the main driver of acute food insecurity in the region. In 2020, conflict accounted for 78 percent of the 56.9 million acutely food insecure people in need of urgent assistance in the region while it drove 77 percent of the 49.9 million people into high levels of acute food insecurity in 2019.<sup>10</sup>

8. The frequency and severity of climate and extreme weather-related events are increasing globally and in the region. Disasters induced by climate and extreme weather-related events have significant impact on agrifood systems and food security and nutrition. Given its reliance on weather, climate and natural resources, agriculture is especially vulnerable to natural hazards and climate related disasters. Analysis of the first Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement submitted by the countries in the NENA region<sup>11</sup> recognised natural hazards as a major driver of risk and vulnerability in the region (by 50 percent of the countries). Over 75 percent of the countries highlighted multiple hazards, while a minority focused on single extreme events. Hazards included floods (70 percent of the countries), droughts (65 percent) and sand and dust storms (53 percent). A recent FAO analysis revealed that drought and flash floods are the top hazards affecting agrifood systems in the NENA region, especially for systems relying on rainfed agriculture, which contributes to some 70 percent of the region's production.<sup>12</sup> Long-term stresses include water scarcity, extreme weather events which largely contributed to the rapidly growing land degradation,

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<sup>5</sup> FAOSTAT 2021

<sup>6</sup> Resilience capacities. Systems, institutions, and people are considered resilient when they have at their disposal the following set of distinct capacities and resources that are crucial to cope with, withstand or bounce back from adverse events and shocks: (a) anticipative capacity; (b) preventive capacity; (c) absorptive capacity; (d) adaptive capacity. The ability to make incremental adjustments, modifications or changes to the characteristics of systems; and (e) transformative capacity

<sup>7</sup> About 43 percent of the region's population live in rural areas, which host 70 percent of the region's poor who largely depend on agriculture

<sup>8</sup> The impact of disasters and crises on agriculture and food security, 2021, FAO

<sup>9</sup> Gates, Scott & Hegre, Håvard & Nygård, Håvard & Strand, Håvard. (2012). Consequences of Armed Conflict. World Development. 40. 1713-1722; World Bank. 2011. World Development Report 2011 : Conflict, Security, and Development. World Bank. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/4389>

<sup>10</sup> 2021 Global Report on Food Crises, Global Network Against Food Crises and Food Security Information Network

<sup>11</sup> Regional Analysis of the Nationally Determined Contributions in the Near East and North Africa: Gaps and Opportunities in the Agriculture and Land Use Sector, FAO, 2021 (unpublished report)

<sup>12</sup> State of Disaster Risk Reduction in Agriculture in the Near East and North Africa, FAO Regional Initiative on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition, FAO, 2021 (under publications)

loss of forests estimated at 2.8 million ha during the period 1990-2020,<sup>13</sup> and degradation of rangelands estimated at 104 107 square km in the Arab countries.<sup>14</sup>

9. Pests and diseases (animal and zoonotic diseases and plant, including forests and rangelands, pests and diseases) are major biological threats to agrifood systems accentuated in past decades by trade activities, movement of people, plants and animals and climate change. Together with climate change, conflicts are another key factor of the increasing risks of transboundary pests and diseases in the region.

10. Plant pests and diseases cause production losses estimated at 40 percent of food crops globally and trade losses in agriculture products worth over USD 220 billion annually.<sup>15</sup> For instance, desert locusts (*Schistocerca gregaria*) can ravage crops, trees and pastureland, destroying food and vegetation and jeopardizing the livelihoods of communities along its path. Just a small one square km locust swarm can consume the same amount of food in one day as approximately 35 000 people. The ongoing Desert Locust upsurge in the Greater Horn of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and Southwest Asia is affecting 16 of the countries in the Near East region.<sup>16</sup> Beside desert locusts, the most serious transboundary plant insect pests in the region include Fall Armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*), Red Palm Weevil (*Rhynchophorus ferrugineus*) and Fruit flies while *Xylella fastidiosa* are considered among the most impactful plant diseases in the region. Invasive weeds – such as Water Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) and Paulownia tree (*Ailanthus altissima*) – are also causing significant damage to the region's already degraded rangelands.

11. Transboundary animal diseases (TADs) result in direct loss of animals and significant reduction in animal productivity estimated at 20 percent, which affects trade of livestock and their products and threatens crucial productive assets of smallholders. The impact of zoonotic diseases<sup>17</sup> extends beyond animals' health and productivity to affecting human health and lives. The most serious TADs in the region include Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) and *Peste des petits ruminants* (PPR) while the most significant zoonotic diseases include *Brucellosis*, Rift Valley Fever (RVF), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV), Crimean Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) and Bovine Tuberculosis.

12. Economic shocks drove 9.8 million people from the region into high levels of acute food insecurity in 2020, representing 17 percent of the total people in crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above). This is a significant increase from 5.9 million acutely food insecure people due to economic shocks in the region in 2019 which is largely attributed to the economic impact of COVID-19.<sup>18</sup> Some countries of the region, such as Lebanon and the Sudan, are experiencing significant economic shocks due to diverse reasons.

## II. Impact of COVID-19

<sup>13</sup> FAO. 2021. Near East and North Africa Regional Forest Resource Assessment 2020 – Extent, changes and trends. Cairo. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7174en>

<sup>14</sup> Darfoui, E. 2018. First Unified Arab Report on Land Degradation Neutrality (Arabic). Arab Organization for Agricultural Development. Khartoum, the Sudan. Note: The information contained in the report is based on different sources. In most cases, it refers to the region defined by FAO as the 'Near East and North Africa' (NENA). Other sources refer to the 'Arab Region', which includes all the countries of the NENA region + Somalia, Djibouti and the Comoros. In the text, reference is made systematically to the country grouping to which the information refers.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1118322/icode/>

<sup>16</sup> Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the Sudan, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen

<sup>17</sup> Zoonotic disease is an infectious disease caused by a pathogen that has jumped from a non-human animal (usually a vertebrate) to a human. Typically, the first infected human transmits the infectious agent to at least one other human, who, in turn, infects others.

<sup>18</sup> 2021 Global Report on Food Crises (GFCR), Global Network Against Food Crises and Food Security Information Network

13. The COVID-19 pandemic comes on the heels of other serious shocks and has triggered the worst global economic crisis since World War II. Tens of millions of vulnerable people were unable to afford adequate and nutritious food as they suffered severe job and income losses often coupled with increased food prices. Therefore, in 2020, economic shocks - including those resulting from COVID-19 - were considered to be the primary driver of acute food insecurity in 17 countries affected by food crises out of 55 identified at the global level, accounting for over 40 million people in crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) or equivalent, compared with eight countries in 2019 with around 24 million people in crisis.<sup>19</sup>

14. Most of the countries of the region had prioritized the agriculture and food sectors at the beginning of the pandemic, contributing to the protection of local agricultural and food value chains. Nonetheless, the impact was significant on vulnerable and informal sector workers throughout these value chains. The wider effect of the pandemic on the economic sector resulted in an increase in the price of basic food items and critical agriculture production inputs. At the household level, this resulted in decreased consumption of food, the sale of animals and productive agriculture assets, spiralling debt and limited productive and income-generating opportunities. Largely due to COVID-19 related measures to stop its transmission, the number of people who experienced high levels of acute food insecurity primarily because of economic shocks in the region in 2020 reached 9.8 million compared with 5.9 million in 2019.<sup>20</sup> At the end of 2020, 12 percent of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon and 19 percent of Lebanese nationals had reported losses of their main sources of income, owing to the combined impact of the financial crisis and COVID-19-related restrictions. As a result, at the end of 2020, the proportion of Syrian refugees living in extreme poverty reached a staggering 89 percent, up from 55 percent the previous year.<sup>21</sup>

15. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic poses another threat. Studies by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE)<sup>22</sup> have raised concerns about a possible role that farmed and companion animals could play in the amplification and spread of the virus. Camels are important animals and assets in the NENA region. However, camels are also a major reservoir, host and a known animal source of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) infections in humans. MERS-CoV (that causes MERS) and SARS-CoV-2 (that causes COVID-19) are both coronaviruses. Co-infection of these coronaviruses in the camel or human cells could facilitate genetic re-combination of their viral genomes, resulting into coronavirus variants with unknown infectious or virulence characteristics.

### III. Opportunities for change

16. The challenges posed by multiple shocks and stresses on the agrifood systems in the region are numerous as explained in previous sections. On the other hand, there are also some opportunities:

- a) Despite its devastating impact on all aspects of life and livelihoods, the COVID-19 pandemic brought some hope. It showed the world's common vulnerability to global shocks such as the pandemic and climate change, reaffirmed the necessity of joint actions, displayed the relative resilience of the agriculture and food sectors and their strategic importance in green recovery and stimulated innovation for tackling many interconnected challenges ahead.
- b) There is some progress in addressing some of the major conflicts and instability in the region s.
- c) The fast-growing innovations would advance the work on resilience building through various means including technologies for monitoring multiple risks and for early warning systems.

<sup>19</sup> 2021 GFCR

<sup>20</sup> 2021 GFCR

<sup>21</sup> Hunger Hotspots March-July, FAO and WFP, 2021

<sup>22</sup> Lam, S.D., Bordin, N., Waman, V.P. *et al.* SARS-CoV-2 spike protein predicted to form complexes with host receptor protein orthologues from a broad range of mammals. *Sci Rep* 10, 16471 (2020) <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-71936-5>; Banerjee, A. *et al.*, *Journal of General Virology* 2020; 101:1251–1260. <https://doi.org/10.1099/jgv.0.001491>

- d) The upcoming release of the UN Common Guidance on Helping Build Resilient Societies provides a shared narrative with common UN-wide principles and approaches to building resilience, which would foster synergies and complementarities among UN agencies in supporting countries and communities on inclusive, resilient and sustainable pathways.
- e) The UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) 2021 and its outcomes, particularly those related to Action Track #5, Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress.

#### **IV. Strategic action areas for managing multiple risks**

##### ***Target groups***

17. This paper proposes a package of risk management action areas to inform the priorities of FAO and the countries of the region. The target groups of these interventions are:

- a) Agrifood systems, especially those which are more vulnerable to multiple shocks and stresses such as those highly dependent on rain-fed agriculture, agro-pastoralism and pastoralism.
- b) Communities, particularly scale producers and family farmers, whose livelihoods depend on food and agriculture (crops, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture, forests) and other renewable natural resources and related food sectors along value chains. Within this group, special focus will be on the most vulnerable and at risk to multiple events, including women, youth, people with disabilities, internally displaced people, refugees and their hosting communities.
- c) Marginal, traditional and Indigenous communities with agriculture and food-based livelihoods that are vulnerable to multiple shocks and stresses.
- d) Relevant local, subnational, national and regional institutions and stakeholders involved in agrifood systems.

##### ***Guiding principles***

18. In identifying the risk management options, priority has been given to responses with high potential to:

- a) Address the priorities and context-specific needs of the people and countries of the region.
- b) Contribute to inclusive, green, resilient and sustainable recovery from COVID-19 and simultaneously accelerate progress towards achieving relevant SDGs in the region (mainly SDGs 1, 2, 13 and 16).
- c) Trigger significant positive impact for many people along the food value chain and at scale.
- d) Contribute to the inclusivity, resilience, and sustainability of agrifood systems noting that a sustainable agrifood system is a system that delivers food security and nutrition for all, while sustaining the livelihoods of agrifood system actors, without compromising the economic, social, and environmental bases needed to ensure the food security and nutrition of future generations. The system must be sustainable economically (i.e., profitable and equitable), socially (having broad-based benefits for society), and environmentally (with positive or neutral impact on the natural environment).<sup>23</sup> Building agrifood systems' resilience is critical to addressing short and medium-term needs but also to ensure social, economic and environmental sustainability, thereby contributing to the achievement of multiple SDGs.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The State of Food and Agriculture, 2021, FAO

<sup>24</sup> United Nations (2020), United Nations Common Guidance on Helping Build Resilient Societies, New York (UN)

- e) Contribute to the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 through significant contributions to the *Four Betters* (Better Production “BP”; Better Nutrition “BN”; Better Environment “BE”; and Better Life “BL”) and its 20 Priority Programme Areas (PPAs) and FAO Regional COVID-19 Recovery Plan for the Near East and North Africa.

### ***Strategic action areas***

#### **Strategic action area 1: Understanding multiple risks**

19. Different shocks and stresses impact different agrifood systems differently depending on their location, types of livelihoods and characteristics of vulnerable, gender and age groups. Reliable information and comprehensive multi-risk assessments are essential prerequisites for holistic management of multiple risks within and across agrifood systems by providing risk monitoring together with early warning linked to anticipatory or early actions as well as informing risk driven policies, advocacy and programming actions. The recent FAO analysis of the state of disaster risk reduction in agriculture in the Near East and North Africa revealed that: (a) around half of the countries have some form of multi-hazard early warning systems, however, the majority of these systems are not functioning effectively; (b) the majority of the countries affected by conflict (e.g. Libya, Syria and Yemen) do not have any multi-hazard early warning system; (c) only few countries have systems in place enabling organized analysis of food security status (e.g. IPC); and (d) there is almost a complete gap in disaster risk management information systems that include estimation of damage and loss caused by disasters in agriculture.

20. Main actions under this strategic action area include:

- a) Support countries to establish, implement, and institutionalize functional agro-climatic, disaster and crisis risk information systems and to manage, analyse, interpret, disseminate, publish and make use of data generated for risk-informed decisions and actions.
- b) Support countries and relevant regional stakeholders – including through capacity building and knowledge sharing, in establishing and strengthening individual, thematic and multi-hazard early warning systems linked to anticipatory and early actions (e.g. TADs surveillance systems, plant pests and diseases surveillance, drought early warning system, etc.) (BP3-One Health and BL5-Resilience of agriculture and food systems).
- c) Strengthen and support country level capacity for immediate damage and loss assessment and damage and loss information system, multi-risk and vulnerability assessments, resilience measurements and social, economic and environmental risk and conflict analyses (BL4-Emergencies and BL5 -Resilience).

#### **Strategic action area 2: Strengthening disaster risk and crisis governance**

21. Robust disaster risk reduction and management policies, institutions and coordination mechanisms are key for effective governance to address multiple and often colliding risks and cascading crisis, within and across sectors and systems. About 79 percent of the countries in the NENA region have national disaster risk management (DRM) strategies, yet the majority are outdated. The perceived effectiveness of the implementation of these strategies varies significantly among countries (on a scale of 1 to 6, where 6 stands for excellent implementation, key expert informants have rated the implementation at around 3). Over 60 percent of the countries have DRM sectoral strategies including for agriculture and food sectors, but their implementation is perceived to be weak. About 64 percent of the countries have DRM governance structures and coordination mechanisms but their performance is perceived to be somehow poor.

22. In view of the aforementioned gaps, the main actions under this strategic action area are:

- a) Support countries, including through capacity building, technical support and knowledge sharing, in developing and updating national/sectoral disaster risk reduction and management



(DRR/M) policies, plans and regulations with a specific focus on building resilient agriculture and food systems (BL5-Resilience).

- b) Develop national and regional institutional capacities to mainstream gender and age considerations in disaster risk reduction/management (BL5-Resilience).
- c) Contribute to supporting and influencing regional resilience agenda including through:
  - i. Contributions to the UN Issue-based Collation “IBC” on food security, climate change and environment as well as the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.
  - ii. Contributions to the efforts by the League of Arab States related to Zero Hunger.
  - iii. Building capacity and support parliamentary networks on issues relating to building resilience to multiple shocks and stresses.
  - iv. Contributions to engagement on DRR/M issues in the region as part of global policy processes such as the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification, among others, and the overarching SDGs, etc.).

### **Strategic action area 3: Reducing risks and vulnerabilities**

23. Investing in reducing risks and vulnerabilities is key for building resilient agrifood systems. Measures to reduce vulnerability at farm level are important to reduce risk exposure to and impact of hazards.<sup>25</sup> These measures include: DRR and climate-smart agriculture practices and technologies, including sustainable diversification and integrated farming systems, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), agroecological approaches, sustainable soil and water management techniques, etc.

24. At the institutional level, implementation of well-designed agriculture insurance schemes would reduce the impact of disasters and crisis and contribute to valuable economic benefits as shown by many experiences, including in the region. Implementation of risk, nutrition, gender-, age-, and risk-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection schemes would increase access of the most vulnerable groups to adequate, safe and nutritious food and basic necessities, and could contribute to enhance implementation of disaster risks and vulnerability reduction measures. A FAO recent analysis showed that about 60 percent of NENA’s countries have social protection systems or mechanisms of some sort with cash transfers and food aid being the dominant mechanisms.

25. Main actions under this strategic action area include:

- a) Support countries to adopt or expand various risk and vulnerability reduction interventions at farm and landscape level, including along the food value chain, including those mentioned above (BL5-Resilience).
- b) Support countries in developing and strengthening (in terms of targeting, use of innovative technologies, expansion of coverage, etc.) risk and vulnerability reduction measures at institutional level, including shock-responsive and risk-, gender- and nutrition-sensitive social protection systems; and risk transfer systems such as crop and livestock insurance (BL5-Resilience).
- c) Support the integration of multiple risk vulnerability reduction measures within FAO programmes, with emphasis on resilience programming in conflict affected areas (BL5-Resilience).

### **Strategic action area 4: Strengthening One-Health approach against biological threats**

26. The One Health approach is a coordinated, collaborative, multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach to address risks that originate at the animal-human-ecosystem interface, involving human,

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<sup>25</sup> The net economic benefit of farm-level DRR good practices are 2.5 times higher than usual practices by farmers, livestock raisers and fishers - Benefits of farm level disaster risk reduction practices in agriculture. FAO 2017

animal and plant health, Antimicrobial Resistance, food safety and the environment. The One Health approach is key for effective management of biological hazards and risks that threaten food chains. This approach requires strong regional and multistakeholder collaboration given the transboundary nature of animal and zoonotic diseases and plant pests and diseases. Science, technology and innovation play important roles in this approach.

27. The main actions under this strategic action area are:

- a) In collaboration with relevant stakeholders, support countries in developing and updating One Health strategies, plans and platforms and in developing regional strategies (BP3-One Health).
- b) Support countries in strengthening research on emerging zoonotic diseases especially on COVID-19 and the role of animals (BP3-One Health).
- c) Support the implementation of quarantine standards to control transboundary animal diseases and plant pests and diseases (BP3-One Health).
- d) Support countries in establishing and strengthening food safety measures and protocols.
- e) Support regional collaboration on transboundary pests and diseases, including through:
  - i. Support the establishment of a regional One Health Platform in collaboration with relevant stakeholders (BP3-One Health).
  - ii. Support the establishment of a regional committee for sustainable management of transboundary plant pests and diseases (BP3-One Health).
  - iii. Advocate for and support the establishment of regional Trust Fund(s) to strengthen sustainable management of transboundary pests and diseases (BP3-One Health).

#### **Strategic action area 5: Enhancing anticipatory actions, emergency preparedness and response**

28. Whereas deterring avoidable food crises is a priority, it should not undermine the importance of medium to longer-term resilient and sustainable humanitarian relief; development programmes and peacebuilding are not serial processes. They are all needed simultaneously and should be implemented in an integrated manner.

29. In view of the above, the main actions under this strategic action area include:

- a) Support countries in strengthening emergency preparedness for effective response and response capacities including through: (i) effective contingency planning; and (ii) mechanisms to provide anticipatory actions (BL4- Emergencies and BL5-Resilience).
- b) Strengthen the quality of emergency response programmes including through supporting and building capacities for:
  - i. Applying the principles of humanitarian-development-peace nexus.
  - ii. Strengthening evidence-based programming and enhanced information systems through structured and deliberate capture and sharing of lessons and good practices (BL5- Resilience).
  - iii. Ensuring accountability to affected populations.
  - iv. Mainstreaming gender and age dimensions into the planning, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes.
  - v. Mainstreaming nutrition in emergency response.
- c) Embed longer-term resilience building within humanitarian activities to withstand future shocks, reduce future risks and protect development gains (BL4-Emergencies), including integrating disaster risk reduction measures into humanitarian action and integrating social, climate and environmental safeguards into humanitarian actions.

#### ***Contribution to the achievement of the SDGs***

30. The aforementioned strategic action areas contribute to the following nine SDGs targets:

#	Target
1.3	Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.
1.5	By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.
2.1	By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.
2.2	By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under five years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.
2.3	By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.
2.4	By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.
13.1	Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters
13.3	Improve human and institutional capacity on CCM, CCA, impact reduction and early warning
16.1	Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

## V. Accelerators and cross-cutting issues

31. FAO's Strategic Framework 2022-31 identifies four 'accelerators' intended to fast-track progress and optimize the impact of efforts in meeting the challenge of the SDGs, and to realize the *Four Betters*. These accelerators are: (i) technology; (ii) innovation; (iii) data; and (iv) complements (governance, human capital and institutions). The proposed strategic options will fully adopt these accelerators. For instance, technologies will be used in hazards and threats' monitoring and early warning systems (strategic action area 1); and in measures to reduce risks and vulnerabilities (strategic action area 3). All types of relevant innovations (e.g. technological - including digital, social, institutional, policy etc.) will be adopted in all strategic action areas. All strategic options will capitalize on reliable data particularly for understanding risks and vulnerabilities (strategic action area 1) and supporting evidence-based policies (strategic action areas 2 and 4). Governance will be particularly emphasized in all actions under strategic action area 2 (strengthening disaster risk and crisis governance). Building human and institutional capacities will be adopted as one of the main strategies for all strategic action areas.

32. Inclusion is central to all strategic action areas. By strongly emphasising gender, youth, elderly and the most vulnerable groups – including Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, internally displaced persons, refugees and their hosting communities, the proposed strategic action areas are fully aligned with the crosscutting themes identified by FAO's Strategic Framework. Shocks, stresses and crises affect women disproportionately given their low and unequal access to assets, resources, services and technologies. Moreover, they exacerbate women's disproportionate share of

unpaid care and domestic work and increase their exposure to violence. Therefore, the proposed strategic action areas have been identified with a gender lens. Engaging the youth is a key strategy especially in reducing risk and vulnerabilities (strategic action area 3). The approach to inclusion encompasses the most vulnerable groups to multiple shocks and stresses including people with disabilities, internally displaced persons, refugees and their hosting communities, Indigenous Peoples, etc.

33. By capitalizing on technologies, data and innovations and focusing on the most vulnerable, including the poorest and hungry, the proposed strategic options will benefit from and contribute to the Hand-in-Hand Initiative in the countries of the region.