

171st Session of the Council

Item 5: Integrated water resources management for food security and climate resilience

Agriculture accounts for 72 percent of all freshwater withdrawals in the world. Water is therefore central to agriculture and the entire Sustainable Development Agenda. Sustainable agriculture depends on integrated water resources management and innovative solutions, addressing climate change risks and poor water governance. There is a need for more effective and consistent actions, coupled with strong political will, in recognizing, valuing and managing water in a holistic and integrated manner to achieve all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The year 2022 has witnessed the greatest water challenges due to climate change and ineffective water governance. The floods in Australia, Madagascar, Pakistan and South Africa, as well as the long-lasting unprecedented droughts in China, the United States of America, East Africa and Europe took thousands of lives, destroyed villages and towns and other infrastructures, massively affecting agriculture and livelihoods.

The annual amount of freshwater resources available per person declined by more than 20 percent in the past two decades. This trend is projected to continue. There is urgency to support farmers to efficiently produce food and increase production of high-value and nutritious food with optimal water use. Integrated solutions and policies at all levels are needed to improve food security, nutrition and resilience.

The 133rd Session of the Programme Committee welcomed the *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (SDG6) and Management's Response*; underlined the fundamental importance of sustainable management of water resources to FAO's core mandate and the need for the Organization to articulate a strategic and coherent approach to water-related activities; stressed the urgent need to address the links between agriculture and water quality and pollution, within FAO's mandate, in collaboration with relevant UN agencies; and called for water issues to be considered with a cross-sectoral perspective within FAO's mandate, in particular by encouraging its discussion by relevant Governing Bodies.

Following this guidance, that of the 28th Session of the Committee on Agriculture and the 170th Session of the Council, the document provides an overview of the ongoing FAO actions in support of integrated water resources management and presents the planned programmatic water-related initiatives to address the challenges, and support the transformation of agrifood systems and the achievement of the SDGs.

These programmatic initiatives include strengthening FAO's work on integrated water resources management, supporting the development of national water roadmaps through country-led dialogues and participatory processes, and organizing a Rome Water Dialogue to catalyse innovation and mobilize political will towards integrated water resources management for food security and climate resilience.

The Council is invited to endorse water resources management as the topic for the General Debate of the 43rd Session of the Conference and as the biennial theme for Governing Body sessions in 2024-2025.

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