

## Web Annex 3:

### The Second International Forum of the Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) and the adoption of the “Praia Call for Action

#### I. Background

1. Water scarcity remains one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century, especially for the agriculture sector. The Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) embodies the active commitment to deal with this challenge collaboratively as manifested in the adoption of the “Rome Statement on Water Scarcity in Agriculture”<sup>1</sup> on 20 April 2017 during the first meeting of partners. Following this, WASAG was officially launched at the 22nd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Marrakech, Morocco, in November 2016 and endorsed by 83 Ministers of Agriculture during the 9th Berlin Agriculture Ministers’ Global Forum for Food and Agriculture.

2. WASAG has been designed to bring together key players from across different sectors to tackle the collective challenge of using water better in agriculture to ensure food security and nutrition for all. It’s a Partnership hosted by FAO and consists of five groups of partners: government agencies, international organizations, research and academic institutions, advocacy and civil society groups and professional membership organizations. WASAG fosters collaboration among its partners<sup>2</sup> for the development and deployment of policies, strategies and programmes enhancing field capacity for the adaptation of agriculture to water scarcity.

#### *Governance and working groups*

3. WASAG’s Terms of Reference,<sup>3</sup> which were approved by the FAO Development Law Service, provide for a governance mechanism consisting of a Steering Committee on which FAO, as a host, has a permanent seat and with a Chair, two vice-Chairs and a proportional representation of the different groups of partners described above.

4. One of the WASAG delivery mechanisms is through its different working groups<sup>4</sup> where Partners work voluntarily to develop various innovative and collaborative solutions to water scarcity in agriculture. These working groups are all led by Partners other than FAO and work on topics such as water and migration, drought preparedness, financing mechanisms, water and nutrition, sustainable agricultural water use and saline agriculture. FAO does not lead purposely any working group to facilitate ownership by the Partners. However, FAO participates in all the working groups and contributes to their activities. The WASAG working groups function like Communities of Practice.

#### *The First International WASAG Forum*

5. The First International WASAG Forum<sup>5, 6</sup> took place in Praia, Cabo Verde, from 19 to 21 March 2019 with the theme of “*Leaving no one behind*” under the patronage of the Government of Cabo Verde and with the support of the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture and the Ministry of Agricultural, Food, Forestry and Tourism Policies of Italy (MIPAAFT). It attracted more than 300 participants from 48 countries and adopted the Praia Commitments<sup>7</sup> as a firm first step towards decisive actions. The Praia Commitments were formulated by the WASAG working groups to reflect agreed priority action areas for addressing water scarcity in agriculture.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/cb2397en/cb2397en.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fao.org/wasag/partners/en/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fao.org/wasag/overview/terms-of-reference/en/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.fao.org/wasag/working-groups/en/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fao.org/land-water/events/ws-forum/en/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/cb6014en/cb6014en.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/cb1477en/cb1477en.pdf>

### ***A WASAG Strategy for 2021-2024***

6. Soon after, WASAG developed a strategy for 2021-2024 with the title "*Turning Water Scarcity into opportunities for sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition*".<sup>8</sup> Its partners, driven by this objective, continued to work together to implement the strategy, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. WASAG has held webinars<sup>9</sup> and virtual workshops, resulting in several knowledge products.<sup>10</sup>

7. WASAG also continues steadily to receive recognition and the mandate to support countries in finding solutions to cope with water scarcity in agriculture in the face of climate change, as expressed during the meetings of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) in 2020<sup>11</sup> and in 2018<sup>12</sup> and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in 2021.<sup>13</sup>

### **II. The Second International Forum of WASAG and the Praia Call for Action**

8. The Second International Forum on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG)<sup>14</sup> was held from 7 to 10 February 2023 in Praia, Cabo Verde under the theme "*Making agriculture resilient to climate change: Water scarcity, an opportunity for action and collaboration*", under the patronage of the Government of Cabo Verde and with the support of the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture. It enjoyed the participation of around 1500 delegates from 80 countries of which 300 participated physically and 1200 virtually. The plenary and parallel technical sessions and side events all offered the option of virtual participation.

9. Building on the First Forum, the Second International WASAG Forum further promoted and positioned agriculture at the core of climate change discussions and this time, in view of the forthcoming events and beyond, such as the UN 2023 Water Conference and the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to be held from 6 to 17 November 2023 in the United Arab Emirates.

#### ***The Praia Call for Action***

10. The Second International WASAG Forum adopted the '**Praia Call for Action**':<sup>15</sup> (i) to mobilize greater political support for an enabling environment to address the effects of water scarcity and climate change on global food and water security and (ii) to accelerate strategic actions, including policies and investments for collaborative actions among countries, based on country needs and priorities.

11. The Praia Call for Action expands the scope of work of WASAG to include, in addition to the themes of the existing six working groups, topics such as:

- Farmer-led agricultural water management;
- Capacity building programs, and particularly inclusive of women and youth;
- Digital agriculture water management;
- Water quality and the safe reuse of wastewater and other non-conventional water resources in agriculture; and
- The "water, energy, food and environment (WEFE) nexus".

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/cb5448en/cb5448en.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.fao.org/wasag/resources/webinars/en/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.fao.org/wasag/resources/publications/en/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7315en/cb7315en.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/ca8619en/ca8619en.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/nh319en/nh319en.pdf>. See Section VII on Monitoring CFS policy recommendations on climate change and water, Para 27.f) point i.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.fao.org/wasag/news/2nd-wasag-forum/en/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.fao.org/wasag/news/2nd-wasag-forum/prai-call-for-action/en/>

12. WASAG is thus set to further play a greater role in developing collaborative actions and solutions to the increasing challenges posed by climate change and water scarcity, in order to make agriculture more resilient. This requires all countries to be involved.

***Implementing the Praia Call for Action by Members***

13. Acknowledging that water scarcity in agriculture will only get worse in the future and adopting the offer by Cabo Verde to make Praia the Capital City of WASAG, the Second WASAG International Forum recommended that:

- i) all Member Countries are invited to become partners of WASAG;
- ii) a Member Country will be designated to Chair WASAG, starting with Cabo Verde;
- iii) FAO convenes, every two years in its headquarters in Rome, a Water Dialogue on WASAG with all Member Countries, where WASAG will report on the progress made, receive an updated mandate and mobilize the required support; and
- iv) the WASAG Forum is convened in Praia every other second year to provide space to partners and stakeholders for sharing solutions and progress towards tackling water scarcity in agriculture.

14. Subsequently, steps are now being taken to:

- i) prepare for the first Rome Water Dialogue on WASAG around April 2024 under the Chairpersonship of the Prime Minister of Cabo Verde and where all Member Countries will be invited to participate;
- ii) plan for the 3rd International Forum of WASAG, to be held in 2025 in Praia, Cabo Verde or at another venue to be decided by Member Countries during the first Assembly of 2024; and
- iii) amend the governance model of WASAG where all Members will actively participate in its business with a Chairperson (currently Cabo Verde) and one or two Vice-Chairpersons (to be decided at the Rome Water Dialogue on WASAG). The current Steering Committee of WASAG will become the Technical Advisory Committee.

15. The Implementation of the Praia Call for Action was discussed at a side event during the 2023 UN Water Conference on 22 March 2023<sup>16</sup> to showcase *political commitments*. The *thematic action areas* will be further discussed by the WASAG Partners at the Water for Food Global Conference in Nebraska, United States of America, on 10 May 2023.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.fao.org/wasag/news/un-2023-water-conference-side-event/en/>