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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA

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**Summary Report of recommendations of FAO Regional Statutory Bodies
(forestry and wildlife, statistics, fisheries/aquaculture)**

Executive Summary

FAO's regional programme includes four thematic regional statutory committees and commissions. These provide a platform for countries across the Africa region to engage in dialogue and deliberate on the collective direction of the thematic areas of work of the committees and/or commissions. The commissions further synthesize the discussions and identify priorities and recommendations aimed at streamlining national and/or regional agendas in the concerned thematic areas.

This document provides an overview of the topics discussed, achievements and relevant recommendations for the Regional Conference for Africa during the 2022-2023 biennium, arising from the following four committees/commissions:

- a. the 28th Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS);
- b. the 23rd and the 24th Sessions of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (AFWC);
and
- c. the 23rd Session of the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF).

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I. The 28th Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS)

1. The 28th Session of the African Commission on Agricultural Statistics (AFCAS) was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 4 to 8 December 2023. 117 Delegates from 31 AFCAS member countries, as well as 10 national, regional and international institutions participated. The new bureau, composed of South Africa as Chairperson, Tunisia as Vice-Chairperson, and Malawi and Madagascar as Rapporteurs, was elected.

2. The theme of the 28th Session of AFCAS was “Leveraging data and statistics for agrifood systems transformation in Africa”. In accordance with this theme, and to assist member countries in improving data collection, processing, analysis, dissemination, comparability and development of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators, the 28th Session of AFCAS focused on eleven key topics:

- a. FAO’s activities in food and agricultural statistics relevant to the Africa region since the last session of the Commission;
- b. implementation of the 50X2030 Initiative in Africa;
- c. Global Strategy to improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (GSARS Phase II) and statistical capacity development;
- d. progress in global and regional agricultural statistics capacity development initiatives in Africa;
- e. special session on the Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators (ASTI) programme;
- f. progress in the World programme of the Census of Agriculture (WCA 2020) and vision on WCA 2030;
- g. improving food and agricultural data dissemination;
- h. new developments in the use of alternative data sources (earth observation) for agricultural statistics;
- i. measuring food security and nutrition statistics;
- j. progress and new developments on measuring SDG indicators; and
- k. overview of progress and activities to improve fishery and aquaculture data with focus on SDG 14: Life under water.

3. Member countries appreciated the efforts made by FAO and its partners towards building capacity of African countries to collect, process, analyse, disseminate and use agricultural statistics to inform food security and nutrition policies. Twenty-seven African countries have benefitted and/or are benefiting from the 50X2030 Initiative. The Initiative aims at supporting 50 countries to improve agricultural data collection systems by 2030, of which 35 countries are expected to be from Africa.

4. Member countries also appreciated the technical assistance and capacity building provided by FAO and its partners to more than 25 African countries across different agricultural statistics areas, through the implementation of the second phase of the Global Strategy to improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (GSARS-II), which is expected to be completed by July 2024. Given the growing demand for similar technical assistance in the region, countries have requested the development of phase III of GSARS.

5. Countries appreciated FAO’s initiative in producing new datasets on vitamins, minerals, other macro and micronutrients for the world from food balance sheets (FBS), household and consumption surveys, and requested FAO to build countries’ capacity to generate the same nutrient datasets from national FBS and/or other relevant national surveys.

6. Of the 70 recommendations approved by the 28th Session of AFCAS, other key priorities that were identified are:
- a. the need for FAO to organize online trainings or consultations targeting questionnaire focal points to explain concepts and definitions, discuss how to fill the FAO questionnaires properly, improve collaboration between FAO and data providers, facilitate the update of focal points' or contact information, and discuss and address any other reporting issues;
 - b. the need for FAO to maintain flexibility in the survey programme of the 50X2030 Initiative to facilitate better integration with existing survey programmes in countries, and to integrate additional thematic questionnaires;
 - c. the request to FAO, in the context of a potential extension of the GSARS-II, to maintain the existing packages of GSARS-II and consider its expansion to include the use of Earth Observation (EO) data and methods for statistics, the application of forecasting methods, the conduct of impact assessment, the use of free statistical software (e.g. R, Python), and the development of new training modalities (e.g. e-learning);
 - d. for member countries to establish good national coordination mechanisms between Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) focal points and relevant institutions in charge of producing agricultural statistics with the objective of facilitating the monitoring of the CAADP implementation, improving the coherence and quality of data reported in biennial reviews (BR), and further disseminating and reflecting on national BR results and lessons learned from the reporting process at national level;
 - e. the need for member countries to support ASTI activities in the region;
 - f. for member countries to follow the process of the preparation of the guidelines of the WCA 2030, participate in the consultations and anticipate the implementation of the proposed recommendations when implementing the WCA 2020 round;
 - g. for member countries to increase or sustain their efforts in producing the global SDG indicators, and for FAO to continue supporting countries in the area of SDG monitoring;
 - h. the need for FAO to continue providing technical assistance to member countries on the use of EO for specific cases, such as mapping of mixed crops, crop yield modelling, assessment of impact of disasters on crops, and to provide capacity development on other non-conventional methods;
 - i. the need for FAO to assist countries in developing their sampling strategies to begin the process of fish stock monitoring and assessment;
 - j. the approval by the commission of the proposed date and venue of the 29th Session of AFCAS to be in Tunisia, in November 2025.
7. The documents of the 28th Session of AFCAS are available at: <https://www.fao.org/food-agriculture-statistics/resources/resources-detail/en/c/1651946/>

II. The 23rd Session of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission

8. The African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (AFWC) held its 23rd Session in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from 22 to 26 August 2022. The Session was convened in hybrid modality (with physical presence and virtual participation). It was attended by 188 participants, including representatives from 26 members countries, as well as Observers from five institutions of the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, Regional Economic Communities,

international and regional non-governmental organizations (NGOs), youth, academia and research institutions.

9. The 23rd Session of the Commission was held together with the 7th African Forestry and Wildlife Week (AFWW7) under the common theme “The role of forests and wildlife in building resilience and recovery from crises and threats”.

10. The Commission raised concerns on the challenges related to cross-border regulations in the region and called upon Member Nations to further cooperate and develop strategic actions and programmes, promoting the legal and sustainable use and transboundary trade of forest and wildlife products.

11. As part of the recommendations relevant to the FAO Regional Conference for Africa, the Commission:

- a) requested FAO to boost collaboration on forest and wildlife related policies, education and scientific research with other relevant sectors and stakeholders, in particular, with the health sector, in line with the One Health framework;
 - b) requested FAO to continue supporting Member Nations, upon their requests, toward effective implementation of forest and landscape restoration (FLR) plans, Africa Forest and Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100) commitments and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration;
 - c) requested FAO to continue its active engagement including through the implementation of post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and other international processes;
 - d) recommended FAO to continue its technical and resource mobilization support to Members including through the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other climate funds for the implementation of large-scale restoration investment programmes, for increasing agricultural production across sectors (crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture) and the resilience of livelihoods;
- a. welcomed the outcomes of the XV World Forestry Congress and recommended FAO through its Committee on Forestry (COFO) and Council and Conference, to consider these recommendations for inclusion in the Strategic Framework 2022-31, the Medium-Term Plan 2022-2025 and the Programme of Work and Budget of the Organization for the coming biennia;
 - b. agreed that the 24th Session of the AFWC would be held in the United Republic of Tanzania at the end of 2023.

12. The documents of the 23rd Session of AFWC are available at:
<https://www.fao.org/forestry/afwc/31908/en/>

III. The 24th Session of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission

13. The African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (AFWC) held its 24th Session in Arusha, the United Republic of Tanzania, from 30 October to 3 November 2023.

14. The Session was attended by 213 participants, including representatives from 29 member countries, representatives from four institutions of the United Nations system, observers from ten intergovernmental, international and regional non-governmental organizations, Regional Economic Communities, youth, women, local group representatives, academia and research institutions.

15. The 24th Session of the AFWC was held together with the 8th African Forestry and Wildlife Week (AFWW8) under the common theme “Sustainable Management of Africa’s Forests and Wildlife Resources: Boosting Food Security and Resilience to Climate Change for Improved Livelihoods”.

16. The Commission invited Members to ensure more integrated livelihood needs, in particular food security, in forest policies supporting the livelihood needs of communities and Indigenous

Peoples, including men, women and youth, through increased coordination with agriculture, forestry and other relevant sectors, and responding to the changing climate.

17. As part of the recommendations relevant to the FAO Regional Conference for Africa, the Commission:
- a. requested FAO to advance the work on the AFWC thematic areas i) advocating for, and profiling, Africa's forests and wildlife; ii) sustainable financing for forestry and wildlife programmes in Africa; iii) restoration for resilience; iv) enhancing action against deforestation and illicit exploitation and trade of forest and wildlife products for sustainable development in Africa and; v) promoting forest and wildlife education and professions; by working with experts and other partners in Africa, mobilize resources and develop national, subregional and regional projects/programme;
 - b. noted that there are many national, regional and international organizations working in the area of forestry and wildlife in the Africa region and called on FAO to strengthen collaboration, partnerships and synergies with these organizations;
 - c. requested FAO to support Members to improve policies and strategies on sustainable forest management as well as to promote legal and sustainable production and trade of forest products, in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA);
 - d. recommended that FAO continues to add more focus on wildlife aspects, and includes carbon markets and climate change mitigation, dryland plants management and conservation, forest management in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the agenda of the next session of the Commission;
 - e. request Members to consult with their governments and inform the Secretariat on their availability to host the 25th session of AFWC in 2025. The Commission called the Secretariat to follow up on this matter with Members and to decide in consultation with its new executive committee (AFWC 24 bureau).

18. The documents of the 24th Session of AFWC are available at:
<https://www.fao.org/events/detail/afwc-24>

IV. Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF)

19. The Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) was established as an advisory body, within the framework of Article VI.2 of the FAO Constitution, by the Director-General following the decision of the FAO Council at its 48th Session in 1967 (https://www.fao.org/unfao/govbodies/gsb-subject-matter/statutory-bodies-details/en/c/182/?no_cache=1). Its purpose is to promote the sustainable utilization of the living marine resources of its area of competence, which includes high seas and national waters, by the proper management and development of the fisheries and fishing operations. CECAF has 34 members, including coastal and non-coastal states and the European Union.

20. In addition to the Committee, CECAF has a Scientific Sub-Committee (SSC). The SSC analyses and assesses main stocks and fisheries, and provides fisheries management advice to the Committee, focusing on transboundary resources. It also discusses other pertinent fisheries management issues in the region, including for artisanal fisheries. The SSC is supported by three working groups, the Working Group for small pelagic species, the Working Group for demersal species and the Working Group for artisanal fisheries.

21. The Committee held its 23rd Session from 11 to 14 July 2023 in Monrovia, Liberia. The Session was attended by 22 Members of the Committee, observers from African Union – Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, the Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation among African States bordering the Atlantic Ocean and the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea.

22. The theme of the 23rd Session of CECAF was “Towards practical solutions to strengthen fisheries management and sustainability in CECAF region”. Major discussion topics included: i) action on recommendations from the 22nd Session; ii) main outcomes of the 9th Session of SSC and

implementation of management advice in the CECAF region; iii) the independent cost-benefit assessment for improved directions of CECAF; iv) matters regarding the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF)-Nansen programme; and v) the CECAF Programme of Work for 2024-2025. The productive discussions and recommendations, once again, demonstrated members' commitment to enhancing fisheries management and sustainability in the CECAF region.

A. Main issues to be highlighted:

- a. Action on the recommendations of the 22nd Session was discussed, with particular attention to addressing overexploited fisheries resources, improving data quality and enhancing the Secretariat's capacity.
- b. The Committee addressed the recommendations from the Dakar Special session on the Cost and Benefit Analysis on CECAF, and discussed strategies to improve CECAF operations, including the need for diverse funding sources and the need to develop a comprehensive communication strategy to raise awareness about CECAF work. The importance of enhanced regional collaboration with organizations such as the African Union regional Centres of Excellence, academia, NGOs and non-state actors was also highlighted.
- c. The Committee reviewed and adopted the outcomes of the 9th Session of SSC (Nouakchott, Mauritania, 5-9 December 2022). The Committee validated the status of small pelagic and demersal stocks in the northern and southern subregions of CECAF.
- d. The Committee adopted the Programme of Work for the intersessional period, focusing on improving management recommendations, enhancing communication and strengthening regional collaboration.
- e. In the Session which focused on fisheries management in the CECAF area, key challenges from participatory case studies in five member countries were presented. Recommendations were discussed to enhance national governance systems and streamline management advice for practical implementation. Emphasis was placed on issuing simplified advice for non-experts through periodic briefs, along with proposing a communication strategy and promoting regional collaboration to facilitate effective implementation in the CECAF region.

B. Main expected actions:

From CECAF Secretariat:

- a. Facilitate the updates of CECAF statutes and review of its legal framework to match the current context.
- b. Develop a comprehensive communication strategy to raise awareness and visibility about CECAF's work.
- c. Simplify or popularize fisheries management advice for decision-makers and non-fisheries stakeholders.

From CECAF members:

- a. Ensure CECAF fisheries management advice is implemented by members and their regional organizations.
- b. Foster collaboration and synergies between partners, members, Regional Fisheries Bodies, Regional Fisheries Management Bodies and Regional Economic Communities across the CECAF region.
- c. Identify and request support for capacity-building initiatives.

23. During the closing session, the Commission called for all partners, especially African countries, to enhance their commitment to CECAF activities, including the implementation of the decisions on management advice and financial support.