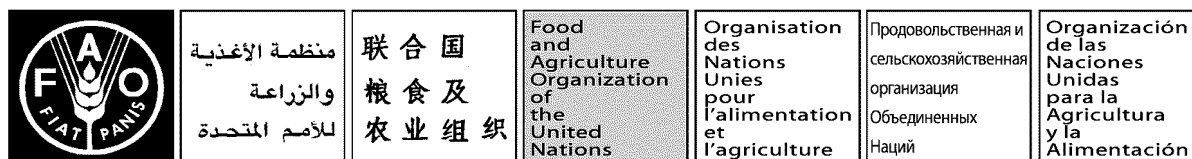


December 2010

**THIRTIETH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST****Khartoum, the Republic of the Sudan, 4-8 December 2010****PROVISIONAL ANNOTATED AGENDA****(A) SENIOR OFFICERS MEETING****4-6 December 2010****I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS**

- 1. Opening of the Senior Officers Meeting**
- 2. Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons and Appointment of the Rapporteur**
- 3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable**

II. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**4. The Implications of Soaring Food Prices and the Global Financial and Economic Crisis on Agricultural Development and Food and Nutrition Security in the Near East**

The Near East countries are highly prone to the vagaries of world food commodity price changes and financial turbulences. The majority of these countries are net food importers with high and increasing dependence on food imports. In addition, agricultural resource base in most of the countries is fairly limited and fragile. Scarcity of arable land and irrigation water with large fluctuations in rainfall, among others; are major factors that constrain their production capacity. Thus, while high food prices could have considerable negative effects on food and nutrition security; increases in food production are would be associated with risks of over-exploiting limited land and water resources.

This document aims at assessing implications of the changes in world food commodity prices and the recent financial crisis for agricultural development and food and nutrition security in the Region. It will also examine actions taken by countries in response to these crises, with a particular emphasis on the recent policy orientation of promoting external investments for securing food supplies. Furthermore, the document will analyze appropriate short, medium and long-term measures necessary to support sustainable national and regional programmes for food security, particularly in the context of the *Comprehensive Framework of Action (CFA)* prepared by the *UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis*.

5. Transboundary Plant Pests and Diseases in the Near East, with Emphasis on Wheat Black Stem Rust (Ug99)

The Near East Region is suffering from a number of trans-boundary plant pests and diseases, such as the Red Palm Weevil, which was originated in Southern Asia and spread to most of the Region countries and parts of Southern Europe, and the Tomatoes Leaf Minor (spread from South America to the Mediterranean Region, including: Spain, Italy, France, Algeria and Morocco). The Peach Fruit Fly is among the most destructive fruit flies that attacks a wide range of fruit trees; it originated in Southern Asia and spread to a large number of Near East countries. Desert locust is also one of the most important plant pests in the Region.

The *Black Stem Rust* disease on wheat strain (Ug99) was detected in Uganda and has spread to parts of Africa and the Near East. This strain is virulent to over 80% of all wheat varieties grown globally and could cause devastating crop losses if its spread is not controlled. Since its emergence, it has been reported in Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, Yemen and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The rust spores are wind-born and are affected by climatic conditions that are similar to those influencing locust outbreak and migration. Through the *Wheat Rust Disease Global Programme (WRDGP)* initiated in 2008; FAO is promoting a global action to reduce the world's vulnerability to emerging Wheat Rust diseases and facilitate a sustainable international system to reduce the threat of these diseases in collaboration with other related international research institutions. FAO is taking the lead in supporting national governments and the international community in their preparedness to manage Ug99 and for mitigation of its potential future threats.

III. OTHER ITEMS

6. Summary of the Recommendations of Regional Commissions and Relevant Meetings in the Near East

This item discusses the conclusions and recommendations of the Regional Commissions and other relevant regional meetings in the Near East. This includes *Regional Fora* like: *Agriculture and Land and Water Commission (ALAWUC)*, *Regional Fisheries Commission (RCOFI)*, *Regional Forestry Commission (RCOFO)* and *Desert Locust Commission, etc.*

IV. INFORMATION NOTES

a. Water Desalination for Agricultural Use

Water resources are severely constrained in the Near East Region and the Climate Change will further deteriorate such limited resources. Excessive groundwater extraction has resulted in salt water intrusion into aquifers in coastal areas and degraded the quality of groundwater resources. Water desalination is an alternative option to increase the availability of water in areas with limited or no fresh water resources. It is the primal source of potable water in the Gulf countries, as well as in various islands around the world. Modern desalination technologies were progressed during the 1960s and desalination plants have been constructed since the 1970s from some of the countries in the Gulf. More than 23,000 plants have been developed around the world.

Water desalination for agricultural use gained more attention in the Region and the previous Regional Conference for the Near East recommended including this topic into the next Conference. Relevant aspects, including the latest technologies, costs, and positive as well as adverse impacts, will be reviewed to assess the feasibility of water desalination for agricultural use in the Near East Region.

b. Valuing Rangelands for their Ecosystem and Livelihood Services

Vast areas of the Near East Region are classified as rangelands dominated by arid and semi-arid climate, with low and erratic precipitation, high risks of severe drought and critical shortage of grazing and water. Rangelands (steppe, desert, savannah and mountain grazing) cover the largest area under one type of land use in the Region. They play a critical role in providing humankind with various goods and services needed for survival and particularly livelihoods of millions of Bedouin and pastoralists communities. Rangelands are by far the cheapest source of livestock feed providing variable proportions of the feed requirements of different types of livestock. Despite the dominance of arid and semi-arid conditions over the rangelands of the Region; rangelands play important roles in recreation, conservation of genetic resources, and contribute to soil and watershed protection. Moreover, they are considered major carbon-sink with greater potential in carbon sequestration under proper management. Unfortunately many of these services are taken for granted in many parts of the Near East and the capacity to provide their products and to perform their functions is declining due to a combination of environmental and man-made factors.

c. Knowledge, Information and Communication for Agricultural and Rural Development in the Near East: *Recent Experiences and Lessons Learned*

Agricultural development in the Near East remains relatively susceptible by the ineffective and incompetent exchange of knowledge and information. Maximize use of the results and experiences would prevent redundancy and duplication of data and efforts; as well as ensuring maximum co-ordination among various agricultural institutes, programmes and personnel. Hence knowledge is the corner stone of development; building the capacity to access and exchange information and converting it into useful knowledge and innovation for dissemination and sharing; is quite essential to achieve development objectives of poverty eradication, food security and sustainable agricultural development. Benefiting from exchange of knowledge and experiences would contribute to improved use of natural resources for agriculture, leading to better food safety; as well as averting and mitigating risks of trans-boundary plant pest and animal diseases. The current experiences on knowledge and information through development and management of networks/ systems for rural and agricultural development and food security improvement in the Near East will be presented.

In line with FAO orientation in this field, an array of Information and Communalization Technology-based projects and activities were initiated. The *Rural and Agricultural Development Communication Network (RADCON)* is an example of projects that have been successfully implemented in Egypt, and it is being proposed as an effective extension tool for agricultural innovation and rural development networking in the Region. Sharing of experiences on food security improvement in the Region will be discussed.

This document will present recommendations on how to reduce the knowledge and information gap that prevails in the Near East. The aim of this information note is to review the institution building and management of networks/systems for rural and agricultural development information networking that are of potential value to Member Countries.

d. An Update on Transboundary Animal Diseases in the Near East

A brief account will be given on the latest development related to major trans-boundary animal diseases, focusing on Avian Flu (which still represents a big concern in the Region) and the novel new *Human Influenza A (H1N1)* virus, but as well covering the other contagious diseases and zoonoses spread in most countries of the Region such as: *Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)*, *Rift Valley Fever (RVV)*, *Pest des petits Ruminants, (PPR)*, *Brucellosis and Blue Tongue (BT)*. These diseases generally cause big economic losses and result in production and productivity reduction, affecting primarily the people who depend on the livestock sector for their livelihood.

e. Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation: New Initiatives and Update on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

Climate change threatens to accelerate degradation or loss of the basic assets for food production, including land, water, air and biodiversity. The Near East, like in the rest of the world, climate change is expected to affect food production and the whole food supply chain. Further, the sustainability of agro-ecosystems/natural ecosystems including fisheries and wild life- and the stability of socioeconomic conditions are also at risk. The vulnerability of countries to climate change is location-specific and is a function of the country's sensitivity/adaptive capacity. With higher temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, and a potential sea level rise – all forecasted for the Region- no country would be safe from the impacts of the changing climate. But what does climatic change mean for the small farmers in the field, who directly rely on natural resources for their daily food, livelihood and well-being? How would such vulnerable communities be affected by a changing climate, and are there ways to improve their ability to cope? Are the relationships between climate change and impacts on agricultural production, fisheries and food security embedded in the national policies of countries of the Region.

The objective of this information note is to review the fragmented information and knowledge on climate change trends and expected impacts on agricultural resource base and fisheries in the Near East. By considering available concrete case studies, the expected climate change projections will be identified and evaluation of their physical impacts on main crops, livestock and fisheries will be assessed. Scenarios of economic impacts on agricultural production and possible adaptation/mitigation options would also be examined.

Regarding impacts on fisheries, the *Ecosystem Approach* to fisheries and to aquaculture would have the potential to increase ecosystem and community resilience, providing valuable frameworks for dealing with climate change. The outcome of the *FAO Regional Workshop*, held in November 2009, on “Adapting to Climate Change: *The Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Near East and North Africa Region*”; will be presented.

f. Evaluation of FAO's Role and Work related to Water

This Info Note gives a brief on the 103rd Session of the Programme Committee meeting regarding the “Evaluation of FAO's Role and Work related to Water”. The Committee felt that this Evaluation should be drawn to the attention of the forthcoming Regional Conferences so that “water” can be assessed by these bodies as part of their role in setting priorities for FAO, including strengthening cooperation with external partners of FAO.

The Committee endorsed the establishment of an FAO Water Platform that should be created immediately, since its endorsement would not be required as an Internal Coordination Mechanism. Both decentralized offices and headquarters units should be involved in the development of this Platform, whose creation is urgent so that resource requirements could be assessed for the preparation of the Programme of Work and Budget for 2012-13.

A primary task of the Water Platform would be to develop a Water Strategy for FAO, in addition to considering some major cross-cutting issues, such as environment and gender; as well as Trans-boundary water which can also be a source of contention that may affect food security, which should receive emphasis in FAO's work.

V. CONCLUDING ITEMS

7. Adoption of the Report of the Senior Officers Meeting

8. Closure of the Senior Officers Meeting

(B) MINISTERIAL MEETING

7-8 December 2010

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

- 1. Inaugural Ceremony**
- 2. Election of Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and Appointment of the Rapporteur**
- 3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable**

II. STATEMENTS AND DEBATES

- 4. Statement by the FAO Director-General**
- 5. Statement by the Independent Chairman of the FAO Council**
- 6. Matters Arising from the World Summit on Food Security and the 36th Session of the FAO Conference, notably Implementation of the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA), including the Decentralized Offices Network**

This item examines the reform of the Organization resulting from the deliberations of the 36th Session of the FAO Conference (Rome, 18-23 November 2009) and its implications for the Near East Region. It also examines the *Implementation of the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA) for FAO Renewal*, including the *Decentralized Offices Network* with a medium to a long-term vision for the structure and functioning of the DO network. The item also presents the results of the *World Summit of Heads of State and Government on Food Security*, held in Rome 16 to 18 November 2009.

7. The Role of FAO Regional Conferences in the Reformed Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

Wide-ranging reforms were agreed to unanimously by Members of the CFS in October 2009, and approved in November 2009 by the FAO Conference. They were also endorsed by the Heads of State and Governments in November at the World Summit on Food Security who were committed to “*fully implement the reform of the CFS*” as one of the four strategic goals of the Summit. This item presents these reforms, which aim to make the CFS the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform dealing with food security and nutrition, and provides an opportunity to discuss how the renewed CFS could be linked to national structures to be effectively operational.

8. Report on FAO Activities (2008-2009) in the Region and Actions Taken on the Main Recommendations of the 29th FAO Regional Conference for the Near East

This document will report on the *Action Taken* on the recommendations of the previous Regional Conference and will also report on the follow-up to the *WFS Recommendations and its Plan of Action*. The document will concentrate on regional aspects in terms of salient follow-up actions taken in the Near East Region to implement the Plan of Action, highlighting the Region’s particular needs, opportunities and weaknesses.

9. Implementation of the Programme of Work and Budget 2010-11 and Areas of Priority Actions for the Near East Region for the following biennium

The document will summarize the main features of the FAO Programme of Work and Budget for the Near East 2010-11. It will highlight the results that need to be achieved and the required resources, with a focus on priorities of the Organization in the Region. It will also provide a broad outline of the main areas of priority action in the Region for 2012-13.

10. Establishment of One Global Shared Services Centre

This item examines the initiative of establishing one global Shared Services Centre by consolidating the Bangkok and Santiago hubs into the Budapest hub for efficiency and saving measures.

III. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

11. FAO Regional Priority Framework for the Near East

This document will present a draft outline of a *Regional Priority Framework (RPF) for FAO* work in the Near East Region. The purpose of this document is: i) to initiate discussion among Members in the Region on major challenges facing agriculture and food security and the ways and means to address these challenges; ii) to identify the key priorities for the FAO work in the region and to agree on the process of the formulation of a full fledged *FAO Regional Priority Framework* that will serve as the reference for the cooperation between FAO and Member Countries.

The RSF aims at translating the *FAO Global Strategic Framework* into regional priority areas and actions for achieving the members' Goals and Strategic Objectives in the Region. The Regional Strategy would take into consideration the Region's characteristics, needs, challenges and aspirations; and propose regional and sub-regional inter-disciplinary priority areas for sustainable food security, agricultural and rural development.

The document will draw on national priorities as reflected, *inter alia*, in the National Medium-Term Priority Framework and/or national sustainable agricultural development and food security strategies. It will also attempt to define key areas for supporting member Countries to achieve global goals and objectives as defined in the FAO Strategic Framework, through country, sub regional frameworks, fully aligned with the respective development agenda and global commitments and conforming with relevant programmes of the UN and other development partners.

The RSF will also attempt to identify a few high-level results and outputs to which all field FAO projects and programmes should contribute, in line with the principles of results-based management (RBM). It will serve as the tool for resource mobilization and for the development of cooperative programmes, involving donors from and outside the Region.

12. Report of the Senior Officers Meeting

IV. OTHER MATTERS

13. Proposed List of Topics to be considered at the 31st Regional Conference

V. CONCLUDING ITEMS

14. Date and Place of the 31st Regional Conference for the Near East

15. Adoption of the Report of the 30th Regional Conference (including the Senior Officers Meeting Report)

16. Closure of the Conference