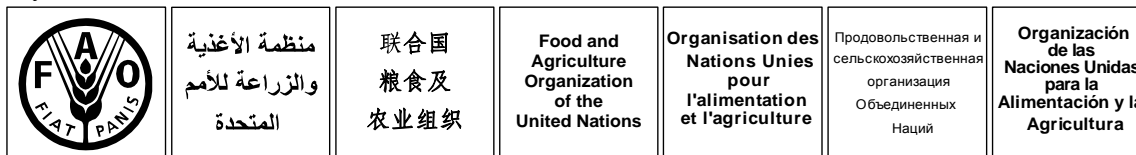


May 2012



FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Thirty-first Session

Rome, 14-18 May 2012

SUMMARY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF REGIONAL COMMISSIONS IN THE NEAR EAST ON I) THE POLICY AND REGULATORY MATTERS AND II) PROGRAMME AND BUDGET MATTERS

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1. This document provides a brief summary of the main outcomes and recommendations made by the regional commissions in the Near East and North Africa during 2010-2011. The commission meetings considered are: the Twentieth Session of the Near East Forestry Commission (NEFRC); Sixth Session of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI); the Thirty Fifth Session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM); the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC); and the Seventh Session of the Agriculture and Land and Water Use Commission (ALAWAC).

I. TWENTIETH SESSION OF THE NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION (NEFRC)

2. The Twentieth Session of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC) and the Second Near East Forestry Week, under the theme “Good Governance of Forests and Rangelands: Pillar of Food Security” were held during 29 January to 2 February 2012 in Antalya, the Republic of Turkey.

3. Recommendations to the attention of the Regional Conference:

- The Commission recommended countries, for the sake of continuity and institutional memory, to nominate a permanent representative to the NEFRC together with a permanent alternative and urged FAO to undertake a case study to explore the barriers to coordination between forest and range in Near East countries.
- The Commission recommended FAO and countries to allocate sufficient human and financial resources to the forests and rangelands programme in the region.
- The Commission recommended FAO to disseminate lessons learned as regards the use of treated waste water from all countries especially valuable experience of the Gulf Countries, and countries to use the participatory approach to involve all stakeholders in the coordination of treated waste water projects.
- The Commission recommended countries to take concrete measures to access finance through international conventions and bodies related to climate change and requested FAO’s support to promote this access. The Commission noted the difficulties in convincing policy makers that forests make a real contribution to the economy.

II. SIXTH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES (RECOFI)

4. The Sixth Session of RECOFI was held at FAO in Rome, Italy, from 10 to 12 May 2011. The Session was attended by 18 delegates from all the eight RECOFI Member countries, one observer country (Yemen) and one observer organization (INFOSAMAK). The Commission reviewed the work carried out since the last session in 2009, including the Commission’s administrative and financial reports; considered selected issues of particular relevance for the region, such as fish stock status reporting and trends of fisheries production, aquaculture development prospective, regional strategy for spatial planning for marine fisheries and aquaculture; reviewed the functioning of the Commission, including its consolidation and development and adopted the work programme for 2011 and 2012.

5. Main outcome and decisions made:

- The Commission Members recognized that regional dialogue had been facilitated through Commission activities that had helped Members identify national and regional actions required to move forward with the adoption of regulations and policies to support the sustainable management of shared fisheries resources and development of the aquaculture sector;
- The Commission acknowledged the comprehensive financial report concerning RECOFI’s work over the 2009-2010 biennium and noted the significant FAO Regular Programme contributions to support RECOFI’s work;
- The Commission agreed that capacity development remained a critical issue in the region and this was essential to enable fisheries personnel to promote policies aimed at facilitating long-term sustainability, including the adoption of the ecosystem approach to fisheries;

- The Commission recognized that the establishment of the Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS) was a significant accomplishment;
- The Commission endorsed the FAO/RECOFI regional strategy on spatial planning for marine capture fisheries and aquaculture and decided, within available resources, to provide the necessary support for follow-up action for the strategy's implementation;
- The Commission adopted its first fisheries management recommendation, RECOFI/6/2011/1, entitled "*Recommendation on minimum data reporting in the RECOFI area*". In accordance with Article V of the Agreement for the Establishment of the Regional Commission for Fisheries, the Commission agreed that the recommendation would take effect on 1 January 2012;
- The Commission endorsed the findings and outcomes of the Special Meeting on RECOFI Consolidation and Development (Rome, 11–12 May 2010);
- The Commission concurred that many fisheries management and developmental challenges faced RECOFI. Members were calling upon the Commission more frequently to undertake additional work and for this reason it was necessary to reconsider the annual contributions paid;
- The Commission noted that the current level of Members contributions was only sufficient to fund the implementation of a limited number of priority activities, and resolved that additional funds would be required if a more ambitious work programme was to be implemented;
- Regarding the options considered by the Special Meeting on RECOFI Consolidation and Development, the Commission decided to continue applying fixed and equal contribution for Members, and agreed on a three-fold increase (i.e. from USD 5000 to USD 15 000) of the Members' annual contributions from 2013 provided that all arrears were liquidated by 31 December 2011;
- The Commission approved a workplan for the next intersessional period and agreed to support activities focusing on: capacity development for aquaculture and fisheries spatial planning and management; stock status reporting; implementation of minimum data requirements and establishment of a regional database and information network to support management of major fisheries; development of regional management plans with agreed operational objectives and measures for fisheries management; pilot joint assessment of the shared stock of kingfish; fisheries socio-economic appraisal; risk analysis in aquaculture; environmental monitoring in cage aquaculture; and maintenance and development of the Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS).

III. THIRTY- FIFTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN (GFCM)

6. The Thirty-Fifth Session of GFCM was held at FAO in Rome, Italy, from 9 to 14 May 2011. The Session assessed the intersessional activities of the Scientific Advisory Committee, and the Committee on Aquaculture and reviewed, through its Committee of Compliance, the action taken by Members to implement binding recommendations in place. Administrative and financial issues were dealt with by the Committee on Administration and Finance. The Commission also reviewed and adopted proposed recommendations on fisheries management, data reporting and monitoring and control. Moreover, the Commission elected its new Executive Secretary.

7. Main outcomes and decisions of the Thirty-Fifth Session of GFCM:

- The Commission discussed the report of the review of GFCM performances launched in 2009 and decided to establish a Task Force aiming at reviewing the recommendations made by the panel of experts and to propose options to improve and modernize the functioning of the Commission, including through a possible amendment of the GFCM agreement, the rules of procedure and the financial regulations;
- The Commission elected its new Executive Secretary (Mr Abdellah Srour, Morocco) and decided to strengthen its Secretariat by recruiting four additional staff members;
- The Commission agreed to move from the FAO premises to the new GFCM HQs, also located in Rome (Via Vittorio Colonna 1);

- The Commission decided to establish an *ad hoc* Working Group to examine issues relating to the Black Sea in connection with fisheries and aquaculture;
- The Commission adopted six binding recommendations and three resolutions and endorsed five recommendations by ICCAT of relevance for the Mediterranean. Below is the complete list:
 - Concerning the establishment of a GFCM Logbook, amending Recommendation GFCM/34/2010/1 (rec.);
 - On the exploitation of red coral in the GFCM Competence Area (rec.);
 - On reducing incidental by-catch of seabirds in fisheries in the GFCM Competence Area (rec.);
 - On the incidental by-catch of sea turtles in fisheries in the GFCM Competence Area (rec.);
 - On fisheries measures for the conservation of the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) in the GFCM Competence Area (rec.);
 - On reporting of aquaculture data and information, amending Recommendation GFCM/33/2009/4 (rec.)
 - ICCAT recommendation [10-04] amending the Recommendation by ICCAT to establish a Multi-annual recovery plan for Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (rec. ICCAT);
 - ICCAT recommendation [10-06] on Atlantic Shortfin Mako sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT (rec. ICCAT);
 - ICCAT recommendation [10-08] on Hammerhead sharks (family Sphyrnidae) caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT (rec. ICCAT);
 - ICCAT recommendation [10-09] on the by-catch of sea turtles in ICCAT fisheries (rec. ICCAT);
 - ICCAT recommendation [07-07] on reducing the incidental by-catch of seabirds in longline fisheries (rec. ICCAT);
 - On the submission of combined data on fishing vessels (res.);
 - On data confidentiality policy and procedures, amending Resolution GFCM/30/2006/1 (res.);
 - Concerning the procedure to submit new proposals of decisions to the annual sessions of the GFCM (res.);
- The Commission adopted its 2011 autonomous budget at the level of US \$ 1 708 239 and adopted the programme of work of its subsidiary bodies for 2011, including the convening of 25 technical meetings.

IV. COMMISSION FOR CONTROLLING THE DESERT LOCUST IN THE CENTRAL REGION (CRC)

8. The Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC) did not meet in plenary session during the intersession period.

V. SEVENTH SESSION OF THE AGRICULTURE AND LAND AND WATER USE COMMISSION FOR THE NEAR EAST (ALAWUC/NE)

9. The date and venue of the Seventh Session of the Agriculture and Land and Water Use Commission for the Near East have not been fixed. ALAWUC/NE has normally been held back-to-back with NERC since its establishment. However it has been decided to hold the upcoming session separately from NERC and in a different country. The session will cover discussion of draft statutes for ALAWUC and the election of its board.

VI. REGIONAL MULTI STAKE HOLDER WORKSHOP ON FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE NEAR EAST

10. At the 30th Session of the Near East Regional Conference (NERC) in Khartoum in December 2010, a request was made to organize a regional workshop on food security and nutrition in the region. Such a workshop would re-enforce linkages with The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and contribute to the 37th Session of CFS. The workshop was organized jointly by the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and CFS and was held in Cairo, Egypt from 3 to 4 October. The objective of the workshop was to bring together a wide range of stakeholders concerned with food security and nutrition to examine key issues affecting food security in the region and provide policy inputs to CFS through a multi-stakeholder consultation process. Representatives from 12 countries, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, UN Agencies, CSOs, NGOs, farmer's organizations, donors, representatives of international financial institutions, regional institutions, agricultural research institutions and the private sector attended. Four policy round tables were held.

11. Below are the key recommended policy actions that resulted from the discussions.

A. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TRANSITION IN THE NEAR EAST - IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION RECOMMENDATIONS

- A regional coordination mechanism should be established to promote regional cooperation to enhance food security. More work needs to be done to define the nature of the mechanism, its main activities and its institutional legitimacy.
- Accurate and timely information on agricultural production and market dimensions should be analyzed and disseminated to allow effective monitoring of food security and nutrition at the national and regional levels. The tools exist but capacity is needed to implement them.

B. FOOD PRICE VOLATILITY AND FOOD SECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Subsidies should be targeted at those who need them to reduce market distortions and the fiscal burden on governments. Safety nets should also be implemented through better targeting of the most vulnerable populations paying special attention to gender differentiated impacts
- Strengthen the cooperative systems to support small-holder farmers' production and marketing, ensuring that both men and women's needs have been considered and they benefit from high food prices by strengthening their negotiating power.
- Promote the sustainable management of natural resources through the implementation of the international environmental agreements such as the Convention to Combat Desertification, to protect biological diversity and advance the utilization of renewable energy while keeping in mind how men and women use and benefit differently from renewable energy.
- Promote policy coherence and coordination at the national level by expanding dialogue between all stakeholders involved in food security and nutrition.
- Water use should take into consideration the scarcity in the region. Treat water as national wealth, and, in addition to price incentives, invest in new technologies that address the gender differences in use and benefits to enhance water management efficiency
- Explore innovative methods for exchange of country experiences, knowledge sharing and technology transfer, particularly in the areas of water and land management by involving both men and women.
- Develop a better understanding of the purpose and costs of different food reserve schemes at regional, national and household level.

C. IMPROVING FOOD SECURITY AND SMALLHOLDER-SENSITIVE INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increased investment is needed in the sustainable intensification of agriculture, the reduction of food losses, improved food quality and safety and improvement of the ability of the poor and vulnerable to access food. The national and regional programmes and action plans for food security provide an ideal framework for such investment. Culturally acceptable strategies to ensure access to extension information by women smallholder farmers would serve as a critical investment in improving food security. FAO will ensure that all stakeholders (i.e men and women farmers) participate in the definition and execution of such regional programmes and action plans.
- Smallholder farmers (men, women and their families) are the backbone of agriculture. They need to receive information in a way that is timely, useful and relevant to their situations.
- The region is diverse. Some countries have natural resources and others have resources to invest. But investment requires a stable socio economic and political environment. A careful assessment of international codes of conduct and other voluntary guidelines for investment and their applicability is needed to ensure broad-based development and food security, reflecting the regional priorities.
- Policy recommendations should take into account analysis of what has happened in the past, what the successes and failures have been and what impact they have had.
- Projects that are targeted at smallholder farmers should be gender sensitive, sustainable and stable.

D. GENDER, FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promote capacity building in the implementation of gender sensitive interventions, through the development of national guidelines by the national institutions such as the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Raise awareness of and advocate for women's rights at regional, national and local levels, with a view to promoting the enforcement of existing legal frameworks such as women's rights to land ownership, access to employment and relevant technologies.
- Strengthen capacities to collect sex disaggregated data, ensuring standardization of methodologies in order to collect comparable data.
- Establish a multi-stakeholder network to promote exchange of experiences, knowledge and technologies promoting gender issues and household nutrition.
- Promote the utilization of innovative tools in addressing women's empowerment and household nutrition, working in partnership with national government to explore how to scale up similar initiatives.

12. A summary of these roundtables was presented to the 37th Session of the CFS by the Rapporteur of the multi-stakeholder workshop. The CFS adopted the recommendations of the workshop. The Conference is called upon to support the implementation of the workshop recommendations by the member countries.