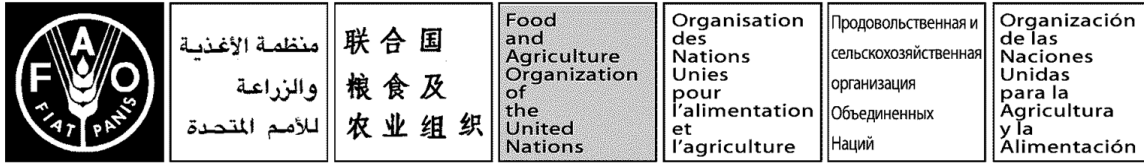


September 2023

E

WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)
NINETEENTH SESSION
Bridgetown, Barbados, 6-8 September 2023
Summary of the priorities established at the XXXVII FAO Regional conference for Latin America and the Caribbean and the potential contribution of fisheries and aquaculture

In recent decades, agriculture (including stock farming, fisheries and aquaculture) in Latin America and the Caribbean has shown a significant growth. The region has become one of the world's leading food suppliers, accounting for 14 percent production and 23 percent of agricultural and fisheries exports.

This significant growth has brought with it considerable environmental costs, such as water scarcity and pollution, soil deterioration, loss of terrestrial and marine biodiversity, reduction in fish stock and forest cover, and a high level of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which contribute to climate change.

Today, Latin America and the Caribbean face a major challenge in transforming their food systems towards more sustainable and resilient production. This will also contribute to combating all forms of malnutrition and reducing poverty of the most vulnerable rural and coastal communities in the region. This transformation can be a source of multiple opportunities as it will require the introduction and expansion of technological innovations, increased investment in human capital and research, improved policies and regulations, and greater opportunities to advance in gender equality.

The Regional Conference was attended by 586 participants from 33 Member States, including one Head of State; one Prime Minister; one Vice-President; 64 Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Permanent Secretaries; 18 Ambassadors; three observers; representatives of eight UN organisations; four intergovernmental organisations; 14 civil society organisations; one representative of Parliamentary Fronts against Hunger; 13 private sector organisations; and 13 scientific and academic organisations.

During the 37th Regional Conference, attention was given to the transformative steps taken since 2019, to ensure that the Organization is fit for purpose, modern, inclusive and agile, and the introduction of corporate initiatives, e.g. the 'Hand in Hand Initiative'; the 'Global Action on Green Development of Special Agricultural Commodities: One Country, One Priority Commodity'; the '1000 Digital Villages Initiative', the knowledge Platform on Family Farming and the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, and encouraged FAO to further dialogue with Members on such initiatives with a view to maximising the impact of FAO's work at country and regional level.¹

FAO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic was also acknowledged, harnessing the Organization's convening power, supporting Members to strengthen the resilience of agri-food systems and keep them functioning, as food production and supply remained stable in a highly stressed context.

During the course of the RC, the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation was recognized along with FAO's work with other relevant stakeholders such as the private sector, civil society, the Parliamentary Front Against Hunger, the academia and scientific community, among others, noting that these collaborations allowed for resource mobilization, technical exchange, capacity strengthening, knowledge management, development of innovations and good practices implementation.

It was also important to highlight FAO support in combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in order to contribute to the sustainability of fisheries in the region.

Similarly, the RC recommended that FAO should:

1. Continue to support Members to ensure that agri-food systems and value chains recover from the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, through the implementation of the priority areas of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031 in the region, with special emphasis on the recovery of decent employment, especially among women and youth, and the eradication of child labour, and ensure the right to adequate food in the context of national food security, in particular for vulnerable households, women, children, youth, indigenous peoples, peasants, afro-descendants and those whose food security and nutrition had deteriorated.
2. Continue to support Members in implementing national policies to reduce all forms of malnutrition and contribute to the consumption of healthy and adequate food and raise awareness of the importance of promoting healthy diets for all.
3. Encourage the adoption of urgent measures to help agri-food systems, according to their characteristics, to adapt and contribute to climate change mitigation, addressing the degradation of natural resources, the restoration of ecosystems and the increase in the frequency and intensity of disasters and natural phenomena, recognising the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the role of the region in global food security.

¹ Report of the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), 36th Session. Published at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ne267es/ne267es.pdf>

4. Support Members to increase public and private investment and strengthen institutional capacity in science and innovation.
5. Support Members to encourage the digitisation of agri-food systems and rural societies.
6. Provide technical assistance for the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes in the context of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028) and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030).
7. Adapt the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031 to the local context and support countries according to local context and capacities, in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to achieve efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems, through the implementation of the priority programme areas, through three regional initiatives to be resourced in a balanced manner: i. Regional Initiative 1, *Sustainable Agrifood Systems to provide healthy diets for all*, to support Members to speed up progress towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in particular SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 12 (Responsible Production and Consumption) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals); ii. Regional Initiative 2, *Prosperous and Inclusive Rural Societies*, to support Members to accelerate progress towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in particular SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 5 (Gender Equality), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 14 (Life Below Water) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals); and iii. Regional Initiative 3, *Sustainable and Resilient Agriculture*, to support Members to accelerate progress towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in particular SDGs 1 (No poverty), 2 (Zero hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 12 (Responsible production and consumption), 13 (Climate action), 14 (Life Below Water), 15 (Life on Land) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).
8. Provide support to Members in terms of regulatory, technical, policy, operational and resource mobilisation areas, taking a programmatic and comprehensive approach to the implementation of regional initiatives, building on existing mechanisms to avoid duplication of efforts.
9. Analyse the impact of excessive price increase of agricultural food and supplies and excessive market volatility and the need to maintain active supply and logistic chains linked to food and nutrition security and provide advice to Members upon request.
10. Provide technical assistance to Members, upon request, to strengthen their statistical systems, including censuses, in line with national data protection regulations, to produce information on agri-food systems for improved decision-making.
11. Support the strengthening and affordability of systems for data gathering, standardisation, analysis and climate-related impacts and early warnings.
12. Provide technical assistance to Members to strengthen and improve their capacity, resilience and access to markets, food supply chains and trade in accordance with World Trade Organization regulations.

13. Support Members to develop their food supply and trade chains with a view to promoting the inclusion of family farming and small and medium-sized enterprises in markets and international trade to contribute to food and nutrition security.
14. Maintain and increase Members' support to implement the Hand in Hand Initiative with the objective of strengthening planning and investment mobilisation processes and the inclusion of holistic approaches to speed up the agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development, as appropriate, in line with existing contexts and priorities.
15. Provide technical assistance and facilitate dialogues to support Members in combating IUU fishing, to contribute to the sustainability of fisheries in the region.
16. Give special attention and support to Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in line with the SAMOA Pathway, contributing to the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions and to the mobilisation of financial resources for Members upon request.
17. Provide technical and financial assistance to Members, in particular Caribbean SIDS, through FAO Priority Programme Area Better Production 2, 'Blue Transformation', to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, including upgrading of national policies and programmes, promotion of technological innovation and engagement of the private sector, in order to achieve the targets of SDG 14 (Life Below Water), with a view to achieving more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable aquatic food systems and ensuring increased contribution to poverty reduction and income generation for small-scale fishers and fish farmers, including young people, in line with the 2021 Declaration of the Committee on Fisheries in favour of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, in line with the report of the 168th session of the Council.
18. Strengthen science and evidence-based decision-making for marine resources management through research and capacity building of Caribbean Members under Nansen programme.
19. Support Members to ensure diversity of land uses, soil fertility and health, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in agri-food systems and the provision of ecosystem services.
20. Organise and support activities with Members to promote the economic and cultural importance of camelids, within the framework of the United Nations Declaration on the International Year of Camelids 2024.
21. Similarly, the RC noted that science and innovation underpinned a wide variety of approaches, technologies and practices, in particular the value of the ancestral knowledge of indigenous or native peoples, which could contribute to meeting the challenges of agri-food systems.
22. Stress that science and innovation are powerful drivers for improving agrifood systems and can promote inclusion and opportunities for producers, in particular, indigenous peoples, peasants, afro-descendants, women and young people.
23. Develop a Strategy for Science and Innovation that would serve as a key instrument to contribute to the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031. Its cross-cutting and cross-sectoral relevance across the work of the Organization was underscored.
24. A note with appreciation for the ongoing consultative process for the elaboration of the FAO Strategy for Science and Innovation for adoption by the 170th Session of the FAO Council was taken.

25. The Regional Conference recommended that FAO considers the context and priorities of Members in the region when implementing the FAO Strategy for Science and Innovation.
26. Adopt an approach that ensures access and affordability of innovations in an inclusive and non-discriminatory manner.
27. Promote partnerships with public and private sector research institutions and exchange among Members.
28. Use multilaterally agreed language, in particular that agreed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, for the elaboration of Documents, Strategic Frameworks and Action Plans.
29. On the new FAO Strategy on Climate Change, the Regional Conference took note of the process of developing the new Strategy, as requested at the 166th Session of the FAO Council, in the context of the recent evaluation of the Organization's contribution to climate action (SDG 13), through an inclusive process, with a view to improving its alignment with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement.
30. The RC note of the pillars proposed in the outline, in particular the strengthening of producers' capacity, innovative solutions to adapt to climate change and the importance of partnerships with regional, international and national organizations and the use of science and innovation as a basis for proposals.
31. The need for FAO to use the multilaterally agreed language, in particular that agreed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, for the elaboration of Documents, Strategic Frameworks and Action Plans, was stressed.
32. The Regional Conference recommended FAO to mainstream the principles set out in the Paris Agreement, such as equity in the implementation of the Strategy and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, in view of regional, sub-regional priorities and needs and differences in Member country contexts, and to recognize the importance of technology development and transfer to improve resilience to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
33. Consider the international environmental agreements, such as those of the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP 26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), through the Glasgow Climate Pact and the Paris Agreement and the Glasgow Declaration on Forests and Land Use, as appropriate.
34. Provide support to Members, upon request, to implement adaptation and mitigation measures to address the challenges of climate change and to strengthen their national, sub-regional and regional policies, strategies and mechanisms in a coherent manner, as appropriate, and in accordance with existing contexts and capacities.
35. Provide specific support to SIDS, recognising their unique climate vulnerability, to access to climate finance, the development of value chains and resources for capacity building to strengthen their agri-food systems, and support the development of oceanographic and fisheries research, through initiatives such as the Nansen Ship, for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.
36. Continue with the support to family farmers, peasants and indigenous and afro-descendant peoples, women and youth, valuing science, evidence and ancestral and traditional knowledge, to address

climate change challenges and promote the efficient, sustainable and resilient use of productive resources, with emphasis on the creation of new opportunities for decent job opportunities, under a gender approach, and the generation of new sources of agricultural and rural income.

37. Support Members to update and implement their climate commitments in accordance with their mandate in the agri-food sector, in line with nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement, in a coherent manner and in accordance with existing contexts and priorities.
38. Facilitate, encourage and enhance the development and access to climate and environmental finance mechanisms for non-reimbursable funds and risk transfer that favour access to insurance and guarantors, under favourable and inclusive conditions for Members, regional and sub-regional organisations and other key partners, with special focus on family farmers, peasants, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and communities.
39. Use holistic and innovative approaches, including biotechnology, genomics, direct seeding and other technical tools, promoting the linkages between climate change, restoration of productive ecosystems, integrated water resources management, land-use planning and management, combat desertification, land degradation and illegal deforestation.
40. Incorporate the suggestions received from the 37th Session of the Regional Conference and continue with the consultative process so that the draft Strategy on Climate Change can be considered by FAO Council at its 170th Session.
41. The Regional Conference reasserted FAO's role in the Technical Secretariats of the Regional Commissions and endorsed the recommendations of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission (LACFC); the Commission on Livestock Development for Latin America and the Caribbean (CLDLAC); the Commission on Small-scale Fisheries, Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture for Latin America and the Caribbean (COPPESAALC) and the FAO/OAS/CIE/IICA Working Group on Agricultural Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean.
42. Requested that the Regional Commissions hold their regular meetings no later than the first half of the second year of the biennium so that technical recommendations and decisions could be addressed in due time and form for the Regional Conference.