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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

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Update on integrated water resources management

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This document presents an update on the progress made on integrated water resources management and the way forward, following the decisions of the Joint Meeting of the 134th Session of the Programme Committee and 194th Session of the Finance Committee, and the 171st Session of the Council.
- This overview includes progress made in the implementation of FAO's water-related programmatic initiatives and the decisions of the 171st Session of the Council. It further summarizes FAO's engagement at global level, including the Rome Water Dialogue, the Water Pavilion at the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC CoP27), and FAO's participation in the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan.
- Looking ahead, 2023 priorities include, among others, the organization of: (i) the second International Forum of the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG), (ii) a regional workshop for Africa on the national water roadmaps; (iii) the Global Dialogue on Water Tenure; and (iv) the International Symposium on Soil and Water. Furthermore, FAO will participate in the United Nations (UN) 2023 Water Conference, conduct an irrigation needs mapping, roll out the Water Productivity through Open- access of Remotely sensed derived data (WaPOR) for a global coverage, continue its support to FAO Governing Bodies on water matters, and mainstream water in implementing the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

- The Programme Committee is invited to review the content of the document and provide guidance as deemed appropriate.

I. Background

1. The document CL 171/6, *Integrated water resources management for food security and climate resilience*¹ was presented and discussed at the Joint Meeting of the 134th Session of the Programme Committee and 194th Session of the Finance Committee (7-11 November 2022, Rome). Members recognized the importance of integrated water resources management (IWRM) for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and welcomed the proposed actions and initiatives.
2. The Council² appreciated document CL 171/6, *Integrated water resources management for food security and climate resilience*, and in particular within the mandate of FAO:
 - a) reiterated the importance of water resources management for sustainable food systems, food security, food safety, and climate resilience, and welcomed the initiative to develop and implement sustainable agricultural water management for promoting mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and addressing the impacts of water scarcity, drought and floods on agrifood systems as guided by the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031;
 - b) underlined the need for FAO to analyse the resources needed to implement programmatic actions on integrated water resources management with sufficient resources, including from global financial institutions, resource partners and voluntary contributions by Members;
 - c) noted, in line with Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the need to respect the rights of individuals with respect to water, and acknowledged in this regard the importance of FAO's initiatives on the complexity of water access, water tenure, and sustainable water management and allocation systems;³
 - d) encouraged FAO to continue seizing the growing momentum ahead of the United Nations 2023 Water Conference, including through consideration of Indigenous Peoples' approaches;
 - e) underscored the importance of science and innovation to support strengthening integrated water resources management, guided by the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy and the FAO Strategy on Climate Change;
 - f) encouraged FAO to fully engage in the United Nations 2023 Water Conference as well as other water related engagements, in particular as custodian of indicators 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 of SDG 6, and report back to Members with relevant information regarding the discussions on water management for agriculture;
 - g) recommended FAO to step up the work on the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) to support Members, upon request, in building and developing capacities to produce data on available and actual use of water resources for agriculture, and in collaboration with relevant UN bodies to initiate a global dialogue on water tenure; and
 - h) recommended FAO, in close collaboration with relevant UN agencies, to support Members, upon request, in their country-led efforts to conduct national water dialogues and develop their national water roadmaps towards the SDGs, as well as building and developing capacities, technical support, research and innovation, and to produce data on water resources for agriculture, as appropriate.

¹ [CL 171/6 - Integrated water resources management for food security and climate resilience \(fao.org\)](#)

² [CL 171/REP. para 17](#)

³ Guideline 8: Access to Resources and Assets, from Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, CL 127/10-Sup.1, paras. 15-19

II. Update on FAO's water actions

A. *Mainstreaming water into FAO's Priority Programme Areas (PPAs)*

3. Following the recommendation of the 133rd Session of the Programme Committee⁴ and the Management Response⁵ to the Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for all (SDG 6), a conceptual framework on integrated land and water resources management has been drafted in consultation with FAO's technical divisions, Decentralized Offices and external experts. Such a framework, once finalized, will enable the mainstreaming of IWRM into all relevant PPAs; further, a concept note on mapping of irrigation needs/potential has been prepared to pilot it with a number of target countries in Asia and the Pacific (India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and Viet Nam) and Africa (Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Tanzania and Zambia). Upon the learning from the pilot, it will be rolled out for a global coverage.

4. The inception activities of the value-added impact area (VAIA) on addressing water scarcity in agriculture and the environment (AWSAME) have started with the ongoing formulation of four global project proposals, to promote drought resilient, nutritious and indigenous crops to cope with water scarcity. In addition, through the collaboration with the inter-Regional Platform on Water Scarcity (iRTP-WS), FAO will develop knowledge products to respond to identified gaps. AWSAME will also collaborate with external partners to develop project proposals on agreed priorities. In this regard, consultations are set to start during the second International Forum of the Global Framework on Water Scarcity (WASAG) to be held in February 2023 in Cabo Verde.

5. Building on FAO's expertise in developing and maintaining information and data platforms such as FAO's data and information system on water and agriculture AQUASTAT, FAO will enable Members and farmers with access to an integrated Soil-Land-Water Information System (SoLaWiSe) to support them in sustainable natural resources management and production at farm and landscape level. SoLaWiSe will eventually lead to an improved capacity of farmers and governments, and enabling environment/policies to sustainably manage natural resources based on reliable data, information, knowledge, tools and science. The SoLaWiSe initiative will help FAO Members in implementing national strategies for sustainable agricultural development, and it will contribute to investment and behavioural change, supported by innovative practices, tools and digital solutions. In the first phase in 2023, the SoLaWiSe initiative, supported by USD 500 000 from FAO's Flexible Multi-partner Mechanism (FMM), will focus on the development and consolidation of methodologies and consultation with selected countries.

6. FAO supported the celebration of the World Toilet Day on 19 November 2022, joining the sanitation community to make productive use of wastewater and bio solids that contain valuable water, nutrients and energy to safely boost agriculture while reducing and capturing greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, through its One Water One Health programme, FAO is expanding the use of technologies, such as whole genome sequencing (WGS), to study the genomes of pathogens and track their path from water to food in order to prevent food contamination at its source. A pilot project in six countries where WGS for surveillance of pathogens from water to food has never been used, is ongoing.

B. *FAO's water actions in global dialogues and mechanisms*

7. On 29 November 2022, FAO organized the Rome Water Dialogue with over 700 online participants and over 80 participants in FAO's Plenary Hall. During the event, knowledge was shared for better understanding of the value of water and its importance to achieve all SDGs in the three dimensions of sustainable development. A number of countries shared their existing national-level water strategies and actions. The importance of the United Nations (UN) 2023 Water Conference in March 2023 was discussed as the first UN conference on water in nearly 50 years, as a "watershed

⁴ [CL 170/11 - Report of the 133rd Session of the Programme Committee \(fao.org\)](#)

⁵ [PC 133/5 Sup.1 - Evaluation of FAO's contribution to availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all \(SDG 6\) and Management's Response](#)

moment”. The country-led national water roadmaps’ proposal by FAO, was discussed and representatives of Members expressed their support. Following the decision by the 171st Session of the Council, the national water roadmaps will underpin countries’ preparations for the FAO Conference in July 2023. A first regional workshop on the national water roadmaps, for the Africa region, is planned to take place in Zimbabwe in February 2023.

8. In response to the recommendation of the 28th Session of FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG) to organize a Global Dialogue on Water Tenure, FAO organized a meeting of experts at FAO headquarters on 8 and 9 November 2022 to discuss a draft roadmap. It will be presented during the regional workshop for Africa on the national water roadmaps and in a side event at the UN 2023 Water Conference, together with the UN-Water Task Force on country level engagement.

9. At the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC CoP27), FAO co-hosted, with the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation of Egypt and other partners, the Water Pavilion, through which FAO engaged with Members and other stakeholders on the matters of the water-energy-food-environment nexus, agricultural water management, freshwater ecosystem restoration and nature-based solutions, financing and water governance, climate resilient agriculture, among others.

10. As an observer organization on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Science-Policy Interface (SPI), FAO attended the first SPI meeting from 13-15 December 2022 in Bonn, Germany, to discuss the pathways for delivering the two objectives and deliverables of the SPI work programme, according to COP decision ICCD/COP(15)23/Add.1⁶:

- Objective 1: “Provision of science-based evidence on sustainable land use systems and their potential to address desertification/land degradation and drought while also contributing to the achievement of multiple United Nations goals and targets, taking into account environmental, economic and sociocultural conditions”.
- Objective 2: “Provision of science-based evidence on the historical regional and global aridity trends and future projections that may contribute to expanding drylands and affected populations and the adaptation approaches that reduce risks to environmental, social and economic systems”.

11. FAO is co-leading the UN 2023 Water Conference Interactive Dialogue on ‘*Water for Sustainable Development: Valuing Water, Water-Energy-Food Nexus, and Sustainable Economic and Urban Development*’ and prepared the corresponding concept paper. FAO will submit one side-event proposal with focus on national water roadmaps and will collaborate with partners to co-organize other strategic side events, as well as one out of the four special events led by other stakeholders.

12. At the 15th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD CoP15), FAO and UNEP, as the leading UN agencies, jointly announced the 10 first flagship initiatives of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, which include two with a significant freshwater component: Shan-Shui Initiative (China) and Namami Gange (India).

13. FAO organized on 7 December 2022 the plenary session dedicated to finance, as one of the five SDG 6 accelerators of the UN Groundwater Summit held in Paris, France, building upon the [World Water Development Report 2022](#) dedicated to groundwater. Innovative finance solutions were presented to respond to the specific groundwater challenges and will be further disseminated, during the UN 2023 Water Conference, the 2023 SDG Summit (September 2023) and the Summit of the Future (September 2024). The [UN-Water Joint Message and Call for Action](#) issued at the end of the Summit called on Member States to register voluntary commitments on groundwater as part of the Water Action Agenda of the UN 2023 Water Conference.

14. On 9 January 2023, FAO participated in the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan, called by the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the UN Secretary-General, and re-confirmed

⁶ [ICCD/COP\(15\)23/Add.1 \(unccd.int\)](#)

FAO's commitment to the post-floods recovery and reconstruction and support to the Living Indus Initiative.

III. Looking forward: implementing FAO's programmatic initiatives on water

15. FAO is in a unique position to support integrated water resources management and scale-up interventions linking water with food security and nutrition, climate change, forest management, ecosystem restoration, biodiversity, soil and land management, antimicrobial resistance, food safety and One Water One Health to achieve interwoven benefits and reduce risks.

16. Building upon FAO's rich experiences and comprehensive work on water, and following the guidance provided by the Joint Meeting of the 134th Session of the Programme Committee and 194th Session of the Finance Committee, the 28th Session of COAG and the 171st Session of the Council, a series of programmatic initiatives, as listed in document CL 171/6 *Integrated water resources management for food security and climate resilience*⁷, are being implemented in partnership with Members to advance integrated water resources management in agrifood systems that contribute to the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.

17. In doing so, the priorities in 2023 include:

- a) Organizing the Second WASAG International Forum from 7-10 February in Praia, Cabo Verde with the theme "Making agriculture resilient for climate change: water scarcity, an opportunity for action and collaboration". The outputs of the Forum will feed into the UN 2023 Water Conference.
- b) Supporting the development of national water roadmaps through country-led dialogues and participatory processes, including organizing the first regional workshop for Africa on the national water roadmaps in February in Zimbabwe. This workshop will also help to prepare countries for their participation and contribution to the UN 2023 Water Conference. Further regional workshops could be organized later, upon request and depending on evolving conditions.
- c) Supporting both agriculture and water sectors of Members to actively engage in the UN 2023 Water Conference in March in New York, United States of America, through the plenary sessions, interactive dialogues, side events and special events. Together with Members and other partners, FAO plans to convene an in-person side event on national water roadmaps, co-convene multiple side events on drought, floods, agricultural water management and other issues, as well as co-lead the Interactive Dialogue on '*Water for Development*'.
- d) Supporting Members to actively engage and drive, when appropriate, the technical and political processes on the Global Dialogue on Water Tenure, towards effective and inclusive water governance, as follow-up to the recommendations of the 28th Session of COAG.
- e) Supporting Members in decision-making on irrigation development planning via the tool "Prioritization of Irrigation Schemes for Modernization and Rehabilitation Tool (PRISM)" and piloting global irrigation needs mapping in selected countries.
- f) Expanding the coverage of and strengthening the WaPOR (Water Productivity through Open access of remotely sensed derived data) to cover the whole world and strengthening the WaPOR data and information portal.
- g) Organizing the International Symposium on Soil and Water, as requested by the 10th Plenary Session of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP), to advance integrated soil, land and water management for food security and agriculture.
- h) Preparing background documents and supporting the FAO Conference, Council and other Governing Bodies in discussions and decision-making on water issues, including the Report on Sustainable Floods Management for Food Security, Agriculture and Rural Development and the State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) 2023 on water scarcity.

⁷ [CL 171/6 - Integrated water resources management for food security and climate resilience \(fao.org\)](https://www.fao.org/3/cl171/6-cl171-6-integrated-water-resources-management-for-food-security-and-climate-resilience-fao-org/)

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- i) Mainstreaming IWRM into relevant Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) and VAAs.
 - j) Upon request, supporting Members to improve coherence among water-related activities between agriculture and other sectors through IWRM approach.