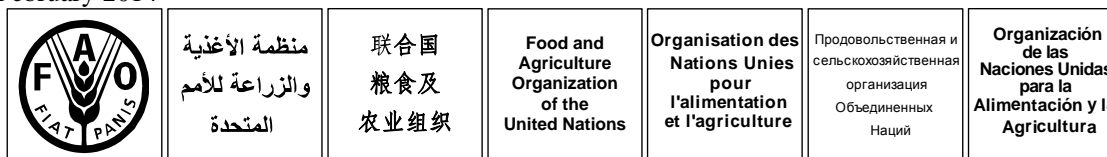


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FAO Regional Conference for the Near East

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Summary of the Recommendations of Regional Commissions and Major Meetings 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 2012-2013. The commissions meetings considered are: the Twenty-first Session of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC); Seventh Session of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI); the Thirty-sixth and Thirty-seventh Sessions 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 (ALAWUC). It also presents the outcomes of major meetings in particular the Land and Water days and the Regional Multi-stakeholder Food Security and Nutrition Workshop.

I. Twenty-first Session of the Near East Forestry Commission (NEFRC)

2. The Twenty-first Session of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC) and the Third Near East Forestry Week (NEFW) were held in Amman, Jordan, from 26 to 30 January 2014. The meetings attracted 262 participants. The Commission session was attended by 35 representatives from 15 member countries and 6 representatives from global and regional intergovernmental organizations. Parallel to the Commission's session, the third NEFW was attended by 75 participants from 16 countries.
3. The 21st Session of the Commission and the 3rd NEFW were held under the common theme of "*Sustainable management of forest and rangelands: towards a green economy in the Near East and North Africa*". Through this theme, the 21st NEFRC and related activities during the week strived to bring sustainable management of forest and rangelands to the center of green economy discussions and to provide an opportunity for the participants of the NEFRC and wide spectrum of other stakeholders with an interest in forest and rangeland issues to share knowledge and exchange experiences.
4. The Session came out with a set of requests and recommendations to both FAO and member countries as well as with some issues to the attention of the Near East Regional Conference and to the Committee on Forestry (COFO).
5. The priority issues for the Regional Conference to consider are:
 - Positioning forests and rangelands properly in developmental policies and strategies;
 - Recognizing the special role of forests and rangelands and through this enhance synergies among the Rio Conventions
 - Recognizing the need for building capacity of institutions and individuals on forests and range in the region as relates to the areas under FAO's new Strategic Framework
6. The Expected outcomes of these considerations are:
 - Information and possible guidance for countries and FAO to recognize the full value of the contribution of forests and rangelands to sustainable development and recognize them properly in developmental policies, strategies and programmes;
 - Information and possible guidance for countries to enhance collaboration on the national and regional levels;
 - Guidance for FAO to focus its programmes on capacity building and related education/extension.
7. The possible follow up activities for FAO are:
 - Work on understanding the full value of goods and services, support the development of integrated, cross-sectoral policies, strategies and programmes and support their implementation;
 - Support countries in developing related policies, strategies and programmes;
 - Give stronger focus to activities in support of capacity building and education.

II. Seventh Session of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI)

8. The Seventh Session of RECOFI was held in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, from 14 to 16 May 2013. The Session was attended by 20 delegates from five of the eight RECOFI Member Countries and eleven observers. The Commission reviewed the inter-sessional work and endorsed the Commission's administrative and financial reports.
9. In relation to *policy and regulatory matters*, the Commission:
 - affirmed that priority should be given to work on shared stocks, in particular giving due consideration to species supporting fisheries of common interest;
 - reiterated the relevance of aquaculture as a priority, and agreed on the need for a long-term regional strategy for aquaculture development;
 - welcomed the opportunity to strengthen cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and other regional partners, emphasizing the value of effective and viable regional cooperation which should be fostered by RECOFI in cooperation with other interested entities;
 - noted the urgent need to formulate a regional management plan for the narrow-barred Spanish mackerel and management procedures to reduce shrimp trawling effort;
 - commended the general and genuine commitment by Members to implement the Recommendation on Minimum Data Reporting (effective 1 January 2012) and recognized the need to establish a RECOFI regional database to support regional fisheries management;
 - reiterated the importance of Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS) as an information tool supporting the aquaculture sector;
 - noted with approval the establishment and ongoing work of the RECOFI Task Group for fisheries socio-economics;
 - commended the RECOFI Secretariat for its role in finalizing the northern area tripartite initiative project document (endorsed by Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq and Kuwait) and for its efforts in seeking financial support from regional institutions;
 - expressed its support for minimizing the impact of fishing on the environment and encouraged the development of regional management measures to reduce bycatch;
 - affirmed the need for a regional framework to address the challenges associated with small-scale fisheries in the region.
10. In relation to *Programme and budget matters*, the Commission:
 - noted the rich programme implemented over the intersessional period and appreciated the support and efforts of the Secretariat for facilitating this. Some of the major activities included in the approved workplan were only possible due to the mobilization of additional resources from the FAO regular programme.
 - recognized that a need exists for Member Countries to further support these efforts. Members noted with concern the balance of accumulated pending contributions as at 31 December 2012 of USD 70 135.
 - Reiterated that Member Countries would have to ensure adequate funding for the Secretariat in order to preserve the work of the Commission, as this is becoming increasingly essential for the sustainability of shared fishery resources and aquaculture development in the region.
 - reaffirmed the decision made at the sixth session that the Member's annual contribution would be increased to USD 15 000 on the condition that current and outstanding contributions would be settled at the earliest possible date.

III. Thirty-sixth and Thirty-seventh Sessions of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)

11. The Thirty-Sixth and Thirty-Seventh Sessions of GFCM were held in Marrakech, Morocco, from 14 to 19 May 2012, and in Split, Croatia, from 13 to 17 May 2013, respectively. Both Sessions assessed the inter-sessional activities of GFCM subsidiary bodies and reviewed the status of implementation of GFCM recommendations in force. Several recommendations and resolutions on fisheries management, data reporting, aquaculture and monitoring, control and surveillance were adopted. Moreover, the Commission agreed on launching a fully-fledged amendment process to modernize the GFCM.
12. In relation to *policy and regulatory matters*, the Commission adopted the five binding recommendations below, three resolutions and two decisions at its Thirty-sixth and Thirty-seventh Sessions:
 - Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/1 on a multiannual management plan for fisheries on small pelagic stocks in the GFCM-GSA 17 (Northern Adriatic Sea) and on transitional conservation measures for fisheries on small pelagic stocks in GSA 18 (Southern Adriatic Sea);
 - Recommendation GFCM/37/2013/2 on the establishment of a set of minimum standards for bottom-set gillnet fisheries for turbot and conservation of cetaceans in the Black Sea;
 - Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/1 on further measures for the exploitation of red coral;
 - Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/2 on mitigation of incidental catches of cetaceans;
 - Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/3 on fisheries management measures for conservation of sharks and rays;
 - Resolution GFCM/37/2013/1 on area-based management of fisheries, including through the establishment of Fisheries Restricted Areas (FRAs) in the GFCM convention area and coordination with the UNEP-MAP initiatives on the establishment of SPAMIs;
 - Resolution GFCM/37/2013/2 on Guidelines on the management of fishing capacity in the GFCM area;
 - Resolution GFCM/36/2012/1 on Guidelines on Allocated Zones for Aquaculture (AZA);
 - Guidelines on precautionary conservation measures pending the development and adoption of GFCM multiannual management plans for relevant fisheries at sub-regional levels;
 - Roadmap on fighting IUU fishing in the Black Sea.
13. In relation to *Programme and budget matters*, main outcomes and decisions of the Thirty-Sixth and Thirty-Seventh Sessions of GFCM included:
 - Following the performance review carried out in 2009-2011, the Commission established a Task Force aimed at spearheading a reform of the GFCM. The Task Force advised the Commission on the possible amendments of the GFCM Agreement and associated procedural and financial rules, and the results of its work were validated during the last two Sessions. An Extraordinary Session of the Commission has been tentatively scheduled in 2014 to adopt a new set of its constitutive texts;
 - Endorsement of the first GFCM Framework Programme (GFCM-FWP) which was proposed as an instrument to collect extra-budgetary resources in support of the activities of the Task Force (commenced in July 2012);
 - Continuation of efforts to address with great attention both fisheries and aquaculture in the Black Sea through its ad-hoc working group;
 - Decision to strengthen its Secretariat by recruiting four additional staff members.
14. The Commission adopted its 2012 and 2013 autonomous budgets at the level of USD 1 805 027 and USD 1 940 973 respectively and endorsed the programme of work of its subsidiary bodies for the same years, including the convening of numerous technical meetings.

IV. Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC)

15. The Twenty-eighth Session of the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC) was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, from 24 to 28 November 2012. The session was attended by 10 Member Countries, and three Desert Locust Organizations for Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA), Western Region (CLCPRO) and South-West Asia (SWAC). The Commission reviewed the work carried out since the last Session in 2010, including the Commission's administrative and financial reports. The Commission adopted the work programme for 2013 and 2014 and made the following recommendations:

16. In relation to *Policy and Regulatory matters*, the Commission:

- requested FAO to offer further autonomy to the Commission to handle its financial and administrative affairs.
- reviewed and updated the agreement establishing the Commission and made the necessary changes, taking into consideration the report of the consultant recruited by FAO in 2011.
- requested frontline Member Countries to conduct regular Desert Locust surveys and to send timely reports to the Commission and FAO Headquarters Desert Locust Information Services (DLIS).
- requested frontline countries to implement the Environmental and Health Standards programme.
- In order to be well prepared for Desert Locust outbreaks, requested the following frontline Member Countries: Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen to prepare a national contingency plan using the updated version of DeLCoPA (Contingency Planning Assistant).
- agreed to enhance cooperation with other commissions (CLCPRO, SWAC and DLCO-EA) in all aspects of Desert Locust Management.
- endorsed the mid-term work plan (2012-2017) and agreed to its implementation.

17. In relation to *Programme and Budget matters*, the Commission agreed to:

- support, technically and financially, activities focusing on capacity development for Desert Locust control operations, implementation of the Environmental Health Standards, maintenance of spraying equipment and Desert Locust database (RAMSES& eLocust4) and any other new technologies.
- announce the Master Degree study scholarship in Desert Locust field in 2014.
- support the production of a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) booklet on Desert Locust operation and maintenance of spraying equipment.
- take the necessary steps to redesign the CRC-EMPRES website to include Arabic as one of the languages, thus providing better awareness and visibility to the Commission's activities.
- the Chairman and Secretary of CRC visit Bahrain, Djibouti, Oman, Iraq, Saudi Arabia (specifically the Islamic Development Bank) and Yemen to meet with the concerned ministers and provide them with an overview on the Commission's activities and its role in the Central Region regarding Desert Locust management and request support for the Commission's activities.
- continue to support and cover the cost of holding a national workshop in the Member Countries with a ceiling of USD 5 000 per workshop.
- approval of the work plan and budget for the next intercessional period (2013-2014).

V. Eighth Session of the Agriculture and Land Water Use Commission (ALAWUC)

18. The Eighth Session of the Agriculture and Land and Water Use Commission for the Near East was scheduled to take place in Beirut, Lebanon, from 4 to 6 February 2014 to discuss the topics that were identified during the Seventh Session. Letters were sent to countries to assign a senior level National Focal Point who will follow-up of the ALAWUC affairs, and to identify their voluntary annual contribution and to express their commitment to the established Trust Fund Account that ensures the Commission's sustainability. Responses were so far received from seven countries only, which is well below the quorum needed (12 Member Countries) to hold the Session.

VI. Land and Water Days

19. The Near East and North Africa (NENA) Land and Water Days were held in Amman, Jordan, in December 2013, as part of the Regional Initiative on Water Scarcity and were convened in partnership with 15 regional and international institutions, including ACSAD, AOAD, AWC, CEDARE, DRC, ESCWA, GIZ, ICARDA, ICBA, IWMI, LAS, NWRC-Egypt, UNESCO, WB and WFP¹, and attended by delegates from 15 countries from the Region. This Region-wide event provided the opportunity for: a comprehensive update on the major tools and methods to tackle land and water challenges in the NENA Region; identifying priorities and focus areas of work to address water scarcity and land degradation across the NENA Region; advancing in the establishment of a Regional Collaborative Strategy for Agricultural Water Management and Food Security in NENA; express a pledge of a renewed Partnerships among the organizations, agencies and institutions working in the NENA Region; and drafting a follow-up actions for an operational work plan.

VII. Regional Multi-stakeholder Workshop on Food Security and Nutrition

20. The Third Regional Multi-stakeholder Workshop on Food Security and Nutrition was held in Tunis, Tunisia, in November 2013, building on the successful experiences of the two previous Regional Workshops in Cairo (2011) and Khartoum (2012), and presenting a regional platform to Member Countries and other participants to provide policy inputs into the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). It brought together a wide range of stakeholders with representation from 14 countries consisting of government officials, UN agencies, regional organizations, regional financial institutions, agricultural research institutions, universities, NGOs, civil societies, and the private sector. The workshop discussed five main topics: i) Food Security in the Near East Region; ii) Nutrition-enhancing agriculture and food systems; iii) Responsible Agriculture Investment (RAI); iv) Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises; and v) Food Losses and Waste Reduction. The workshop supported the draft strategy paper "Food Security in the Near East and North Africa: Issues and Policy Options", developed by FAO in collaboration with the World Bank, ESCWA and IFAD; called governments to heighten their commitment to combat malnutrition; supported the FAO Draft Regional Strategy to Reduce Food Losses and Waste in the NENA region; and made policy recommendations at national, regional, and international levels in the topics discussed.

VIII. The Fifth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (GB5) and the Ministerial Conference for the Near East

¹ (ACSAD) Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Dry Lands, (AOAD) Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, (AWC) Arab Water Council, (CEDARE) Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe, (DRC) Desert Research Center, (ESCWA) United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, (GIZ) Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, (ICARDA) International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, (ICBA) International Center for Biosaline Agriculture, (IWMI) International Water Management Institute, (LAS) League of Arab States, (NWRC-Egypt) National Water Research Center-Egypt, (UNESCO) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (WB) World Bank and (WFP) World Food Programme.

and North Africa Region plus Brazil, Indonesia, Italy, Norway & Spain (NENA+5), 24-28 Muscat, Oman.

21. The Fifth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (GB5) was hosted by the Government of the Sultanate of Oman in Muscat from 24 to 28 September 2013. On the other hand, the Ministerial Conference for the Near East and North Africa Region plus Brazil, Indonesia, Italy, Norway & Spain (NENA+5) on “Water and Drought as Agricultural Challenges in the NENA Region and Beyond: The Contribution of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture,” was hosted by the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries Wealth, in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman on 21 September 2013. Both meetings marked historic events, not only in the life of the International Treaty, but also for the region and for the larger International Treaty community.
22. The Ministerial Conference for the NENA Region +5 adopted the Muscat Ministerial Declaration on the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, including a “Framework Action Plan for the Implementation of the Benefit-Sharing Fund in the Near East and North Africa Region: 2014 – 2020.” .The Action Plan focuses on water scarcity, drought and climate change impact on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA).
23. In implementing the Muscat Ministerial Declaration and its Framework Action Plan, countries can contribute with technical and financial contributions aimed at furthering the implementation of the International Treaty and its Benefit-Sharing Fund in the Near East Region and elsewhere. The Region has requested active follow-up on the Muscat Ministerial Declaration, particularly on the Framework Action Plan pursuant to which, the Treaty Secretariat is planning to convene a Technical Meeting and a Donors’ Conference for the Region. These will focus on the burning issues of water, drought and food security, and also on raising resources to support projects funded by the Treaty’s Benefit-Sharing Fund.