



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



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The Regional Initiative on Small-scale Family Farming and the Sustainable Development Goals





In 2015 the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, a set of 17 aspirational objectives with 169 targets leading to a transition to a more inclusive, dynamic and sustainable pathway to development.

The SDGs are indeed the main reference for development policies and programmes at national level.

Food and agriculture both lie at the very heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Agenda. From ending poverty and hunger to responding to climate change and sustaining our natural resources, FAO plays a key role in a new development pathway.

FAO's ultimate vision is that of *"a world free from hunger and malnutrition, where food and agriculture contribute to improving the living standards of all, especially the poorest, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner"*.

To focus action toward its global goals of food security, elimination of poverty, and sustainable management and utilization of natural resources, FAO has set itself five Strategic Objectives that are directly aligned to its broad priorities in the 2030 Agenda, especially:

- **end poverty, hunger and malnutrition;**
- **enable sustainable development in agriculture, fisheries and forestry;**
- **combat and adapt to climate change.**

Strategic objectives of FAO

- S01** Help eliminate hunger, food security and malnutrition;
- S02** Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable;
- S03** Reduce rural poverty;
- S04** Enable inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems;
- S05** Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.



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As a strategy to mainstream its objectives, FAO launched various regional initiatives around the globe that can respond to and improve the integrated response to regional challenges. The regional initiative on small-scale family farming (RI-SSFF) for the Near East and North Africa region provides the region's countries with a cohesive framework to promote small-scale agriculture as a means to reduce rural poverty and improve the livelihoods of the most vulnerable communities. It focuses on a comprehensive programme addressing small-scale family farming development.

Through its integrated approach the initiative works directly with governments, smallholders, cooperatives, formal and informal rural institutions and producers' organizations. Its strategy is channeled into three main areas of work:

- **sustainable and innovative practices developed to boost the agricultural productivity of farmers' and their associations in small-scale agriculture;**
- **rural organizations and institutions' capacities strengthened to improve access to rural services and markets;**
- **decent rural employment opportunities and complementary social protection mechanisms developed and incentivised.**

Through these three major areas of work the regional initiative focuses on (i) developing sustainable small-scale agriculture and advancing policy options to sustainably improve productivity, quality and value addition of small-scale production; (ii) promoting decent rural employment and (iii) supporting social protection, rural services and access to markets for small-scale farmers for an inclusive economic growth that will benefit small farmers and their rural communities from the region and, in particular, the most vulnerable groups among them: women and youths.

The work of the initiative produces outcomes for producers, institutions and policies that oversee small-scale agriculture in NENA countries. Technical support for good agricultural practices that increase productivity have showed evidence of producing positive spill overs in community and women's empowerment, livelihoods' improvements and rural poverty reduction.

While the regional initiative is connected with many of the SDGs, it stems directly from **SDG 1** (*End poverty in all its forms everywhere*) and **SDG 2** (*End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*) thereby aligning itself with the FAO's broad priorities in the Agenda 2030.

Nevertheless, it also contributes significantly to **SDG 8** (*Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*) and **SDG 12** (*Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*).

The three pillars of the regional initiative and **SDGs**

Through its three pillars, the regional initiative contributes to Agenda 2030 by way of the following projects, each of which supports at least of one of the focus SDGs (**1, 2, 8** and **12**).

In addition, the initiative can relate its contribution to almost all the SDGs:

- > with the relevant role covered by women within small-scale agriculture, it contributes to **SDG 5** (*Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*);
- > given the importance that both small-scale agriculture and climate change cover in the region, the initiative also addresses **SDG 13** (*Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*);
- > targeting artisanal fisheries it also contributes to **SDG 15** (*Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss*).
- > The initiative also highlights the role of small-scale agriculture, enabling the access to land and resources and thus helping to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. In so doing, it indirectly addresses **SDG 16** (*Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*).

Improving value chains for productivity

FAO's Sub-Regional Office for North Africa has been particularly active in value chain efficiency and capacity building through the selection of 50 innovative agricultural jobs for young people and youth organizations as well as the providing support to women beekeepers and clam collectors. The regional initiative also promoted value chains of non-wood forest products by the people living on the margin of forests, and the valorization of cameline products.

Outside the Maghreb, the initiative has supported a UNHCR project on the promotion of sustainable rural livelihoods for refugees and their host communities in Eastern Sudan, called Agriculture and Livestock Value Chain (ALIVE). The regional initiative also supported the reform and development of markets, value chains, and producers' organizations in West Bank Gaza Strip.

The regional initiative aims to upgrade the agricultural education system in Lebanon to provide youth with the technical capacity needed to obtain better jobs. In so doing, the initiative not only enables rural youth aged 15 to 17 to access decent work, but enhances the employability of young male and female Lebanese and displaced Syrians and others refugees in Lebanon. The initiative also supported the development of communication and technology tools for small-scale producers through radio programmes in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia.

While it is important to strengthen producers' agricultural abilities, the initiative also points to the importance of diversifying rural employment to build resilience to environmental and economic shocks. As such, it conducted a rural diversification pilot project to enhance youth employment and better labour mobility in Tunisia, facilitating opportunities for rural use in agriculture through seasonal migration and agro-entrepreneurship in Tunisia.

Strengthening producers' capacities

The regional initiative has supported governments, producers' organizations and rural institutions, first and foremost, through the development of technical research. It conducted small-scale family farming studies in Egypt, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia to assess the country-specific priorities. The regional initiative has also mapped local and solidarity-based partnerships between producers and consumers in some countries of the Mediterranean basin (i.e. Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, West Bank and Gaza Strip and Tunisia) as well as collecting, analyzing and using sex-disaggregated data to monitor poverty and inequality reduction and better target policies in Egypt and Jordan. In addition to this data collection focused work, the initiative has systematically supported the development of producers' organizations and cooperatives in the region, including in Iran, Lebanon, Oman, Sudan, and West Bank and Gaza Strip. The regional initiative also supported the creation of an enabling environment for producers' organizations to contribute effectively to food security and nutrition in the Maghreb. Further, it developed material for e-learnings on several subjects of interest for producers' organizations in the region (strategic planning, apiculture, small ruminants, financial management, etc.).

It has also supported the reform of law governing agricultural cooperatives in Egypt. In addition to this direct support, the team developed a fully functional e-learning platform for producers' organizations for the Maghreb sub-region, and has contributed to the global Family Farming Knowledge Platform. The regional initiative has also established a farmer field school (FFS) network that aims to coordinate support to FFS programme development, exchange information and material, ensure FFS quality, and develop a NENA version of the FFS Guidance Document. In parallel, a workshop was launched in order to define the role of FFS for anchoring sustainable integrated pest management (IPM) by smallholders in the NENA region, introduce innovative technologies, and improve the productivity and the community empowerment.

The Sub-Regional Office for North Africa has also developed a robust platform for artisanal fishing communities in the Maghreb that provides clear guidance and action plans to strengthen the fishery associations. Furthermore, the regional initiative aimed at promoting small-scale aquaponic food production in the region.

Supporting employment and social protection

One of the key ways to reduce poverty and improve food security in the region is through the implementation of social protection, rural services and increased access to markets. Over the past few years, the initiative has delivered strong support on social protection measures. First, it mapped existing social protection programmes to identify the gaps in support. It then went on to provide assistance to interested countries in the design of social protection programmes that support small-scale farmers and rural communities, notably in Lebanon and Morocco. The initiative is engaged in a project to promote social protection for small-scale fishers in the Mediterranean, including in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. It also is actively working with the Port of Zarzis, Tunisia, to make it a model port for sustainable job creation. In Lebanon, the regional initiative designed a registry of farmers that included information on livelihoods and households dynamics.

Furthermore, the regional initiative supports the social protection dialogues occurring in Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan and recently launched an e-learning course on social protection and rural poverty reduction in the NENA region. The course focused to build the capacity and awareness of experts and policymakers to reduce rural poverty, improve resilience, and optimize migration flows through social protection. The FAO Multi-Partner Programme Support Mechanism project - "*Social Protection and enabling rural youth aged 15 to 17 to access decent work*" has been implemented in Lebanon in order to expand the coverage of social protection for all in the rural areas and enabling rural youth to access to decent rural work, with a focus on the Syrian refugee children.

At a regional level, the initiative developed social protection mechanisms through an inter-agency initiative. The initiative also focused specifically on social protection for children by assisting in tackling child labour in agriculture in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the development of a regional rural development academy that will create decent youth employment in Luxor Governorate, Egypt, in partnership with ILO and UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The initiative has also provided awareness raising and policy support to address the root causes of rural migration in Tunisia, including the lack of decent rural work. In fact, the initiative helped to position FAO within the inter-agency Working Group on Migration, and produced and reviewed evidenced-based knowledge products in internal and external migration.

In so doing, the regional initiative implements SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, with particular attention to SDG 8.3 (*Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including to access to financial services*) and SDG 12.1 (*Implement the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries*).

The regional initiative and SDG 1 and 2:

the key role of the initiative
in reducing rural poverty and
enhancing food security

While the regional initiative on small-scale family farming contributes significantly to multiple SDGs, its primary focus is on achieving **SDGs 1 and 2**. It is specifically related to targets 1.3 and 2.3.

It contributes to these targets by helping to implement social protection, rural services and increased access to markets and value chains, to strengthen producers' capacities for improving sustainable productivity, and to facilitate rights to land and property for women, indigenous people, family farmers, pastoralists and fisheries.

Small-scale family farming can help improve not only agricultural productivity, but also food security and nutrition in a sustainable manner.

The NENA region is greatly impacted by malnutrition that leads to an increase of both stunting and obesity. Supporting small-scale family farming is very important for domestic food and nutritional security. Furthermore, in most countries, the majority of small-scale farmers produce mainly for subsistence, selling only a small portion of their products. Even if this helps them to ensure food security in times of food price inflation, they do not always produce sufficient quantities of every food item to avoid dependence on the market. Thus, the lack of access to markets, credits and information, reduce the benefits small-scale farmers would receive from commercialization.





GOAL *End poverty in all its forms everywhere.*

TARGET *Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.*

INDICATOR 1.3.1: *Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable.*



GOAL *End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.*

TARGET *By 2030 double the agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale producers, particularly women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.*

INDICATORS 2.3.1: *Volume of production per labour unit by classes of farming, pastoral forestry enterprise size.* **2.3.2:** *Average income of small-scale food producers by sex and indigenous status.*

The regional initiative promotes productivity through the expansion of social protection systems to rural areas. There is growing consensus that social protection plays a key role not only for the social but also for the economic and political development of countries. This insight is highlighted in the text of the Agenda 2030 and was identified as cross cutting area in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. For the regional initiative, social protection is also a key modality for addressing SDG 2 because it contributes to ending hunger through poverty and vulnerability reduction.

Social protection can encompass a range of services, such as social assistance for the poor, social insurance for the vulnerable, labour market regulations and social justice for the marginalised. These policies and programmes aim to provide protective measures that help guarantee relief from and avert deprivation. They also promote measures which aim to enhance real incomes and productivity, especially among smallholder farmers and rural workers. Those transformative measures can address concerns of social equity and exclusion while directly helping to reduce rural poverty, and therefore hunger.





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