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Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة  
الأغذية والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

## Thirty-seventh Session

Amman, Jordan, 5-8 February 2024 and 4-5 March 2024

## Provisional Annotated Agenda

### Senior Officers Meeting 5-8 February 2024

#### I. Introductory Items

- 1) **Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable**
- 2) **Election of the Chairperson, Vice Chairpersons and Appointment of the Rapporteur**
- 3) **Statement by the FAO Regional Representative for the Near East and North Africa**
- 4) **Statement to the Senior Officers Meeting by the Chairperson of the 37th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East**

#### II. Regional and Global Policy and Regulatory Matters

- 5) **Accelerating Transformation of Agrifood Systems in the Near East and North Africa**

The importance of transforming agrifood systems to embed more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable systems that promote better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind, has been acknowledged as being pivotal for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. As countries from the region recover from the adverse implications of the global challenges that have prevailed in recent years, the need to embrace a policy framework and action plan that would secure the acceleration of transforming the regional agrifood systems so as to attain sustainable agriculture and food security amidst the poly-crises facing the region is becoming increasingly crucial. Building on the outcomes of the 35th and 36th Sessions of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC), the deliberations at NERC 37 would seek to forge a regional understanding and define an action plan, with shared ownership and support towards the implementation of actions to accelerate such transformation. The discussion would focus in this context on FAO's global and regional framework, programme and priorities to this end.

Documents can be consulted at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

## **6) Summary of the Recommendations of Regional Commissions and Major Meetings in the Near East**

Presentation of the conclusions and recommendations of the FAO Regional Commissions in the Near East with regard to i) policy and regulatory matters; and ii) programme and budget matters. This includes regional fora such as the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) and the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC). Updates from relevant regional meetings such as the High-Level Joint Water-Agriculture Technical Committee of the League of Arab States will also be presented for information.

## **7) Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Agrifood Systems in the Near East and North Africa**

Although there has been major progress, there are still main gaps that hinder women's participation in the agrifood systems. This information note provides an overview of the gender dynamics that characterize agrifood systems in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region and highlights the main gaps that, in some cases, prevent women from fully contributing to and benefiting equally from, rural transformation and agrifood systems development. By providing an update on FAO's work on gender equality and women's empowerment, the note outlines promising approaches and interventions that have the potential to be replicated and scaled up. Finally, it proposes a set of actions for the way forward, emphasizing the need for integrated and systemic approaches to tackle the underlying causes of gender inequalities, rooted in discriminatory social norms and practices, and perpetuated by gender-blind structures, legal and policy frameworks.

## **8) Enabling Inclusive and Sustainable Rural Transformation in the Near East and North Africa**

Rural transformation is the process whereby rising agricultural productivity, increasing commercialization, diversification, access to services, and decent employment and voice in policymaking lead to improved rural livelihoods. Transformative processes pursued by FAO, therefore, span across the rural urban continuum, addressing sustainable value chains and agribusinesses; decent work and youth empowerment; effective and responsive rural advisory services; collective action, sustainable intensification, and digital innovation, with inclusivity and gender equality underpinning every endeavour. The paper advocates for systemic approaches that leverage multisector and multistakeholder processes across the pillars of policy, investments and finance, governance, institutions, human capital, and partnership, for more inclusive and sustainable transformation.

## **9) Accelerating Transformation Towards Sustainable Markets, Trade and Consumption**

A sustainable and well-integrated ecosystem of sustainable agrifood markets, trade and consumption can provide a food-secure future and healthy diets for all in the NENA region. It is, however, imperative to design and internalize the enabling policy framework that leads towards acceleration of the transformation for sustainable agrifood markets through resilient food supply chains, trade through enhancing intraregional trade, and consumption through ensuring access to and encouraging healthy diets for all. This paper provides the elements required for such transformation and the needed areas of focus and investments.

## **10) Greening Agriculture: Towards Transformation to Efficient and Climate-Resilient Agrifood Systems**

Transforming food systems requires urgent attention to addressing the drivers of natural resources degradation that threaten agricultural productivity, such as water scarcity, land, forest and soil degradation, loss of biodiversity and unsustainable management practices, all of which are expected to intensify under the deepening effects of climate change. This paper advocates for the shift to sustainable production systems while simultaneously engaging in policy processes and inclusive, long-term planning for climate-resilient agroecosystems.

#### **11) Anticipatory Action to address the impacts of compounded crises.**

The NENA region is characterized by a combination of structural vulnerabilities and exposure to natural and human-induced hazards that make the region extremely prone to the compounded impacts of shocks, stresses, and crises. Moreover, climate change, conflicts, political instability, demographic pressures, degraded natural resources and heavy dependence on food imports are serious long-term stresses that further aggravate risks and vulnerabilities and weaken existing capacities. Combined with the increasing frequency and severity of climate-change related events, water scarcity, economic instability and conflict, the threat to food insecurity in the region cannot be underestimated. This paper calls for wide adoption of holistic and multi-hazards anticipatory action systems in the NENA region within the overarching framework of effective and proactive disaster risk management.

#### **12) Farmers Field Schools (FFS) portfolio in the region.**

Short video on the regional event on Farmers Field Schools (FFS) and the concerted efforts to support the growing portfolio of FFS in the region that is attentive to the implementation of Farmers as Innovators for Resilient Agro-Ecosystems ([FAIRE] – Reimagining and Modernizing FFS) – one of the 12 new Value Added Impact Areas (VAIAs) aiming to provide innovative support to farmers in coping with current and emerging challenges.

### **III. Programme and Budget Matters**

#### **13) The Strategic Framework, Priorities, and Results in the Region**

The Regional Conference will consider how FAO activities have addressed previously agreed regional priorities during 2022-2023 and moving towards more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment* and a *better life*, leaving no one behind. The Regional Conference will also provide guidance on areas of regional priorities for the coming biennium (2024-2025) and beyond, based on the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.

The discussion will be informed by the results of FAO's work in the region, the Medium-Term Plan (Reviewed) 2022-25 and Programme of Work and Budget 2024-25 approved by the FAO Conference in July 2023.

#### **14) Update on the Implementation of the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy**

The FAO Science and Innovation Strategy (the Strategy) has been developed through an extensive and inclusive consultation process launched in September 2021. The Strategy is designed as a key tool to support the delivery of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and aims to support Members to harness science and innovation to realize context-specific and systemic solutions for more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment* and a *better life*, leaving no one behind, in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The presentation will provide an overview of the Strategy's regional implementation plan in NENA and will highlight major events that took place in the region, emphasizing key findings and recommendations, with a focus on leveraging the power of digital innovation and technologies, especially for small-scale producers to build their resilience to climate shocks, improve productivity, foster the sustainable use of natural resources, and enhance their livelihoods.

#### **15) Update on the Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change**

Climate Change is one of the most important externalities that the world is facing in general, but the NENA region has witnessed the negative impact of climate change much harder. FAO has developed the Strategy on Climate Change, in order to deal with this challenge and manage the transformation of agrifood systems in a climate resilient manner. This session will highlight the main aspects and implementation cases for the FAO Strategy on Climate Change.

**16) Financing to end hunger for today and tomorrow (SDG 2)**

The progress on achieving SDG 2 cannot be termed as satisfactory. It is not foreseen, with the current state of affairs, to achieve the SDG 2 by 2030. One of the major hurdles, identified by a wide set of stakeholders, is the lack of availability and access to required financing for SDG 2. This session will explore the challenges and opportunities, particularly the pathways to ensure the availability of and access to financing to end hunger for today and tomorrow.

**17) Building Resilience through Transforming Agrifood Systems**

FAO is working to support Member Nations in transforming their agrifood systems towards more resilience. This is even more imperative in the NENA region, where multiple factors have negative effects on resilience of agriculture, food security and livelihoods. This session will highlight the policy pathways and best practices for building resilience through agrifood systems transformation.

**18) Global and Regional Food Security Outlook**

This session will present the global and regional food security outlook based on the short-, medium- and long-term scenarios, as per the FAO Outlook Report. The need for having proper foresight and trend analysis is imperative for effective and timely policy design and implementation for ensuring food security.

**19) How to fight against Food Loss and Waste**

Food Loss and Waste represents a significant challenge to global and regional agrifood systems. There have been numerous efforts towards mitigating food loss and waste, but still about one third of the food is either lost or wasted in the NENA region. This session will share the best practices and policy pathways to fight against food loss and waste, through designing and implementing enabling policy framework and adopting behavioural practices and changes for consumption of food.

**20) Decentralized Offices network**

Ongoing efforts to improve and strengthen the work of FAO's Decentralized Offices network in the region will be reviewed and recommendations formulated to enhance the Organization's effectiveness and efficiency at regional and country levels.

**IV. Other Matters****21) Any other matters****22) Review of the Ministerial Declaration****23) Adoption of the Report of the Senior Officers' Meeting**

## **Ministerial Session 4-5 March 2024**

- 24) **Statement by the FAO Director-General**
- 25) **Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council**
- 26) **Statement by the Chairperson of the 37th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East**
- 27) **Statement by the Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)**
- 28) **Statement by the Spokesperson of the Civil Society Organizations**
- 29) **Statement by the Spokesperson of the Private Sector**

### **V. Ministerial Roundtables**

Countries will be given the opportunity to discuss the regional priorities and explore how they articulate with FAO's vision of supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment* and a *better life*, leaving no one behind. Each of the "betters" will be used as an entry point for a facilitated discussion among ministers.

**30) Ministerial Roundtable I: Enabling Inclusive and Sustainable Rural Transformation in the Near East and North Africa**

A facilitated discussion around the regional priority dedicated to rural transformation, territorial development, digital innovation, extension and advisory services, and decent employment, its achievements during the last biennium, the way forward and its linkages to the better production and better life components of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.

**31) Ministerial Roundtable II: Accelerating Transformation Towards Sustainable Markets, Trade and Consumption**

A facilitated discussion around the regional priority dedicated to food security, healthy diets, food systems, markets and trade and the enabling policies, its achievements during the last biennium, the way forward and its linkages to better nutrition and better environment components of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.

**32) Ministerial Roundtable III: Greening Agriculture: Towards Transformation to Efficient and Climate-Resilient Agrifood Systems**

A facilitated discussion around the regional priority dedicated to green recovery, water productivity, governance, nature-based solutions and climate change actions, its achievements during the last biennium, the way forward and its linkages to the better production and better environment components of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.

**33) Ministerial Roundtable IV: Anticipatory Action to address the impacts of compounded crises.**

A facilitated discussion around the regional priority dedicated to building and strengthening resilience and response actions, its achievements during the last biennium, the way forward and its linkages to the better production and better life components of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.

### **34) Ministerial Roundtable V: Foresight Drivers and Triggers relevant to the NENA region.**

FAO is systematically engaging in foresight activities at corporate, regional, sub-regional, and country levels for the transformation of agrifood systems, using the experience gained during the Corporate Strategic Foresight Exercise (CSFE) 2020-22 and its findings, portrayed in the recent FAO flagship report, *The future of food and agriculture – Drivers and triggers for transformation (FOFA-DTT)*.

The FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa region (FAORNE), with the support of the team of the Policy Intelligence Branch - Global Perspectives (PIB-GP) in the FAO Agrifood Economics and Policy Division (ESA), along with the Office of Strategy, Programme and Budget (OSP), the Office of Innovation (OIN), and the broader FAO Foresight Network, has recently embarked upon the Regional Foresight Exercise (RFE).

This session is aimed at sharing the insights and goals to be obtained from regional experts during the RFE expert consultation:

- present historical trends and projections of key variables for priority Drivers in the Region and related weak signals;
- present regionalized FOFA-DTT scenarios, regional challenges, and triggers for transformation;
- discuss and obtain insights on strategic policy options and regional investment priorities; and
- gather feedback to validate current findings and enrich the final version of the RNE-RFE first phase Report.

## **VI. Special Events**

### **35) Science, Innovation and Digitalization to accelerate Transformation of Agrifood Systems**

This is a facilitated discussion around the need for innovative policies, organizational processes, and practices; research and science- and evidence-based technological solutions; and the need for effective cooperation and partnerships to address the complex and emerging issues in the region. There are numerous initiatives in the region that harness the potential of technologies and digital agriculture to address the challenges faced by smallholder farmers. Yet, various constraints hamper the widescale application and benefits. These are primarily related to digital literacy, the rural and gender-digital gap, affordability and access to digital technologies and information, institutional capacities, quality, relevance, and sustainability of digital services, and the enabling ecosystem.

### **36) Transforming Agrifood Systems in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)**

Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) are priority countries for FAO. The FAO Director-General made it clear that the Organization is working to further strengthen its support to SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs by becoming the first specialized agency in the UN system to establish an office exclusively focused on addressing these countries' needs and interlinked challenges. Offering a platform to discuss how to harness the potential of the SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs in the Near East region for agrifood systems transformation will help scale up resilience for more sustainable and inclusive development.

### **37) FAO Flagship Initiatives**

The session will discuss FAO Flagship Initiatives such as One Country One Priority Product (OCOP), Digital Villages Initiative (DVI), Blue Transformation, Regional Academy and Observatory, Foresight Exercise with a view of identifying their importance for the region.

### **38) Regional Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum**

In collaboration with the host country and Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Investment Forum, the session will focus on the implementation of the Hand in Hand Initiative in the Region and the results of the HIH Investment Forum

- 39) Adoption of the Ministerial Declaration**
- 40) Adoption of the Report of the Regional Conference**
- 41) Date and Place of the 38th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East**