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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

## Thirty-third Session

Rome, Italy, 9-13 May 2016

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

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 2014-2015. The commissions meetings considered are: the Twenty-second Session of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC); Eighth Session of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI); and the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC) and the Western Region (CLCPRO). It also presents the outcomes of major meetings in particular the Regional Collaborative Platform Meeting for Water Consumption, Productivity and Drought Management; the Regional Multi-stakeholder Food Security and Nutrition Workshop, the regional meetings on small-scale agriculture, and the regional meetings on Livestock.

#### Guidance sought

The Conference might wish to:

- take note of the commissions and call upon member countries to implement their recommendations;
- take note of the major meetings held;

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- welcome the integration of the major workshops and meetings into the RIs ensuring that their recommendations are implemented.

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## **I. THE NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION (NEFRC)<sup>1</sup>**

1. The 22nd Session of NEFRC was held in Tlemcen, Algeria, 13–17 December 2015. It was attended by 29 representatives from 14 Member Countries and three representatives from global and regional intergovernmental organizations. The Fourth Near East Forestry Week was organized in parallel with the Commission's session and was attended by 137 participants from five countries and 15 national companies and NGOs.

2. *In relation to policy and regulatory matters, the Commission made the following recommendations:*

- Support the development of a regional forestry and rangelands strategy with action plans to improve the NENA forest and rangeland information and implementation of global processes and provide guidance on coordination and collaboration between countries and FAO for its development.
- Strengthen countries' forest and rangeland policies and strategies; demonstrate their environmental, economic and social contributions to national development; and explore their linkages with climate change, food security and other areas and sectors of interest in the region.
- Provide guidance on coordination and collaboration for members and FAO on the implementation of international commitments related to forests and rangelands at regional level.
- Encourage countries to strengthen the inclusive participation of local communities in their national development efforts and undertake policy and legal framework reforms to create favourable conditions for private financing in the forest sector.
- Countries are to consider how to integrate gender mainstreaming into their forest and rangeland policies and programmes and share experiences on gender and youth initiatives to improve the understanding of these themes.
- Countries are to consider the proposed criteria and indicators (C&I) for sustainable management of forests and rangelands in the region as an umbrella framework, and undertake national consultations to identify those that are already used at the national level, indicate potential indicators that could be applied and report on the results of testing their application in country selected pilot sites.
- Encourage the creation of favourable policy and legal conditions for attracting private financing in the forest and rangeland sector for small- and large-scale enterprises.
- Encourage countries to formulate projects and programmes with a greater focus on adaptation to climate change due to its relevance for forests and rangelands in the region.
- To support, based on the geographical rotation, the nomination of H.E. the Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon to the next chair of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) at the 23rd Session of COFO in July 2016.

3. *In relation to programme and budget matters, the Commission made the following recommendations:*

- Assist with the adoption of C&I in the region and identify areas for further support through new or existing working groups under COFO.
- Support the implementation of forest and landscape restoration in the region and provide guidance on building capacity and training on new technologies in drylands monitoring.

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<sup>1</sup> Full NEFRC 22 report and documents are available at the NEFRC Website:  
<http://www.fao.org/forestry/31112/en/>

- Support in monitoring country restoration initiatives and in developing restoration programmes in drylands to address, among other related targets, land degradation neutrality.
- Undertake sustainable management of biological diversity in forest rangelands in the region, including the monitoring of plant species.
- Develop adaptive management to build resilient forests and rangelands in the region.
- Assist in mainstreaming gender into forest and rangeland policies and engage youth participation in country-level initiatives.
- Support countries to assess the valuation of forests and rangeland goods and services and improve communication on forests and rangelands.

## II. THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES (RECOFI)

4. The 8th Session of RECOFI was held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, from 12 to 14 May 2015. The Session was attended by 21 delegates from all the eight RECOFI Member Countries and two observers. The Session reviewed the work of the Commission and its administrative and financial reports; considered selected issues of particular relevance for the region, such as fish stock status and regional minimum data collection and reporting, and aquaculture development; and reviewed the functioning of the Commission, including strengthening its Secretariat and adopting the work programme for 2015 and 2016.

5. *In relation to policy and regulatory matters, the Commission:*

- concurred on the merit to take a regionally concerted approach to fisheries management and aquaculture development based on the shared nature of the marine ecosystem and its fishery resources in the RECOFI region;
- acknowledged the urgent need to formulate coordinated policy measures for the effective fishery management of an increasing number of commercially important species, and to ensure their sustainable exploitation;
- commended the work of the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) whilst acknowledging that some planned activities could not be undertaken due to budgetary constraints;
- took note of the main issues affecting the efficient and full functioning of the Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS) and adopted the terms of reference of its staff appreciating the support provided by the State of Kuwait to RAIS;
- noted the outcomes of the Working Group on Fishery Management (WGFM) confirming the relevance of the regional priorities identified, including the joint appraisal of shared fishery resources and regional management plans;
- acknowledged with concern that none of the priority activities of the WGFM had been addressed during the intersessional period, and called on Member Countries to be more proactive in supporting and implementing the Commission's decisions and work;
- adopted the draft recommendation RECOFI/8/2015/1 on Minimum Reporting on Aquaculture Data and Information, and agreed on an annual deadline for submission of the mandatory aquaculture data and information;
- was informed that data reported under Recommendation RECOFI/6/2011/1 on minimum data reporting provide an adequate basis for monitoring the status of fishing operations and resources and for taking management decisions;
- decided that RAIS would include the data collected under the aforementioned recommendation, acknowledged the need to establish an agreed data access protocol and develop a standardized and integrated database, and endorsed the dissemination of data through RAIS.

6. *In relation to programme and budget matters, the Commission:*

- considered strengthening the Secretariat, including its location in a RECOFI Member Country, and agreed that the actual decision on budget and related elements needs to be discussed and agreed at an ad hoc session in 2016;
- noted the offer of the State of Kuwait to host the RECOFI headquarters and Secretariat, should they be relocated;
- agreed, due to continuing budgetary constraints, to reduce the activities of the WGFM to include the first priority only: the regional assessment of kingfish stock;
- reduced the number of activities of the WGA and merged some of them; and
- reconfirmed the hosting of the ninth session of RECOFI by the State of Kuwait in May 2017.

### **III. COMMISSION FOR CONTROLLING THE DESERT LOCUST IN THE CENTRAL REGION (CRC) AND IN THE WESTERN REGION (CLCPRO)**

7. The 29th Session of the CRC was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in November 2014. The session was attended by 25 delegates, 10 Member Countries, FAO Locust Group and three Desert Locust organizations. The Commission reviewed the intersessional work, including the Commission's administrative and financial reports, and adopted the work programme for 2015 and 2016 and made the recommendations below.

8. *In relation to policy and regulatory matters, the Commission recommended:*

- the representative of Ethiopia and the Secretariat of the Commission to communicate with the responsible authorities in Djibouti in order to activate their participation in the Commission and pay their annual contributions and arrears;
- the Secretary of the Commission to visit Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to provide the concerned ministers with an overview on the Commission's activities and its role in Desert Locust management in the Central Region, and to present proposals to support the Commission's activities; and
- contact the concerned authorities in Yemen to dedicate the assistance received by Yemen from the donor community, amounting to USD 1 350 000, for use in Desert Locust operations only.

9. *In relation to programme and budget matters, the Commission agreed to:*

- invite all Member Countries to the 30th Session and the 50th Anniversary of CRC, at the expense of the Commission's Trust Fund;
- double the contribution rates of Member Countries, with due attention to each country's correspondence process; and
- develop a roadmap for the implementation of financial mechanisms for controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region, and establish a Regional Emergency Fund for Desert Locust emergencies, with the allocation of USD 150 000 from the Commission's Trust Fund.

10. The 7th Session of CLCPRO was held in Mauritania, 22–26 June 2014. Sixteen participants were present in the session, nine Member Countries (except Libya), FAO Locust Group and three organizations: CRC, Maghreb Union (UMA) and the West African Monetary and Economic Union (UEMOA). The Commission reviewed all the activities achieved since the 6th session.

11. *In relation to policy and regulatory matters, the Commission requested Member Countries to:*

- send Desert Locust survey/control project plans for 2014 according to the updated monitoring system developed during the meeting of experts, held in Mauritania in June 2014 and approved during the 7th Session of CLCPRO;

- continue implementing environmental requirements: Mapping of sensitive areas, use of Pesticide Stock Management System (PSMS), mitigation measures in control operations, progressive use of biopesticide;
- raise the conclusions and recommendations formulated in the ministerial meeting in Algiers in 2015 to the FAO Council;
- the Secretariat of the Commission to draft and sign agreement protocols with UMA, West African Monetary and Economic Union (UEMOA), the Authority of Liptako Gourma (ALG) and the Economic Community of West African States (CEDEAO); and
- Member Countries and the Secretariat to constitute, by triangulation or acquisition, a minimal stock of pesticides in one of the frontline countries, to be used when necessary.

12. *In relation to programme and budget matters, the Commission*

- approved the annual accounts 2012, 2013 and 2014 and work plan/budget for the period (2014–2016).

#### **IV. AGRICULTURE AND LAND WATER USE COMMISSION (ALAWUC)**

13. This Commission is being reviewed in the context of the Water Scarcity Regional initiative and has not convened since its 7th session that took place in 2012.

#### **V. REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM FOR WATER CONSUMPTION, PRODUCTIVITY AND DROUGHT MANAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURE**

14. A regional workshop on ‘Operationalizing the Regional Collaborative Platform to address water consumption, water productivity and drought management in Agriculture’ was held in Cairo, Egypt, on 27–29 October 2015, as one milestone activity of the Regional Water Scarcity Initiative. The workshop brought together about 100 national, regional and international participants, including governmental professionals, experts and decision-makers involved in agricultural water management and drought management. The workshop was co-sponsored by the Daugherty Water for Food Institute (DWFI), Nebraska, USA, and opened by the Minister of Water Resources of Egypt.

15. The objectives of the Workshop were to:

- propose and discuss a work plan for 2016-17 to operationalize the Regional Collaborative Platform on ‘water consumption’ (reduction), ‘water productivity’ (increase) and ‘drought management’ (preparedness) in Agriculture;
- deploy the Remote Sensing ‘metrics’ satisfying the data and operational requirement for monitoring key water parameters;
- identify subnational agricultural systems where monitoring key water parameters will be conducted;
- assign roles and responsibilities to implement the different components of the work plan;
- design an effective institutional arrangement for monitoring and early warning of drought to conduct risk/vulnerability assessments, and to develop preparedness plans and response actions;
- elaborate on the use of financial resources in support of the countries to operationalize the Regional Collaborative Platform; and
- recommend an optimal governance arrangement for the Regional Collaborative Platform, including the composition of the technical and steering committees.

16. The Workshop resulted in:

- A *Standardized Regional Remote Sensing-based Monitoring System* for ‘water consumption’, ‘crop water productivity’ and ‘early warning of drought’ established;
- a well-structured and operational partnership arrangement that would allow the NENA countries to upgrade their data acquisition, processing and monitoring systems for ‘water consumption’, ‘crop water productivity’ and ‘early warning of drought’ implemented; and
- a results-oriented country-level work plan, including capacity development and field programmes for the biennium 2016–2017 designed.

## VI. REGIONAL MULTI-STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

17. The 4th Near East Regional Multi-Stakeholder Workshop (RMSW) for Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) was held in Amman, Jordan, on 28–29 April 2015 and co-organized by FAO/RNE, Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the World Food Programme (WFP) Regional Bureau in Cairo, in partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and League of Arab States (LAS). The workshop is part of the policy dialogues supported by the regional initiative on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition.

18. The Workshop discussed the following five major themes:

- Improve FSN in the Near East through regional collaboration and partnership
- *Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises* (anticipating adoption at the 42nd CFS Session in October 2015)
- FAO/WHO Second International Conference on Nutrition
- *Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture*
- The Regional Strategic Framework for Food Losses and Waste

19. The Workshop recommended:

- More coordinated efforts, deeper analysis of the complex issues facing FSN and associated role of information systems, and a specific focus on social protection measures for FSN.
- Creating national-level, multi-stakeholder mechanisms to implement the principles in the Near East region.
- Establishing a steering committee to provide leadership and follow implementation of the ICN2 commitments among countries, and discuss progress at future RMSW workshops.
- Supporting technical ministries and agencies in achieving the objectives set out in the Principles, with focus on the enabling environment as the starting point for fostering more responsible investment.
- Stepping up efforts to implement the endorsed Regional Strategic Framework for Food Losses and Waste Reduction by putting in place plans and programmes at the national level.

20. Participants underlined the importance of ensuring ownership of the forum by Member Countries and regional stakeholders and moving from discussion to action. A final major recommendation was to establish a steering committee, aiming to: (i) provide strategic direction to the RMSW and the dialogue led by Member Countries; (ii) monitor and advocate for implementation of the endorsed recommendations; and (iii) derive action plans from the recommendations and other platforms including ministerial-level regional conferences.

## VII. REGIONAL MEETINGS ON SMALL-SCALE AGRICULTURE

21. Meetings within the framework of the Regional Initiative on Small-Scale Agriculture for Inclusive Development were attended by participants from ten countries of the NENA region and other international partners.
22. The march meeting provided the opportunity for the Member Countries represented to discuss the problematic of small-scale agriculture in their countries, exchange experiences on approaches and policies and agree on the content of the study on small-scale agriculture to be conducted by FAO in partnership with CIHEAM and CIRAD.
23. The results of the study were presented at the December 2015 regional meeting during which the work plan of the Regional Initiative for the 2016–2017 was discussed.
24. The following conclusions of the discussions were the following: 1) There is no one single definition of small-scale farming, but there are multiple definitions depending on the objective pursued (policy making, research, etc.); in addition, existing national statistic systems do not capture adequately the various facets of small-scale farming; 2) future work should focus on the importance of policies, institutions and governance to provide a framework for assistance at community level; 3) investment in innovative sustainable productivity is needed at a small-scale level; 4) support the understanding of small-scale food systems and the patterns of consumption and production; 5) support to policies favouring employment in rural areas with a focus on gender and youth; and 6) assist the small-scale farming sector through Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Fund for building resilience to adapt to climate change.

## VIII. REGIONAL MEETINGS ON PRIORITY LIVESTOCK ISSUES

25. FAO organized several regional meetings and consultations on livestock key priority issues. The meetings were organized in collaboration with strategic partners, including OIE, WHO and ICARDA and covered the topics of MERS-CoV, foot and mouth disease (FMD), animal feed and the role of livestock in food security and nutrition.
26. A regional technical consultation on livestock contribution to food security in NENA region was held in Cairo, Egypt, 17–18 January 2016. The consultation brought together 65 senior technical officers representing 12 countries from the region, key livestock experts and scientists from collaborating institutions and international organizations such as OIE, WHO, ICARDA and USDA-APHIS. The Consultation discussed the comprehensive study on "the role of livestock and food security in the NENA region" and made recommendations that have been integrated in the NERC/16/5 discussion paper.
27. A regional workshop on FMD and peste des petits ruminants (PPR) roadmap for the Middle East region was held in Doha, Qatar, 1–3 December 2015. The meeting was the third roadmap meeting. It was attended by 50 participants from 12 countries of the Middle East, representatives of international and regional agencies and national observers. Countries updated their progress on FMD progressive control pathway (PCP) as per the agreed Regional Roadmap and Strategy, and assessed their status on PPR control and their roadmap for eradication in line with the Global Strategy for PPR control and Eradication by 2030, adopted by over 100 countries in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, in April 2015.



28. Two regional technical consultations on MERS-CoV in animals were organized in Muscat, Oman, 20–21 May 2014 and in Doha, Qatar, 27–29 April 2015. Muscat Declaration<sup>2</sup> and the Doha Declaration<sup>3</sup> have set the stage for countries to address collaboratively this emerging infectious disease that affected primarily the Gulf countries.

29. An expert meeting on animal feed resources and their management in the Near East and North Africa region was held in Muscat, Oman, 24–26 March 2014. The Meeting, jointly organized by FAO, ICARDA and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries of Oman, was attended by 29 participants from eight countries of the region and by regional and international organizations. Countries agreed to undertake inventories of feedstuffs with chemical compositions and nutritional values; characterise and map feeding systems; monitor prices and trade of feed and feed ingredients; assess and forecast feed demand and supply; develop feed resource management and feeding strategies; and document success stories and create a platform for exchange of information with experts.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/newsroom/docs/Oman%20Muscat%20Declaration\\_Final%20May%202014.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/newsroom/docs/Oman%20Muscat%20Declaration_Final%20May%202014.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/en/empres/documents/docs/Doha\\_Declaration\\_2015.pdf](http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/en/empres/documents/docs/Doha_Declaration_2015.pdf)