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Food and Agriculture
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Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الأغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

CONFERENCE

Forty-fourth Session

Rome, 28 June - 4 July 2025

**Report of the 33rd Session of the Regional Conference for Africa
(Rabat, Morocco, Senior Officers Meeting 26-28 March 2024 and
Ministerial Meeting 18-20 April 2024)**



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**

ARC/24/REP

REPORT

**Rabat,
the Kingdom of
Morocco
26-28 March
2024 (virtual) and
18-20 April 2024
(hybrid)**

Thirty-third Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa

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Table of Contents	Page
Summary of main recommendations	6
	Paragraphs
Introductory Items	1-10
Programme and Budget Matters	
FAO results in the region – 2022-23	11-12
Priorities for FAO in the region under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31	13-15
Harnessing science and innovation for increased agricultural productivity and competitiveness in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)	16-18
Rediscovering African foods: Promoting native foods for improved nutrition, health and food security	19-22
How to fight against food loss and waste	23-24
Presentation of Reports of the Subregional Consultations	25-26
Regional and Global Policy and Regulatory Matters	
Global and Regional Food Security Outlook	27-29
Building resilience through agrifood systems transformation	30-32
Financing to end hunger for today and tomorrow (SDG 2)	33-35
Country Office Network - Current Status and Way Forward: A policy paper	36-38
Other Matters	
Date and place of the 34th Session of the Regional Conference for Africa	39
Concluding items	
Ministerial Declaration	40
Appendices	Pages
Appendix A: Ministerial Declaration	17-20
Appendix B: Agenda	21-22
Appendix C: List of documents	23-24

FAO Member Nations in the Africa Region

Algeria	Ethiopia	Niger
Angola	Gabon	Nigeria
Benin	Gambia	Rwanda
Botswana	Ghana	Sao Tome and Principe
Burkina Faso	Guinea	Senegal
Burundi	Guinea-Bissau	Seychelles
Cameroon	Kenya	Sierra Leone
Cabo Verde	Lesotho	Somalia
Central African Republic	Liberia	South Africa
Chad	Libya	South Sudan
Comoros	Madagascar	The Sudan
Congo	Malawi	Swaziland
Côte d'Ivoire	Mali	Togo
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Mauritania	Tunisia
Djibouti	Mauritius	Uganda
Egypt	Morocco	United Republic of Tanzania
Equatorial Guinea	Mozambique	Zambia
Eritrea	Namibia	Zimbabwe

Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for Africa

First	Lagos, Nigeria, 3 – 12 November 1960
Second	Tunis, Tunisia, 1 – 10 November 1962
Third	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 3 – 15 September 1964
Fourth	Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 9 – 19 November 1966
Fifth	Kampala, Uganda, 18 – 29 November 1968
Sixth	Algiers, Algeria, 17 September – 3 October 1970
Seventh	Libreville, Gabon, 14 – 30 September 1972
Eighth	Rose Hill, Mauritius, 1 – 17 August 1974
Ninth	Freetown, Sierra Leone, 2 – 12 November 1976
Tenth	Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, 18 – 28 September 1978
Eleventh	Lomé, Togo, 16 – 27 June 1980
Twelfth	Algiers, Algeria, 22 September – 2 October 1982
Thirteenth	Harare, Zimbabwe, 16 – 25 July 1984
Fourteenth	Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, 2 – 11 September 1986
Fifteenth	Moka, Mauritius, 26 April – 4 May 1988
Sixteenth	Marrakech, Morocco, 11 – 15 June 1990
Seventeenth	Accra, Ghana, 20 – 24 July 1992
Eighteenth	Gaborone, Botswana, 24 – 28 October 1994
Nineteenth	Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 16 – 20 April 1996
Twentieth	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 16 – 20 February 1998
Twenty-first	Yaoundé, Cameroon, 21 – 25 February 2000

Twenty-second	Cairo, Egypt, 4-8 February 2002
Twenty-third	Johannesburg, South Africa, 1 – 5 March 2004
Twenty-fourth	Bamako, Mali, 30 January – 3 February 2006
Twenty-fifth	Nairobi, Kenya, 16 – 20 June 2008
Twenty-sixth	Luanda, Angola, 3 – 7 May 2010
Twenty-seventh	Brazzaville, Congo, 23 – 27 April 2012
Twenty-eighth	Tunis, Tunisia, 24 – 28 March 2014
Twenty-ninth	Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 4 – 8 April 2016
Thirtieth	Khartoum, the Sudan, 19 – 23 February 2018
Thirty-first	Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, (virtual), 26 – 28 October 2020
Thirty-second	Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, (hybrid), 11 – 14 April 2022
Thirty-third	Rabat, the Kingdom of Morocco (virtual) 26-28 March 2024 and (hybrid) 18-20 April 2024

SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

MATTERS REQUIRING THE ATTENTION OF THE COUNCIL

Programme and Budget Matters

- *FAO results in the region – 2022-23* (Paragraphs 11 and 12)
- *Priorities for FAO in the region under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31* (Paragraphs 13 to 15)
- *Harnessing science and innovation for increased agricultural productivity and competitiveness in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)* (Paragraphs 16 to 18)
- *Rediscovering African foods: Promoting native foods for improved nutrition, health and food security* (Paragraphs 19 to 22)
- *How to fight against food loss and waste* (Paragraphs 23 and 24)
- *Presentation of Reports of the Subregional Consultations* (Paragraphs 25 and 26)
- *Country Office Network - Current Status and Way Forward: A Policy Paper* (Paragraphs 36 and 38)

MATTERS REQUIRING THE ATTENTION OF THE CONFERENCE

Regional and Global Policy and Regulatory Matters

- *Global and Regional Food Security Outlook* (Paragraphs 27 to 29)
- *Building resilience through agrifood systems transformation* (Paragraphs 30 and 32)
- *Financing to end hunger for today and tomorrow (SDG 2)* (Paragraphs 33 to 35)

I. Introductory Items

Organization of the Regional Conference

1. The 33rd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa (ARC) was organized in two segments: the Senior Officers Meeting from 26 to 28 March 2024 and the Ministerial Session from 18 to 20 April 2024. The Senior Officers Meeting was convened in virtual modality and the Ministerial Session was conducted in hybrid modality.
2. The **Senior Officers Meeting** was attended by 285 delegates from 51 Members, including two Ministers, two Deputy Ministers, 30 Ambassadors, three private sector organizations, four civil society and/or non-governmental organizations, nine intergovernmental organizations, twelve research organizations, three United Nations (UN) organizations and three observer nations.
3. The **Ministerial Session** was attended by 241 delegates from 51 Members, including: one Head of Government; 45 Ministers; five Deputy Ministers; 32 Ambassadors; five Observer nations; Representatives of five United Nations (UN) organizations; ten intergovernmental organizations; five civil society organizations; five private sector associations; and five scientific and academic organizations.

Opening of the Senior Officers' Meeting

4. The Senior Officers Meeting was opened with addresses by Mr Mohamed Sadiki, Minister for Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development, and Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco and Mr Abebe Haile-Gabriel, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Africa.

Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons, and appointment of Rapporteurs

5. Delegates elected Mr Mohamed Sadiki, Minister for Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development, and Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco as Chairperson of the 33rd Session of the Regional Conference, and Mr Redouane Arrach, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development, and Water and Forests of the Kingdom of Morocco was designated to represent the Chairperson during the Senior Officers Meeting. The Regional Conference further endorsed Mr José Juan Ndong Tom, Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Rural Development of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea as first Vice-Chairperson and Mr Memma Ould Beibata, Minister for Agriculture of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania as second Vice-Chairperson.
6. The Regional Conference appointed Mr Anthony Muriithi, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to FAO, IFAD and WFP, and Mr Gerson Mateus dos Santos Francisco, Third Secretary of Permanent Representation of the Republic of Angola to FAO, IFAD and WFP as first and second Rapporteurs, respectively.

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

7. The Regional Conference adopted the Agenda (*Appendix B*) and the Timetable.

Inaugural Ceremonies

8. The inaugural ceremony of the 33rd Session of FAO Regional Conference for Africa was held on 18 April 2024 in the presence of H.E. Aziz Akhannouch, Head of Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and Dr QU Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The authorities delivered their statements.

Statement by the FAO Director-General

9. The Director-General delivered a statement to the 33rd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa, which may be found in document ARC/24/INF/4 on the ARC 33 website.

Statement by the Head of Government of the Kingdom of Morocco

10. H.E. Aziz Akhannouch, Head of Government of the Kingdom of Morocco delivered a statement to the 33rd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa.

II. Programme and Budget Matters

A. FAO results in the region – 2022-23

11. The Regional Conference considered document ARC/24/8, *FAO results in the region – 2022-23*.
12. The Regional Conference:
- a. appreciated FAO's leadership and contribution to 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;
 - b. noted the achievements in the implementation of the Regional Priorities in the Africa region, including:
 - i. boosting entrepreneurial ecosystem in agribusiness at regional, subregional and country levels;
 - ii. the scale-up of dialogue and engagement with the private sector and multilateral development financial institutions;
 - iii. the establishment of the FAO African Small Island Developing States programme road map;
 - iv. the significant growth of FAO's climate change adaptation and mitigation portfolio; and
 - v. the progress made to strengthen the integration of digitalization into FAO's projects and programmes;
 - c. noted the achievements on the implementation of FAO's strategies and corporate initiatives in the Africa region;
 - d. appreciated the emphasis on country-led and country-owned programming in the implementation of the Regional Priorities, fostering critical and high-level commitment and leadership by the governments on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 and SDG 2, among other SDGs in the region;
 - e. recognized that the regional programmatic approach sharpens FAO's focus, sets clear priorities, enhances dialogue and facilitates communication and advocacy with governments and partners;
 - f. acknowledged FAO's efforts in ensuring programmatic alignment and collaboration among Regional and Subregional Offices, and in reinforcing the monitoring, evaluation and learning functions in Subregional Offices;
 - g. noted the advancement in strengthening linkages between FAO's work and investment through enhanced partnerships with the private sector and development financial institutions, complementing those with smallholder producers and their organizations; and
 - h. recommended FAO to share, with the Regional Economic Communities, its support to Members in terms of the implementation of the Strategic Framework 2022-31.

B. Priorities for FAO in the region under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31

13. The Regional Conference considered document ARC/24/9, *Priorities for FAO in the region under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31*.

14. The Regional Conference:
- a. noted FAO's efforts in implementing the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 in the Africa region;
 - b. expressed appreciation to FAO for:
 - i. the implementation of regional foresight exercises, the regional programmatic approach and how it sharpens FAO's focus, sets clear priorities, enhances dialogue, and facilitates communication and advocacy with governments and partners;
 - ii. providing a leadership role in convening and facilitating the multisectoral dialogues on agrifood systems transformation under the *aegeis* of the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021 and its follow-up initiatives; and
 - iii. providing catalytic support in engaging with development partners, including resource partners, development agencies, the civil society and the private sector, among others;
 - c. acknowledged the importance of:
 - i. innovation, technology, data and complement accelerators across FAO's programmatic interventions to fast-track impact while minimizing trade-offs;
 - ii. sustainable development of efficient, resilient, inclusive and targeted value chains at continental, subregional and national levels, with particular emphasis on facilitating access to markets and trade to smallholder farmers; and
 - iii. the role of private and public investment in agriculture, in particular in resilience building, agricultural mechanization, as well as promoting access to finance for smallholder farmers;
 - d. welcomed the continued focus of FAO's work on priorities for the Africa region, drawing from the experience of implementing the FAO Strategic Framework in the 2022-2023 biennium, as well as the major trends, challenges and opportunities shaping agrifood systems;
 - e. noted the ongoing refinement of the business model for the Hand-in-Hand Initiative to enhance the quality of national government-led agrifood investments, including a clearer focus on policy issues, complementarity with other national flagship investments and enhanced private sector engagement;
 - f. appreciated FAO's efforts to scale up the One Country One Priority Product Initiative, as well as strengthen areas of complementarity with other initiatives, to include more countries and specialized agriculture products, including field crops, forestry products, livestock and horticulture;
 - g. welcomed the ongoing expansion of the 1000 Digital Village Initiative portfolio with activities focusing on market access and advisory services, leveraging digital tools such as satellite information and e-commerce platforms, supporting digital upskilling of Farmer Field Schools, and exploring the potential of Artificial Intelligence (ChatGPT) for advisory services and digital equipment for rural public extension; and
 - h. encouraged Members to provide an enabling environment and complementary investments to scale up FAO's corporate initiatives.
15. The Regional Conference recommended FAO to:
- a. continue to facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices in the implementation of FAO's corporate strategies and initiatives including the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, the One Country One Priority Product Initiative, the Green Cities Initiative and the 1000 Digital Village Initiative among Members and across regions;
 - b. support Members in developing investment plans towards mobilizing resources and increasing investment through innovative financing mechanisms for building resilience, improving agrifood systems and fighting poverty;

- c. further highlight, within the Regional Priorities, strategic areas such as animal production and health, including among others the eradication of *Peste des Petits Ruminants* (PPR), agricultural mechanization, and the promotion of blue economy for economic growth and food security and nutrition in the region;
- d. continue providing technical support to Members in the areas of agrifood systems transformation, policy dialogue, trade and investment; and
- e. strengthen capacities of national statistical systems to provide reliable evidence for policy action and effective planning.

C. Harnessing science and innovation for increased agricultural productivity and competitiveness in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

16. The Regional Conference considered document ARC/24/3, *Harnessing science and innovation for increased agricultural productivity and competitiveness in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)*.

17. The Regional Conference:

- a. recognized the crucial role that science and innovation play in boosting agricultural production, productivity, competitiveness and food security and nutrition, as well as sustainable rural development;
- b. encouraged Members to:
 - i. increase funding for agricultural research and development, focusing on priority areas, such as drought-resistant crops, orphan crops, climate-smart agriculture, precision agriculture, and improved storage and processing technologies;
 - ii. establish dedicated spaces and platforms where scientists, finance and technical innovators, farmers and entrepreneurs can collaborate to address common challenges, develop shared solutions and facilitate knowledge sharing and technology transfer across borders;
 - iii. implement policies that protect and incentivize innovation, while ensuring equitable access to knowledge and technology;
 - iv. expand access to reliable energy and internet infrastructure crucial for deploying precision agriculture tools, accessing market information and facilitating e-commerce for agricultural products;
 - v. promote public-private partnerships for the development and deployment of innovative solutions; and
 - vi. invest in appropriate education, data collection and analysis by strengthening national agricultural information systems and promoting data and information sharing across borders.

18. The Regional Conference recommended FAO to support Members in:

- a. facilitating experience sharing and mutual learning within Africa, as well as among other FAO regions, using FAO's platforms;
- b. the deployment of agricultural mechanization in Africa with a view to increasing production and productivity;
- c. the application of digital tools for the deployment of precision agriculture, improvement of access to market information and the facilitation of e-commerce and trade of agricultural products;
- d. strengthening national agricultural information systems and implementing policies that ensure equitable access to knowledge and technology; and
- e. strengthening national and regional capacities in relation to food safety standards and regulations, their harmonization and monitoring, in addition to the Codex Alimentarius, to promote intra-African trade within the context of AfCFTA.

D. Rediscovering African foods: Promoting native foods for improved nutrition, health and food security

19. The Regional Conference considered document ARC/24/4, *Rediscovering African foods: Promoting native foods for improved nutrition, health and food security*, and examined the nutritional, environmental, sociocultural and economic benefits to be derived from promoted native crops and Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs).

20. The Regional Conference:

- a. acknowledged the set of actions needed to raise awareness on the potential role of native crops as opportunity crops for Africa, and non-wood forest products in transforming agrifood systems among all relevant actors, including policymakers, technical practitioners, the private sector and rural communities; and
- b. welcomed the guiding principles outlining necessary actions to promote increased supply through production and investment interventions, and increase demand through consumer awareness;

21. The Regional Conference recommended FAO to support Members in:

- a. identifying key entry points and necessary technical and financial investments for effective promotion of native crops;
- b. engaging critical actors in this promotion effort of NWFPs;
- c. strengthening national and regional policies, programmes, strategies and legislation towards the integration of native crops and NWFPs in agrifood systems;
- d. increasing advocacy and consumer awareness on the nutritional benefits of these commodities at all levels;
- e. establishing national seed banks, animal genetic resources and strengthening research, especially the use of local knowledge, with a particular focus on the species at risk of extinction, to preserve biodiversity;
- f. data collection to generate information for national policy and strategy development;
- g. developing the food composition table to address issues around nutrition and raise consumer awareness;
- h. supporting ongoing initiatives, developing value chains for native crops and NWFPs, and making them more attractive to consumers; and
- i. enhancing Members' capacity in promoting non-conventional animal products for further food and nutrition security.

22. The Regional Conference invited Members to:

- a. increase investment in the production of native crops and NWFPs, including reinforcing technology, innovation and research to strengthen their value chains;
- b. support private sector investment in native crops and non-wood forest products in a sustainable manner, in line with the promotion of biodiversity;
- c. promote dietary diversification by including native crops and NWFPs in national policies; and
- d. develop strategies and policies to increase awareness and promote programmes that include native crops and NWFPs.

E. How to fight against food loss and waste

23. The Regional Conference considered document ARC/24/5, *How to fight against food loss and waste*.
24. The Regional Conference:
 - a. acknowledged the social, environmental and economic burden food loss and waste has on achieving food security, nutrition and sustainable development; and
 - b. appreciated the approaches identified for reducing food loss and waste towards MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems transformation in the region;
 - c. invited Members to:
 - i. recognize the importance of reducing food loss and waste to improve the efficiency, inclusiveness, resilience and sustainability of agrifood systems, and the achievement of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
 - ii. integrate food loss and waste reduction in national and regional policies, programmes and strategies dealing with agrifood systems, including those related to climate change;
 - iii. invest in creating an enabling environment to support private sector action and facilitate collaboration with all other actors to encourage food loss and waste reduction at national and subnational levels;
 - iv. adopt a holistic approach to the four pillars of food security, focusing equally on food safety and food utilization;
 - v. prioritize the development of infrastructure for food loss and waste reduction by investing in storage facilities, cold chains, road infrastructure and power supply, among others;
 - vi. promote revalorization of animal and agricultural by-products;
 - vii. enhance capacities for preventing and reducing post-harvest loss; and
 - viii. strengthen prevention and control of transboundary plant and animal pests and diseases.
 - d. recommended FAO to assist Members in:
 - i. their efforts to reduce food loss and waste, including gathering and analysing data and information, developing policies and strategies, supporting investments in processing and storage technologies, awareness-raising and capacity building in relation to food loss and waste reduction;
 - ii. supporting capacity development of smallholders, processors, traders and entrepreneurs in the uptake of post-harvest equipment and technologies; and
 - iii. taking measures to reduce cafeteria waste and food waste in any other form.

F. Presentation of Reports of the Subregional Consultations

25. The Regional Conference considered the reports of the subregional consultations.
26. The Regional Conference:
 - a. noted the themes discussed during the subregional consultations for Central, Eastern, Southern and West Africa;
 - b. appreciated the inclusive approach adopted that involved representatives of governments, regional economic communities, development partners and UN agencies, Civil Society Organizations and the private sector in the consultation process;
 - c. noted the relevance of the priorities identified for FAO's support, namely:

- i. enhancing production and productivity to achieve food security/sovereignty and better nutrition;
 - ii. agrifood systems transformation across all the value chains;
 - iii. access to essential infrastructure for fisheries, aquaculture and processing for smallholders;
 - iv. irrigation and water management with a view to making agriculture more resilient to climate extremes;
 - v. resource mobilization, trade and investment promotion;
 - vi. agribusiness and rural development, agro-industrialization and financing for agriculture; and
 - vii. inclusion of women and youths; and
- d. invited FAO to provide policy, technical and capacity development support to Members in implementing these priorities.

III. Regional and Global Policy and Regulatory Matters

A. Global and Regional Food Security Outlook

27. The Regional Conference took note of document ARC/24/2, *Global and Regional Food Security Outlook*.
28. The Regional Conference:
- a. noted with concern the deteriorating food security and nutrition situation in Africa, despite global and national efforts, such as the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit and national-level programmes and projects;
 - b. recognized the urgent need to work together to address the main drivers of undernourishment and food insecurity in the world, particularly in Africa, including conflicts and geopolitical tensions, extreme and more frequent climatic events, economic slowdowns and downturns, and persistent inequalities;
 - c. emphasized the need for continued urgent humanitarian assistance, including the scale-up of actions that build resilience;
 - d. acknowledged FAO's statistical work as the lead agency generating data on food and agriculture, relevant for monitoring food security;
 - e. recognized the need to address issues such as soil fertility and soil health, conflicts around land tenure, post-harvest losses, cafeteria food waste, weak national capacities, non-availability of credible data for relevant national food commodities and energy resources, among others; and
 - f. invited Members to provide up-to-date and complete data and statistics to FAO to allow timely assessments and analyses to inform policy decisions for food security and nutrition.
29. The Regional Conference recommended FAO to support Members in:
- a. sharing experiences and lessons learnt on promoting healthy diets, mechanisms to mobilize resources at regional and national levels, and reviewing the relevance of programmes at national level and the conclusions of global discussions on agrifood systems transformation; and
 - b. providing guidance on approaches for reducing yield losses in staple commodities due to climate change and natural disasters.

B. Building resilience through agrifood systems transformation

30. The Regional Conference considered document ARC/24/6, *Building resilience through agrifood systems transformation*.
31. The Regional Conference:
- a. noted with concern the extent of disaster risks exposure in agrifood systems;
 - b. recognized best practices, innovations and lessons learned for enhancing resilience through the adoption of innovative, context- and gender-specific approaches and solutions to mitigate risks and manage the impact of disasters; and
 - c. invited Members to:
 - i. acknowledge the imperatives to enhance resilience capacities at community, institutional and ecosystem levels to contribute to agrifood systems transformation;
 - ii. step up carefully targeted investments in resilient agrifood systems; and
 - iii. strengthen partnerships with multiple relevant stakeholders in their effort to increase resilience at all levels.
32. The Regional Conference recommended FAO to support Members in:
- a. facilitating anticipatory actions to mitigate the impact of disasters, reduce humanitarian needs and enable quick recovery of agricultural livelihoods;
 - b. enhancing resilience for accelerating agrifood systems transformation by implementing risk -management measures, addressing food loss and waste from production to consumption, water infrastructure for food security and nutrition, the enhancement of domestic markets and the promotion of intraregional trade in agrifood products, climate-smart livestock feed and insurance schemes, natural resources management, and the strengthening of the work along the humanitarian--development--peace nexus;
 - c. scaling up both public and private investments and fostering partnerships to effectively meet the challenges of resilience for agrifood systems transformation;
 - d. sharing best practices, knowledge exchange and collaboration with stakeholders at national and international levels; and
 - e. formulating the Post-Malabo agenda for action on the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) informed by the African Common Position on Food Systems, in collaboration with the African Union and other partners.

C. Financing to end hunger for today and tomorrow (SDG 2)

33. The Regional Conference considered document ARC/24/7, *Financing to end hunger today and tomorrow (SDG 2)*.
34. The Regional Conference:
- a. recognized the need to deploy innovative financing instruments to end hunger today and in the future, including effectively tracking financial flows; repurposing public support in agriculture; accessing and mobilizing catalytic and blended financing to de-risk; and catalysing bank credit and private investment into the agrifood sector;
 - b. appreciated the impact of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative in facilitating financial sustainability through assessing available financial opportunities and other innovative ways of financing, such as approaching international development agencies, public budgets, banking institutions and capital markets for assistance;

- c. noted the financing options, both internal and external, which are realistically available to the African countries;
 - d. recognized that creating a diverse range of financial instruments is critical to financing agrifood systems transformation; and
 - e. invited Members to:
 - i. provide de-risking or risk-sharing financing instruments to increase investment financing from the private sector and other funds;
 - ii. improve the quality of recurrent public spending on agriculture including crops, livestock, forestry, and fisheries and aquaculture;
 - iii. share experiences and best practices among Members to improve sustainability of financing programmes;
 - iv. explore new approaches for financing agrifood systems, and create and/or re-orient grants to support activities that contribute to the achievement of SDG 2;
 - v. provide government support and implement agricultural policies that stimulate investment and innovation, which could lead to the improvement of food security and nutrition;
 - vi. promote the implementation of innovative technologies in agriculture, and provide infrastructure support to address issues related to logistics and communication;
 - vii. implement the Malabo commitment to allocate at least 10 percent of public expenditure to agriculture; and
 - viii. set up and strengthen multisector and multi-stakeholders' coordination mechanisms for agrifood systems financing and mutual accountability on achievements and resource use.
35. The Regional Conference recommended FAO to support Members by:
- a. facilitating experience sharing on national approaches and policies to finance agrifood systems transformation;
 - b. identifying the financing pathways to accelerate the process of ending hunger in Africa;
 - c. providing technical assistance to improve the quality of public and private investment and recurrent public spending on agriculture including crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture sectors;
 - d. developing mechanisms to provide financial support to small business owners who are generally excluded from the conventional financing mechanisms;
 - e. encouraging project implementation approaches that increase the accessibilities of the funding to the direct beneficiaries; and
 - f. supporting the development of integrated approaches for agricultural production, including development of protected agricultural production areas.

D. Country Office Network - Current Status and Way Forward: A Policy Paper

36. The Regional Conference considered document ARC/24/10, *Country Office Network – Current status and way forward: A policy paper*.
37. The Regional Conference:
- a. appreciated the update on decentralized offices with a proposed way forward to strengthen the Organization's efficiency and work at country level;

- b. welcomed the proposal which responded to previous guidance from ARC to pursue the adjustment of its decentralized offices business models, in particular in light of the UN Development System repositioning, in order to ensure greater flexibility and efficiency in the use of the Organization’s existing limited financial and human resources, aiming to respond to Members’ emerging needs and priorities in line with the SDGs, and to reconsider the skills and competency mix needed to improve programme delivery;¹
 - c. endorsed the overarching guiding principles of tailoring the proposed approach to countries’ evolution, specificities and needs; building in flexibility, agility and strengthened capacity; reflecting modern ways of operating and delivering; implementing changes in a progressive manner; and maintaining the overall regional budgetary allocation to the FAO Country Office network; and
 - d. supported the set of proposed measures and models to adjust the FAO Country Offices to better respond to Members’ expectations for FAO’s support and delivery under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and beyond.
38. The Regional Conference requested FAO to proceed with a transparent process of consultation with countries for the progressive implementation of the proposed arrangements, including a regular assessment.

IV. Other Matters

E. Date and place of the 34th Regional Conference for Africa

39. The Regional Conference welcomed the generous offer by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania to host the 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa, to be held in 2026, and accepted the offer. The exact date will be agreed jointly between the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Secretariat of the Regional Conference, in consultation with the Bureau of the African Regional Group of Ambassadors to the Rome-based Agencies.

Concluding items

F. Ministerial Declaration

40. The Regional Conference reviewed and endorsed the Ministerial Declaration, as reproduced in *Appendix A*, presented to the Ministers at the Ministerial Session, held from 18 to 20 April 2024, in Rabat, Morocco.

¹ ARC/20/REP, paragraph 47 subparagraphs v. and ix.

Appendix A: Ministerial Declaration

33rd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation, assembled at the 33rd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa held in Rabat, the Kingdom of Morocco, from 18 to 20 April 2024:

Having reviewed the state of agriculture, and food security and nutrition in Africa, and noting the multiple and overlapping shocks and threats induced by climate extremes, pests and diseases, political instabilities and conflicts, economic slowdowns and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, among others, that undermine Africa's efforts towards agrifood systems transformation;

Concerned that Africa is not on track to meet the Malabo Commitments by 2025 nor Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 by 2030, as both the FAO data and the 4th CAADP Biennial Review Report demonstrate, with the majority of countries not making sufficient progress towards reaching those targets;

Further concerned about the number and depth of crises causing food security vulnerabilities in our region;

Aware that efforts remain to be made to achieve the targets defined in the Malabo Commitments by 2025 and the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030;

Recognizing the momentum created by the United Nations (UN) Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment in 2023 for agrifood systems transformation;

Welcoming FAO's convening, among others, of the FAO Global Conference on Sustainable Livestock Transformation from 25 to 27 September 2023, and the Global Conference on Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization from 27 to 29 September 2023;

Noting the progress in the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, with its focus on Better Production, Better Nutrition, Better Environment and Better Life, and its implementation in Africa;

Acknowledging the focus of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 on stronger and coordinated efforts to achieve the SDGs, with a view to eradicating poverty (SDG 1), ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition (SDG 2), reducing inequalities (SDG 10), as well as attaining all the other SDGs in the region;

Appreciating FAO's efforts in rolling out and supporting innovative initiatives in Member Nations, particularly the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, the Green Cities Initiative, the 1000 Digital Village Initiative and One Country One Priority Product Initiative;

Recognizing FAO's efforts in ensuring that FAO Country Offices are more agile in responding to the evolving needs of Members;

Noting the importance of aquatic foods in sustainable diets and livelihoods of a large proportion of our populations;

Also appreciating FAO for its continuous technical and financial support to Members in combating transboundary pests and diseases, including the Desert Locust;

Acknowledging the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP 28) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that was hosted by the United Arab Emirates in 2023, and welcoming the 29th COP in Azerbaijan, in 2024;

Further welcoming the upcoming 16th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 16) that will take place in Colombia from 21 October to 1 November 2024 and the 16th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD COP 16) that will take place in Saudi Arabia from 2 to 13 December 2024;

Recognizing the One Health Joint Plan of Action 2022-2026 approach for FAO's future actions and its vital role in the achievement of the SDGs, as part of agrifood systems transformation, the health of people, animals, plants and the environment, as well as in combating challenges and diseases, tackling antimicrobial resistance, ensuring food security and preventing human-animal threats;

Further recognizing the relevance of the Committee on World Food Security's global platform, celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2024, as well as its policy tools and High Level Panel of Experts reports as high-value instruments in advancing food security and nutrition;

Acknowledging FAO's achievements in the Strategic Foresight domain, including the publication of the corporate series "The Future of Food and Agriculture" (FOFA), the Regional Foresight Exercises (RFEs) and all the domain-specific foresight activities;

Cognizant that agrifood systems transformation is a whole-of-government, as well as a multistakeholder endeavour;

1. **Commend** FAO for the progress made in the implementation in Africa of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, in particular the four Regional Priorities;
2. **Reconfirm** the current four Regional Priorities for FAO in the Africa region: 1) Sustainable agrifood production systems; 2) Efficient and equitable food and nutrition systems; 3) Climate action and sustainable natural resource management; and 4) Building resilience and ending poverty, aligned with the *four betters*;
3. **Reconfirm** the *four betters*: Better Production, Better Nutrition, Better Environment and Better Life as core to agrifood systems transformation in Africa;
4. **Commend** Members for the widespread adoption in Africa of the FAO Corporate Initiatives, including the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, One Country One Priority Product, the Green Cities Initiative, and 1000 Digital Village Initiative with FAO's support;
5. **Note with appreciation** the progress achieved in the implementation of the recommendations of the 32nd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa, as well as the demonstrated importance of adopting innovative approaches using science and technologies, such as digital solutions, to address new situations and challenges;
6. **Request** FAO to continue supporting Members in building resilience for accelerating agrifood systems transformation through risk management, mitigation and adaptation measures to climate shocks, supporting post-harvest loss management to address food loss and waste from production to consumption, infrastructure for water security, strengthening domestic markets and promoting intraregional trade in agrifood products, climate-smart animal feed and sustainable natural resources management, and strengthening the work along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus;
7. **Further encourage** FAO to expand and sustain its partnership with African regional institutions with expertise in agriculture, food security and nutrition and environment, as stipulated in their mandates;
8. **Welcome** FAO's proposal for a reinigorated business model for the evolution of the FAO Country Offices network;
9. **Reaffirm** the centrality of gender equality, youth empowerment, social justice and socioeconomic inclusion for a successful agrifood systems transformation in Africa, recognizing the roles of youth, women and men as agents of change, and resilient builders and innovators in agrifood systems;

10. **Call** on FAO to collaborate with Members on increased revival and sustainable use of indigenous and orphan crops, and non-wood forest products for improved nutrition, health and food security, as well as the preservation of the environment, and their contribution to the ecosystems;
11. **Welcome** the declarations of the Civil Society Organizations and the Private Sector Dialogue as contributions to the agrifood systems transformation agenda in Africa;
12. **Welcome** the announcement made by H.E. Josefa Sacko, African Union Commissioner for the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, about the Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health (AFSH) Summit scheduled to take place from 7 to 9 May in Nairobi, Kenya;
13. **Renew** our commitment to:
 - a. accelerating collective and individual Member action to achieve the African Union Maputo (2003) and Malabo (2014) commitments;
 - b. implementing the *four betters* and the flagship initiatives in an integrated and synergetic manner under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, in consonance with the UN Food Systems Summit 2021 and the UN Food Systems +2 Stocktaking Moment to accelerate actions towards the attainment of the SDGs including, in particular the Africa Common Position on Food Systems;
 - c. implementing policies and strategies that will support agrifood systems transformation, including through sustainable agricultural mechanization and digitalization;
 - d. accelerating actions to tackle the impacts of climate change, which represent a major threat to the African region, capitalizing on the successive COPs of UNFCCC, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and Convention on Biological Diversity through climate smart agriculture technologies and other adaptation and mitigation measures;
 - e. supporting the implementation of the Committee on World Food Security's Multi-year Programme of Work 2024-2027;
 - f. promoting the crucial importance of soils and seed systems, seizing the opportunity of the upcoming Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Summit that will be held from 7 to 9 May 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya;
 - g. participating actively in FAO's Strategic Regional Foresight Exercises, and utilizing the findings to inform our choices for the transformation of agrifood systems, the preparation of Common Country Assessments and other country-level programming exercises; and
 - h. increasing domestic savings, national and regional investment capacities to balance and complement foreign as well as private sector investments;
14. **Call upon** FAO to:
 - a. continue supporting Members in ensuring integrated and synergetic programming for the flagship initiatives and the *four betters*, namely *better production, better nutrition, a better environment* and *a better life*, leaving no one behind;
 - b. join the African Union, together with other partners, and support the implementation of the road map relating to the development of the post-Malabo agenda for action on CAADP, informed by the Africa Common Position on Food Systems for the UN Food Systems Summit;
 - c. provide experience sharing through South-South cooperation, and technical support for Blue Transformation in Africa to sustainably expand and intensify aquaculture, effectively manage all fisheries, and upgrade the value chains of aquatic foods to maximize the benefits of aquatic food systems for food security, nutrition and livelihoods, especially small-scale producers, and ensuring the inclusion of aquatic foods in nutrition and food security strategies;

- d. continue supporting national governments and other relevant stakeholders in strengthening capacities for innovation in all its dimensions, including sustainable use of farm mechanization, promoting and adopting new technologies, policies and practices;
 - e. further highlight within the regional priorities the strategic areas such as animal production, transboundary animal disease prevention and control, with emphasis on the eradication of *Peste des Petits Ruminants* (PPR), and promotion of the blue economy for economic growth and food security in the region;
 - f. support innovative financing and risk-sharing mechanisms to advance the agenda of agriculture and agrifood systems transformation;
 - g. continue supporting Members in the preparation and review of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and UNCCD action plans and their implementation;
 - h. Increase support to Members in developing integrated programmes for the implementation of agrifood systems solutions in response to CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD decisions and commitments, through technical assistance and resource mobilization (the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund and bilateral donors among others);
 - i. provide special attention to agrifood systems transformation in Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries, which face peculiar challenges;
 - j. identify, organize and disseminate or transfer the good practices in the areas of the *four betters* and initiatives, such as the Green Cities Initiative, which contribute to ecological and economic viabilities with a view to improving healthy diets and rural-urban linkages; and
 - k. strengthen its Strategic Foresight exercise at all levels in support to Members;
15. **Express** our gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting the 33rd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa, and providing excellent facilities for the Conference;
16. **Invite** the Africa Group of Permanent Representatives to the UN Rome-based Agencies, the Secretariat of the Regional Conference for Africa and the Chairperson of the 33rd Session of the Regional Conference for Africa to consult in order to make a final decision on the theme for the 34th Session of the Regional Conference for Africa to be held in 2026 in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Rabat, 20 April 2024

33rd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa

Senior Officers Meeting

26-28 March 2024

I. Introductory Items

Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons, and appointment of the Rapporteur

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

II. Programme and Budget Matters

FAO results in the region – 2022-23

Priorities for FAO in the region under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31

Harnessing science and innovation for increased agricultural productivity and competitiveness in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

Rediscovering African foods: Promoting native foods for improved nutrition, health and food security

How to fight against food loss and waste

Presentation of Reports of the Subregional Consultations

III. Regional and Global Policy and Regulatory Matters

Global and Regional Food Security Outlook

Building resilience through agrifood systems transformation

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

Country Office Network – Current Status and Way Forward: A policy paper

IV. Other Matters

Date and place of the 34th Session of the Regional Conference for Africa

Any other matters

Adoption of the Report of the Senior Officers Meeting

**Ministerial Session
18-20 April 2024**

Statement by FAO Director-General

Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council

Statement by the Chairperson of the 32nd Session of the Regional Conference for Africa (ARC 32)

Statement by the Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

Statement by the African Union Commission

Statement by the Spokesperson of the Civil Society Organizations

Statement by the Spokesperson of the Private Sector

I. Ministerial Roundtables

Financing resilient agrifood systems and inclusive rural transformation: Boosting public and private sector investment

Blue Transformation in Africa: The potential of aquatic foods

Inclusive rural transformation in Africa: Agriculture mechanization, digitalization, women and youth

Decisions of the United Nations Conference of Parties to Climate Change, Biological Diversity and Combat Desertification & FAO cross cutting strategies: Challenges and Opportunities for coordinated implementation in Africa region

Agrifood systems transformation in Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries

Foresight analysis: Drivers and triggers of agrifood systems transformation in Africa

II. Special Events

Livestock Development Strategy in Africa

Members' experience-sharing on the four betters and initiatives

The Regional Hand-in-Hand Initiative Investment Forum dialogue with partners

III. Plenary Session

Adoption of the Report of the Regional Conference

Closure of the Regional Conference

Appendix C. List of documents

33rd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa

(<https://www.fao.org/about/meetings/regional-conferences/arc33/documents/en/>)

Symbol	Title
ARC/24/1	Provisional Annotated Agenda
ARC/24/2	Global and Regional Food Security Outlook
ARC/24/3	Harnessing science and innovation for increased agricultural productivity and competitiveness in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)
ARC/24/4	Rediscovering African foods: Promoting native foods for improved nutrition, health and food security
ARC/24/5	How to fight against food loss and waste
ARC/24/6	Building resilience through agrifood systems transformation
ARC/24/7	Financing to end hunger for today and tomorrow (SDG 2)
ARC/24/8	FAO results in the region – 2022-23
ARC/24/9	Priorities for FAO in the region under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31
ARC/24/10	Country Office Network – Current Status and Way Forward: A policy paper

Information Documents

Symbol	Title
ARC/24/INF/1	Information Note
ARC/24/INF/2	Provisional Timetable
ARC/24/INF/3	Provisional List of Documents
ARC/24/INF/4	Statement by the FAO Director-General
ARC/24/INF/5	Statement by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council
ARC/24/INF/6	Statement by the Chairperson of the 32nd Session of the Regional Conference for Africa
ARC/24/INF/7	Statement by the Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)
ARC/24/INF/8	Statement by the African Union Commission
ARC/24/INF/9	Statement by the Spokesperson of the Civil Society Organizations
ARC/24/INF/10	Statement by the Spokesperson of the Private Sector
ARC/24/INF/11	Reporting on the recommendations of the 32nd Session of the Regional Conference for Africa
ARC/24/INF/12	Summary Report of recommendations of FAO Regional Statutory Bodies (forestry and wildlife, statistics, fisheries/aquaculture)
ARC/24/INF/13	An overview of FAO Africa work on conflict sensitivity and peace contributions
ARC/24/INF/14	Foresight analysis: Drivers and triggers of agrifood systems transformation in Africa
ARC/24/INF/15	Blue Transformation in Africa: The potential of aquatic foods
ARC/24/INF/16	Inclusive rural transformation in Africa: Agriculture mechanization, digitalization, women and youth
ARC/24/INF/17	Decisions in United Nations Conference of Parties to Climate Change, Biological Diversity and Combat Desertification and FAO cross cutting strategies: “Challenges and opportunities for coordinated implementation in Africa region”
ARC/24/INF/18	Agrifood systems transformation in Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries
ARC/24/INF/19	Livestock Development Strategy in Africa
ARC/24/INF/20	Financing resilient agrifood systems and inclusive rural transformation: Boosting public and private sector investment
ARC/24/INF/21	Members’ experience-sharing on the <i>four betters</i> and initiatives
ARC/24/INF/22	The Regional Hand-in-Hand Initiative Investment Forum dialogue with partners