

# FAO Saudi Arabia Newsletter

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## RAMADHAN KAREEM 2023



Women participation in agribusiness and entrepreneurship for rural development programme in Tabuk.

### Welcome Note

Ramadhan Mubarak! Greetings from FAO Saudi Arabia team. March has been quite a busy month with many milestones for Sustainable Rural Agricultural Development Project (SRAD). The SRAD-Natural Resources Management (NRM) component’s desertification team organized an informative session on United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) which was highly successful. International Women’s Day was celebrated at the UN House with the theme of digital inclusion. SRAD team conducted two new orientation training for 120 women agri-preneurs from Asir and Tabuk under the ‘WARFA initiative’. The first Farmer Field School (FFS) info session was held at Jazan and the Cereal Research Unit established by the project has started its field trials for new varieties of sorghum. The sesame demonstration farm in Jazan has shown successful results. The model livestock farm has also been established and received livestock management tools.

their perspectives on the overall importance of making desertification and land degradation top priorities for sustainable land management. This led to more discussion and clarification of the subject. The well-planned event was wrapped up with a discussion of possible benefits of implementation for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

### Cereal Research Unit at the Agricultural Research Center, Jazan

With the technical guidance of SRAD’s rain-fed cereals component, the first Cereal Research Unit has been successfully established at the Agriculture Research Center (ARC), Jazan. A small technical team was formed and initiated field trials of hybrid sorghum (15), millet (5), and sesame varieties mainly to test for yield and disease resistance against local land races. The Director of ARC, Nawazi had a discussion with Kakoli and her team and described their plans to advance research and set more field demonstrations at the ARC to increase farm productivity and water management for sorghum and other crops that are important for food security.

### Celebrating International Women’s Day

On the occasion of International Women’s Day, the United Nations in Saudi Arabia organized roundtable discussions on “DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality” celebrating the women and girls who are championing the advancement of transformative technology and digital education. Maha Dighriri from REEF of Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MEWA) participated in the event and raised awareness of the challenges and opportunities for rural Saudi women in the agriculture sector and discussed the steps being taken to tackle them.

### UNCCD Linked Training

SRAD-NRM team participated in a workshop with the topic “Training on UNCCD communication and assessing, monitoring, reporting desertification and land degradation for sustainable land management.” Participants discussed assessing and communicating desertification and land degradation while several specialists provided



Sorghum crop field trial established by the ARC.

### Promoting women-led agribusiness and entrepreneurship for rural development

The SRAD project technical team organized a three-day programme at Khamis Mushait, Abha for engaged women in agribusiness of livestock products and raised awareness of the importance of agri-cooperatives for value chain development, better linkages and assured income. The orientation was an expansion of the 'WARFA Initiative' which started in 2022. The range of topics covered included technical elements of good livestock products value chain, the importance of sustainable development; gender equality and the role of women in business, and the importance of the cooperative-led initiative. Some 44 women participants received certificates and acknowledged that the training helped them identify important constraints and how to address them.

The project team continued with a four-day workshop for women engaged in small business and agri-entrepreneurship in Tabuk. It was attended by 80 participants in two concurrent workshops held at MEWA-Tabuk's premises. Through interactive sessions, all participants received hands-on training on value addition, cooperatives, agribusiness and marketing with a particular focus on their business areas such as wool handicrafts, cosmetics, and traditional sheep products. All participants appreciated the hands-on experience in developing business plans and received certificates for their participation.

### Queen rearing and honey colony multiplication techniques training



Participants in practical queen rearing training, Rijal Alma, Asir.

The SRAD bee team organised queen-rearing and honeybee colony multiplication training for beekeepers at Rijal Alma, Asir. The majority of the practical parts of queen rearing have already been practiced by the trainees because the training was mostly hands-on. There were 155 beekeepers in total, with 85 men and 70 women attending the training and receiving the certificates.

### Livestock Demonstration Farm

The SRAD project, in collaboration with MEWA and its Livestock team in Jazan, distributed livestock management tools to the host farmer, Afrah for a model livestock farm. Speaking at the event, Husain Mashiakhi from MEWA-Jazan urged all farmers to increase good practices. A demonstration session was held for the tools used which generated high interest from the farmers and members of the livestock cooperatives. The livestock team explained the comprehensive model for sustainable livestock management, and it was welcomed by all.

### Establishing fruits demonstration farm in Hail

The SRAD sub-tropical team visited fruit growers in Hail to establish fruit demonstration farms that adhere to the criteria for demonstration farm establishment. The model demonstration farms are established to deliver hands-on training, promote improved fig tree, grape tree, and fig drying tunnel installation, and form farmer learning groups around each demonstration farm for further disseminating fruit farm technologies and practices in the region.

### Training for facilitators of Farmer Field Schools (FFS)



Participants in FFS Training with WEQAA in Riyadh.

In collaboration with the National Center for the Prevention and Control of Plant and Animal Diseases (WEQAA), FAO Saudi Arabia conducted a refreshing training for Farmer Field Schools facilitators in strengthening the capacity of the Center to act as field facilitators and assist farmers in controlling the spread of red palm weevil for dates. The Center plans to establish a number of FFS in Al-Madinah, Al-Ahsa, Najran, and Hail as a model for testing this approach as Center's future expansion initiative. The SRAD project also organized an info session on FFS for lead farmers in Jazan. Six selected lead farmers and six staff members from Agriculture Research Center, Jazan participated in the session and will be leading the next course of action in this initiative.

### Strengthening MEWA's Capacity to implement its Sustainable Rural Agricultural Development (SRAD) Programme (UTF/SAU/051/SAU)

In the framework of the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme, this project is strengthening the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MEWA) capacity to implement its Sustainable Rural Agricultural Development Programme (2019–2025). The project is being implemented with MEWA, Reef and National Cover and Vegetation Center Development and Combating Desertification (NCVC) in nine components across Saudi Arabia, i.e., coffee, beekeeping, roses, sub-tropical fruits, livestock, fisheries, rain-fed cereals, value addition and natural resources management covering forests, national parks, rangelands and controlling desertification. The main objectives of the project are to increase production and productivity while managing natural resources, promote diversification and income generation for smallholders, in particular rural youth and women.

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