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منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
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联合国
粮食及
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pour
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et
l'agriculture

Organización
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Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

TWENTY-NINTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Cairo, the Arab Republic of Egypt, 1-5 March 2008

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

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1. This document provides a brief summary of recommendations made by the regional commissions in the Near East during 2006 –2007. The commission meetings included are: the Fourth Session of the Agriculture and Land and Water Use Commission (ALAWUC); Fourth Session of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI); the Seventeenth Session of the Near East Forestry Commission (NEFC); and the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust.

I. FOURTH SESSION OF THE AGRICULTURE AND LAND AND WATER USE COMMISSION (ALAWUC)

2. The Fourth Session of ALAWUC was held in Sana'a, Yemen, 7 – 9 March 2006.
3. The Commission debated the issue of “*Plant Protection and Plant Quarantine Systems in the Near East to Enhance Plant Health and Food Safety and Promote Agricultural Exports*”. It made the following recommendations.

Recommended Action by Member Countries

- Give priority to national plant protection and plant quarantine systems (NPPOs) and strengthen their national capacities as a means for enhancing quality control, promoting exports and protecting their own production;
- Where appropriate, update and harmonize their plant quarantine and plant protection laws and legislation. Where appropriate, consider cost recovery systems to ensure a secure base for their phytosanitary systems;
- Increase public awareness in areas of plant protection, particularly regarding pest spread starting from farmers down to consumers;
- Pay more attention to capacity building regarding agricultural extension workers and activate their roles;
- Seek ways to make the best use of information available in the country and of scientific capacity available in Government and in academia;
- Seek synergies among food safety, animal health, plant health and biosafety, to make best use of resources where activities are closely related. Countries may wish to explore such synergies within a biosecurity context;
- Join the Near East Plant Protection Organizations (NEPPOs);
- Participate fully in the international standard setting process, both in plant protection (IPPC) and food safety (Codex), by enhancing national structures, to ensure that their concerns are fully taken into account;
- Participate fully in information exchange through the International Phytosanitary Portal and the International Portal on Food safety, Animal and Plant Health;
- For countries which have not yet done so, become a Contracting Party to the IPPC;
- Adopt IPM participatory approaches as a national crop protection strategy and take all necessary measures and policies to ensure effective implementation of this strategy, to improve food quality, enhance exports and protect the environment.

Recommended Action by FAO and other Organizations

- Supports activities to revise plant protection legislation, including pesticide management legislation;
- Supports activities in the Region to strengthen and update the phytosanitary systems, making full use of the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation Tool;
- Provides member countries with technical assistance to enable them to join related international and regional conventions and agreements;
- Supports activities on awareness, capacity building and information exchange for the establishment and management of the Near East Plant Protection Organization (NEPPO);

- Seeks resources to continue annual workshops on draft International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures and, in general, for participation of Contracting Parties in the Region to participate in the standard setting procedure;
- Seeks resources to assist Contracting Parties in the Region to participate in the information exchange among countries through the International Phytosanitary Portal;
- Provides technical and policy support to countries to strengthen their IPM programmes both at the levels of farmers and policy- and decision-makers.

4. The Commission also discussed the issue of “*Pathways for Improving Agriculture Water Productivity*” and agreed on the following recommendations.

Recommended Action by Member Countries

- Develop and adopt policies conducive to higher water productivity and conservation in agriculture, with due consideration to resource sustainability and pollution control, and emphasis on groundwater management and the linkages between surface water and groundwater;
- Promote agriculture water productivity improvement through awareness, technological know-how and the introduction of appropriate management tools and practices;
- Increase the level of investment in institutional capacity development at all levels, including the training of service providers and farmers, to enhance better water use efficiency and productivity as priorities of irrigated agriculture;
- Assess the feasibility of adopting water services cost recovery and related measures as a means for enhancing better agriculture water management and achieving higher productivity;
- Promote the organization of agriculture water users, including for the use of treated wastewater, and facilitate their involvement and participation in water management;
- When rehabilitating open-channel surface irrigation schemes, give due consideration to improved allocation and flexibility for demand-oriented systems that can respond quickly and effectively to farm water requirements as an effective way of improving water productivity.

Recommended Action by FAO and other Organizations

- Assist member countries in developing and adopting appropriate policies and strategies for agriculture water management, prioritizing increased water productivity and conservation, with due consideration to resource sustainability and pollution control;
- Develop guidelines and training materials on agriculture water, based on updated technologies and management tools adapted to the Near Region, and assist member countries in their implementation;
- Support member countries in setting up agriculture water users’ organizations, where relevant, and in transferring the management of irrigation schemes to them;
- Foster capacity development on agriculture water management and enhance regional cooperation on issues of regional dimension;
- Develop a regional project aimed at building the capacity of member countries to rationalize water use in agriculture;
- Prioritize cooperation among organizations concerned with agriculture water, coordinate their strategies, share information and cooperate in the promotion of water policy reforms in member countries and advocate for increased investment from all funding sources in the water sector.

5. In addition, the Commission made the following general recommendations for consideration by member countries and with the support of FAO and other concerned organizations, except as otherwise indicated:

- Identify priorities on agriculture and land and water use and elaborate focused, targeted strategies and action plans to address them;
- Give greater attention to land use, as a means of enhancing improved productivity of both land and water resources in a complementary manner;
- In response to water depletion in many parts of the Region, countries should give due consideration to policies and regulations to address the issue. In particular countries should enforce water regulations and develop and implement such regulations in cases where they do not exist;
- Promote improved efficiency and productivity of water use in agriculture, particularly through the introduction of water-saving irrigation technology where relevant, modernization of public surface irrigation schemes, the setting up of irrigation advisory services and capacity development of farmers and water service providers;
- Enhance research on technology development and the selection of crop varieties and genotypes with greater water productivity under, and tolerance of, water stress conditions;
- Develop country information systems as a means to enhance rationalization of water use in agriculture;
- Elaborate and implement a strategic vision on the development and implementation of projects, taking into consideration impact indicators, with monitoring and evaluation of sustainability of successful activities and outputs;
- Put greater focus on water harvesting and cloud seeding, through cooperation with concerned organizations and research centres, as means to address water scarcity in the Near East Region;
- Strengthening the seed sector in the Near East Region through:
 - Harmonization of seed rules and regulations through a project supported by FAO, as it is the case in other regions, such as South Africa, East Africa, West Africa and Central Asia, in order to facilitate seed trade within the Region,
 - Activation of the consultative forum which was previously established in the Region (CFS-NENA) to assist member countries on all issues related to seed sector development, and integration of the West Asia and North Africa (WANA) Seeds Network.

II. FOURTH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES (RECOFI)

6. The Fourth Session of RECOFI, held in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 7– 9 May 2007, evaluated the progress of inter-sessional activities relating to recommendations of earlier sessions, addressed regional fisheries issues of concern and reviewed plans for short- and medium-term activities. The Commission endorsed the work plan of its Working Group on Aquaculture, stressed the importance of developing and implementing National Plans of Action to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, noted the increasing importance of fish food safety, and urged RECOFI Members and FAO to increase their efforts in improving fisheries information systems and methods of reporting of stock status in the region. In examining its role, responsibilities and future challenges, the Commission decided to expand its current Working Group on Statistics to a wider Working Group on Fisheries Management. Further, the Commission made the following decisions and recommendations.

Review of Inter-sessional Activities

- FAO ought to make more effort to assist RECOFI countries in evaluating and improving their fishery statistics programmes

- Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) should examine the issue of artificial reefs as suitable nursery areas for releasing hatchery-produced fingerlings of selected species of commercial interest in the Region
- The Commission agreed that Working Group on Fisheries Statistics' (WGS's) role and functions should be described more accurately and its role expanded to handle evaluation, assessment and management as well as statistical activities, particularly in terms of sharing resources, as envisaged when the Working Group was established.

Aquaculture in the RECOFI Area

Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS)

- The Commission agreed that the WGA should take into consideration matters involving production of fingerlings for stock enhancement and collaborate with fishery experts who could be part of a proposed ad hoc Working Group on Stock Enhancement
- The Commission welcomed the offer of Bahrain to host a working group meeting on this topic as well as the Islamic Republic of Iran to organize a regional seminar to present the results and current findings from its national artificial reef programme aquaculture legal and policy framework project proposal
- The Commission endorsed the WGA work plan to: i) a develop regional strategy on aquatic animal health, ii) organize a regional workshop on sustainable marine cage aquaculture development, iii) finalize RAIS, and iv) implement the aquaculture legal and policy framework project for the next inter-sessional period.

National and Regional Measures to Address IUU Fishing

- The Commission stressed the importance of developing and implementing National Plans of Action to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing.
- The Commission took note of the outcomes of the FAO Regional Workshop on the Elaboration of NPOA-IUU in the Near East Region held December 2005 in Cairo, (RECOFI/IV/inf.10), and requested that FAO consider the possibility of organizing a workshop for all its members.
- The Commission noted lack of acceptance by many of its members of certain international instruments that are important for fisheries governance and urged all members who have not yet done so to ratify or accept these instruments.

Guidelines for Reporting Stock Status

- The Commission agreed that the proposed reporting formats contain technical issues that could be analyzed better by a more technical group, such as the WGS.
- The Commission suggested that reporting of stock status by Commission countries be further evaluated at future meeting of the WGS.

Report on the Regional Workshop on Food Safety

- The Commission suggested that more specialized courses on post harvest handling and food safety be organized in the Region in order to enhance the technical capacity of those working in the fields of fish handling, processing and trade.
- The Commission noted the increasing importance of traceability and suggested that this issue be examined through contacts with the expert groups concerned.

Report on the Regional Workshop on Fisheries Statistics in Cairo, 20 – 22 November, 2006

- The Commission suggested that further effort should be made by member countries to improve the cost-effectiveness and reliability of their statistical programmes, particularly through making use of reference material and expertise available from the FAO.

- The Commission endorsed the workshop's finding that better use should be made of available statistics.

Report on the RECOFI Capture Production Database

- The Commission suggested that guidelines for the effective use of Fishstat+ software be a subject of the next WGS meeting.

Rebuilding and Rehabilitating of Fisheries Infrastructure and Institutions in Iraq

- The Commission expressed its support to all efforts to rebuild and rehabilitate the fisheries institutions in Iraq.

III. SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE NEAR EAST FORESTRY COMMISSION (NEFC)

7. The Seventeenth Session of the Near East Forestry Commission (NEFC) was held in Larnaca, Cyprus during 5 – 9 June 2006. The Commission made the following recommendations.

Recommendations to Member Nations

- The Commission stressed the need for countries to mobilize national resources for national forest inventories and to seek complementary support from foreign sources in order to improve the information base on forest and range resources. The Commission therefore recommended that:
 - countries endeavour to undertake a proper evaluation of goods and services in order to enhance the awareness of decision-makers on the socio, economic and environmental roles of forest and trees, and to seek assistance from FAO to improve valuation methodology;
 - countries in the Region take appropriate measures to integrate forests and rangelands in national policies and development programmes;
 - countries of the Region ensure that national forest programmes take due account of water resources concerns.
- Stressing the importance of empowerment as a basis of poverty alleviation, the Commission recommended that community involvement in forest resource management be strengthened through appropriate adaptation of legislation and policies.

Recommendations to FAO

- The Commission recommended that FAO and other relevant partners provide support to national and regional academic institutions to review forestry *curricula* and increase training capacities.
- The Commission recommended that FAO consider elaborating a special code of practice for arid and semi-arid zone forestry.
- The Commission, recognizing the value and benefit of regional cooperation on forestry, especially with regard to forestry policy, forest protection and global information on forests, stressed the importance of strengthening the Regional Forestry Commissions and recommended that FAO pursue and strengthen support to the Commission Task Force or similar arrangements as well as the establishment of *ad hoc* technical working groups.
- The Commission noted the weak technical capacities in the Region and underscored the need for better sub-regional and national level forest and range resources assessment. It recommended that member countries make efforts to improve the information base on forest and range resources and that FAO support such activities upon request.

- The Commission noted that there was inadequate appreciation of the contribution of forestry to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and stressed the need to highlight the role of forests, woodlands and trees outside forests in environmental protection, watershed management and poverty alleviation, through the appropriate valuation of goods and services. It urged FAO to help countries undertake such studies.
- The Commission underscored the importance of integrating forestry in rural development initiatives and recommended that FAO provide the necessary technical guidance to countries, drawing upon its initiatives in combating hunger and poverty.

IV. TWENTY-NINTH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE COMMISSION FOR CONTROLLING THE DESERT LOCUST IN THE CENTRAL REGION

8. The Twenty-Ninth Executive Committee Meeting of the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC) was held in Sana'a, the Republic of Yemen, 20 – 24 May 2007. The Commission made the following recommendations.

- In view of the importance of Track Guidance System (TGS) in ensuring proper aerial application of pesticides and efficient monitoring of field application, the Commission should provide specifications and cost to the countries, i.e. Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.
- In order to encourage companies to purchase the TGS, spray companies in the above countries should be provided with government-purchased TGSs, with agreement to reimburse the cost at a later stage.
- Since member countries should cover their participation from their own government sources, it was noted that a several CRC member countries do not participate in the Commission Session because of fund limitations. The Executive Committee recommended that the Secretary of the Commission should address the issue of covering the cost of participation of all representatives from the countries in the sessions from the CRC Trust Fund, and ask the Director-General of FAO to include it in the agenda of the next Ministerial Meeting in order to amend it.
- All front-line countries, particularly Sudan and Yemen, should have their administrative and financial autonomy under direct supervision of the Undersecretary or the Minister OF Agriculture, and the Secretary of the Commission should follow up the matter and submit a report.
- Countries should send their updated information on spray aircraft to CRC, for easy updating and monitoring of the changes in capacities, dates, etc.
- Specifications of spray aircraft and contracting conditions and procedure should be sent to CRC.
- Desert Locust information should be exchanged directly among Locust Control Centers of frontline countries.
- Regular contact between Information Officers and field teams is needed, so the field teams will be directed to right target for survey and monitoring.
- Regular contact is needed among Directors of Locust Control Centres and Information Officers.
- Available expertise in the Central Region should be used to support the Information Offices and for training.
- A workshop should be organized for Locust Control Centre Heads and Information Officers of frontline countries on using DLIS alerts and forecasts in desert locust management and decision-making.

- Direct contact between the Locust Control Centres and the National Meteorology Services in the Central Region should be increased in order to use the information for targeted surveys and for forecasting.
- Exchange visits should be undertaken and locust bulletins shared between the Commissions of the Central and Western Regions.
- National training courses should continue to be supported to build skilled capacities in the countries.
- In view of the positive feedback concerning the performance of its graduates, it is recommended that the CRC continue its support of the Desert Locust Management Diploma.
- In view of the high cost of the diploma programme, particularly in the absence of the EMPRES funding, it is recommended to support the diploma course for the academic year 2007-2008. Thereafter, the Commission should seek financial support from donors. If this support is not secured, the financial support from CRC will be discontinued.
- The Directors of Locust Control Centres in the FAO Member Governments should continue their efforts to encourage research institutes in their countries to submit proposals and provide them with all relevant documents including priority lists, guidelines and formats.
- The Director of the Locust Control Centre in Saudi Arabia should investigate the possibility of establishing an International Centre for Desert Locust Research in Saudi Arabia. In case the concerned authorities in Saudi Arabia show a positive response, the Commission will recruit a consultant to prepare a comprehensive proposal for establishing the centre.
- The Desert Locust Glossary should be produced in hard copies as well as in electronic version.
- Stress should be placed on the recommendation made in the 25th Session of the Commission in Doha, Qatar, requesting that the Director-General of FAO address the countries that had not paid their annual contributions for last three years or more, in order to clarify their positions as members of the Commission and to settle their arrears.
- The Commission should address the need to increase the annual contributions of a number of countries to enable the Commission to implement its activities and work plan, and to delegate the Secretary and the Chairman of the Commission to visit these countries as required.
- An ad hoc meeting should be held in September 2007 in Khartoum, Sudan, to prepare a regional action plan for the coming winter campaign in the frontline countries e.g. Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Yemen and Eritrea, (the meeting took place recently in Cairo, 9 -11 September 2007).
- Commission should maintain the Web site and update it regularly. Attempts should be made to record the number of visitors and their countries.