



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Twenty-ninth Session

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Integrated water resources management and governance of tenure of water resources for food and agriculture

Executive Summary

Water is the lifeblood of the earth and is central to the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Recognizing the water management challenges, increasing demand and greater uncertainty caused by climate change, FAO Governing Bodies have endorsed various guidance documents to guide the Organization's work on water, including the *Management Response to the Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6*, *FAO's Conceptual framework for integrated land and water resources management*, and the approval by the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference in July 2023 of the "Biennial Theme 2024-25: Water resources management for the four betters: better production, better nutrition, better environment and better life, to achieve Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals".

This document provides a comprehensive update on FAO's work on integrated water resources management (IWRM) since the 28th Session of the COAG, held in 2022, including FAO's "Water Journey" and contributions to global dialogues and mechanisms, mainstreaming water into the Organization's Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) and normative work, progress made on water tenure governance through country pilot activities, and regional and global dialogues.

Moreover, the document highlights the future priorities in support of the implementation of *FAO's Conceptual framework for integrated land and water resources management* and related decisions by the Governing Bodies, the further development of the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) and work on water tenure governance.

Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- underline* the central role of integrated water resources management to achieve food security and nutrition;
- acknowledge* FAO's Conceptual framework for integrated land and water resources management, and progress made to date in its implementation;
- encourage* Members to support the implementation of FAO's Conceptual framework for integrated land and water resources management and related decisions of the Governing

Bodies on integrated land and water resources management, water tenure and the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG);

- d) *take note of* progress made by FAO in assessing water tenure arrangements, and organizing the Global Dialogue on Water Tenure, and *provide further guidance* on the dialogue process and objectives;
- e) *encourage* Members to actively engage in the Global Dialogue on Water Tenure in identifying and agreeing upon the principles for the responsible governance of water tenure;
- f) *encourage* Members to join the WASAG and participate in the High-Level Dialogue on WASAG, to be held on 17 October 2024, and support resource mobilization efforts to make WASAG an effective and impactful partnership to address water scarcity challenges.

Queries on the substantive content of the document may be addressed to:

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I. Background

1. Water is the lifeblood of the earth and is central to the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹ However, with a rapidly growing global population, economic development and urbanization, there are increasing and competing demands for freshwater for all sectors and the environment, while resources are becoming increasingly scarce. Global water demand is projected to increase by 30 percent by 2050.² Currently, more than 2.3 billion people live in water stressed countries and 733 million people in areas of high or critical water stress.³ The water challenge facing countries is threefold: increasing water scarcity, more frequent and severe floods, and deteriorating water quality.

2. Agriculture both contributes to and is affected by water stress. Agriculture is by far the largest user, accounting for 72 percent of global water withdrawals, mostly for irrigation.⁴ Yet, to answer to the demand of a projected global population of 10 billion in 2050, agricultural production will need to increase by almost 50 percent,⁵ with much of this growth being achieved through irrigation.

3. The central role of integrated water resources management (IWRM) for achieving food security and nutrition is well recognized in FAO as reflected in key publications and decisions by the Governing Bodies, including:

- *The State of the World's Land and Water Resources for Food and Agriculture – Systems at a breaking point (SOLAW21)*⁶ report;
- Document CL171/6 *Integrated water resources management for food security and climate resilience*;⁷
- The Management's Response to the *Evaluation of FAO's contribution to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (PC133/5 Sup.1)*;⁸
- Document JM2023.2/2 *Implementation of integrated water resources management: progress and needs*;⁹
- Document PC137/6 *FAO's Conceptual framework for integrated land and water resources management*;¹⁰ and
- Documents of the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference: C2023/2 *The State of Food and Agriculture: Integrated Water Resources Management*;¹¹ and C2023/30 *Biennial Theme 2024-25: Water resources management for the four betters: better production, better nutrition,*

¹ UN-Water. 2016. *Water and Sanitation Interlinkages across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. <https://www.unwater.org/sites/default/files/app/uploads/2016/08/Water-and-Sanitation-Interlinkages.pdf>

² Under a Business-as-Usual Scenario, FAO. 2021. *The State of the World's Land and Water Resources for Food and Agriculture - Systems at breaking points. Synthesis report 2021*. Rome. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cb7654en>

³ FAO and UN Water. 2021. *Progress on the level of water stress: Global status and acceleration needs for SDG indicator 6.4.2, 2021*. Rome. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cb6241en>

⁴ FAO and UN Water. 2021. Op. cit.

⁵ FAO. 2017. *The future of food and agriculture – Trends and challenges*. Rome. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/2e90c833-8e84-46f2-a675-ea2d7afa4e24/content>

⁶ The synthesis report of SOLAW21 has been launched in December 2021 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cb9910en>

⁷ CL171/6 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/ebcc6c7a-5ed7-48f8-9483-f0e0fde7c6d8/content>

⁸ PC 133/5 Sup.1 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/d626f9e0-8c79-4e70-b9e7-4772ff0a877d/content>

⁹ JM 2023.2/2 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/137fb9db-b3c1-444a-8a3f-ed4b2212e7d8/content>

¹⁰ PC 137/6 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/NN077EN>

¹¹ C 2023/2 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/efc7f055-1c0a-485c-9b2a-fef65ee2ef21/content>

better environment and better life, to achieve Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals;¹² and the Report of the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference.¹³

4. While the document *Implementation of integrated water resources management: progress and needs¹⁴* presented to the 137th Session of the Programme Committee and the 198th Session of the Finance Committee in November 2023 provided a comprehensive update on the progress, this document highlights further major progress since the 28th Session of COAG (18-22 July 2022) and puts forward future priorities for the consideration of COAG 29.

II. Key progress in implementing integrated water resources management (IWRM)

A. FAO's Water Journey and contribution to global dialogues and mechanisms

5. **Rome Water Dialogues:** The first Rome Water Dialogue¹⁵ took place at FAO headquarters on 29 November 2022, with over 700 participants online during the opening session, and over 80 in-person participants. At the event, the importance of water to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in all three dimensions of sustainable development was presented, and FAO's Director-General announced FAO's new "Water Journey" – a process within FAO to understand and incorporate IWRM into FAO's work to achieve food security and better nutrition.

6. Following the first edition of the Rome Water Dialogue and building on the UN 2023 Water Conference, the second Rome Water Dialogue,¹⁶ was held in October 2023 in a hybrid format over two days. This second edition was structured around eight thematic sessions and provided further opportunity to discuss FAO's engagement during the 2024-2025 biennium - and FAO's "Water Journey". Given the importance of the integrated management of water, soils and land resources, the 2023 Rome Water Dialogue coincided with and benefited from the Global Symposium on Soils and Water, with a joint reporting back to Plenary and closing sessions.

7. The third Rome Water Dialogue will be fully integrated into the World Food Forum, to be held from 14 to 18 October 2024, with dedicated sessions on water and youth, science and innovation for water, and irrigation mapping for investment in water at the *Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum*.

8. **Global Water Action Agenda:** FAO was actively engaged in the UN 2023 Water Conference, held in March 2023 in New York, and submitted eight commitments to the Water Action Agenda: (i) National Water Roadmaps towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (ii) Global Dialogue on Water Tenure; (iii) Financing integrated drought management; (iv) Global irrigation needs and potential mapping; (v) Global Water Data Portal; (vi) Remote Sensing Technologies for Water Productivity; (vii) Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) and Praia Call for Action; and (viii) AQUALEX. FAO continues to mobilize resources to advance these actions.

9. **World Food Day (WFD) 2023:** leading up to 16 October 2023 under the theme "Water is life, water is food. Leave no one behind", the five-month WFD campaign stressed the critical role of water in underpinning food security. FAO's global call to action mobilized multiple stakeholders - from governments and the private sector to civil society and individuals, including youth - urging collective efforts to better manage and protect water. It reached stakeholders in over 45 languages through more than 450 events in over 150 countries, hundreds of TV and radio stations, thousands of news articles and 4.1 billion social media accounts. This helped to raise FAO's global leadership and visibility on water matters.

10. **WASAG:** the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) hosted its Second International Forum in Praia, the Republic of Cabo Verde, from 2 to 7 February 2023, with

¹² C 2023/30 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/4eb091d7-c09d-44f7-a1fb-7854b20e8259/content>

¹³ C 2023/REP <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/f1f7c772-8139-4931-ac88-12dc5f927220/content>

¹⁴ JM2023.2/2. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/137fb9db-b3c1-444a-8a3f-ed4b2212e7d8/content>

¹⁵ Rome Water Dialogue. <https://www.fao.org/events/detail/rome-water-dialogue/en>

¹⁶ Rome Water Dialogue. 2023 <https://www.fao.org/events/detail/rome-water-dialogue-2023/en>

the participation of 300 in-person delegates and 1 500 online participants from 80 countries overall. The Forum adopted the Praia Call for Action,¹⁷ calling on all Members to join WASAG with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as a new Member.

11. On 29-30 April 2024, a meeting **Towards a High-Level Dialogue on the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) – Technical Preparatory Meeting**¹⁸ was organized in a hybrid format (at FAO headquarters and online). The meeting discussed the proposal of establishing a Member-led Steering Committee of WASAG, a draft Rome Declaration on Water Scarcity and the future operating modalities of WASAG. Consultations on these proposals will be continued in preparation for the High-Level Dialogue on WASAG, which will be held on 17 October 2024 during the World Food Forum. Further information on WASAG is provided in the document COAG/2024/INF/8.

12. **UN system-wide strategy on water and sanitation:** as a core member of UN-Water, FAO contributed to the development of the UN system-wide strategy on water and sanitation that aims to strengthen the coordination among UN Agencies in supporting countries in delivering SDG 6. The strategy was approved by the UN system High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) in March 2024, and endorsed by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in April 2024. Furthermore, the First Collaborative Implementation Plan (CIP) 2025-2028 was developed and was discussed by the UN-Water Principals in July 2024. The CIP also includes key initiatives that FAO committed to at the UN 2023 Water Conference.

13. **Partnership for water resilient food systems:** building on the global momentum from the UN Food Systems Summit and the UN 2023 Water Conference, FAO, together with key partners including the National Determined Contribution (NDC) Partnership, launched a two-year partnership that will support countries to better integrate water and food systems management – for both adaptation and mitigation – in national climate plans, namely the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and NDCs.

14. **The 10th World Water Forum:** FAO participated in the 10th edition of the World Water Forum in Bali, the Republic of Indonesia, from 18 to 25 May 2024, and played a key role in the Forum's discussions by organizing a High-Level Special Session on National Water Roadmaps during which the Organization officially launched its initiative *National Water Roadmaps towards the 2030 Agenda*, together with seven participating countries and other partners. FAO also organized thematic sessions on non-conventional water use, drought management, water data and information, irrigation, circular water resources management, water quality, water tenure and governance, and co-convened several other political and thematic sessions.

15. **Water being a priority at FAO Governing Bodies:** built upon discussions during the Joint Meeting of the 134th Session of the Programme Committee and the 194th Session of the Finance Committee in November 2022, and the 171st Session of the Council in December 2022, the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference in July 2023 approved the “Biennial Theme 2024-25: *Water resources management for the four betters: better production better nutrition, better environment and better life, to achieve Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals* acknowledged that transforming agrifood systems to achieve the SDGs will require both sustainable and efficient water use in irrigated and rainfed agriculture and integrated water resources management (IWRM); emphasized that water resources management needs to be integrated at all levels, inclusive of all stakeholders, and coherent across relevant sectors; stressed that integrated and inclusive water resources management should be supported by improved water governance to ensure efficient, sustainable and equitable water allocation and usage; and requested FAO to further develop programmatic initiatives on flood and disaster risk management and utilization of flood water.¹⁹ These

¹⁷ WASAG – The Praia Call for Action. <https://www.fao.org/wasag/news/2nd-wasag-forum/praiia-call-for-action/en/>

¹⁸ *Towards a High-Level Dialogue on the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG)*. <https://www.fao.org/wasag/news/towards-high-level-dialogue/en/>

¹⁹ C 2023/30 REP. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/4eb091d7-c09d-44f7-a1fb-7854b20e8259/content>

decisions made at the strategic and highest corporate level, recognized the importance of water for food security and nutrition and guided FAO's work on water.

16. During the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference in July 2023, FAO organized three High-Level Ministerial Roundtables: Water Scarcity; Integrated Flood Risk Management; and Water Infrastructure. These Roundtables built a shared understanding on the topics discussed and their impacts on agrifood systems, discussing the recommendations and need for potential work by FAO on IWRM for resilient agrifood systems.

17. The 37th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Near East (NERC), held in Amman, Jordan in February-March 2024, addressed water use efficiency and water productivity within sustainability boundaries for resilient transformation of agrifood systems in the Near East and North Africa Region (NENA)²⁰ as a key challenge to the agricultural development of the Region.

18. The 33rd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa (ARC), held in Rabat, the Kingdom of Morocco in March and April 2024, identified "irrigation and water management with a view to making agriculture more resilient to climate extremes" as one of the seven priorities for FAO's support and requested the Organization to continue supporting Members in building resilience for accelerating agrifood systems transformation through supporting "water infrastructure for food security and nutrition", as well as for water security.

19. The 38th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC), held in Georgetown, Guyana in March 2024, requested FAO to: (i) continue mobilizing resources towards climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as conservation and restoration of ecosystems, biodiversity, sustainable water management and soil conservation to improve the sustainability, resilience and efficiency of agrifood systems; and (ii) support Members in the improvement of water management, through the development of policies, capacity development, knowledge exchange, and technological and social innovation.

20. The 34th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC), held at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy in May 2024, recognized the multidimensional approach of water resource management for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

21. Considering the FAO biennial theme 2024-25, water has been also tabled by the FAO Technical Committees, and will be discussed at the upcoming 36th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) (8-12 July 2024), under the agenda item *Integrated water resources management (IWRM) in fisheries and aquaculture*, the Second Session of the COAG Sub-committee on Livestock (16-18 July 2024) under the agenda item *Managing soil, land and water resources for sustainable livestock production*, and the 27th Session of the Committee of Forestry (COFO) (22-26 July 2024) under the agenda item *Contribution of forestry to FAO's work on climate change and integrated water management*.

B. Mainstreaming water into FAO's Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) and normative work

22. Since the 28th Session of COAG, held in 2022, FAO developed both an organizational framework for IWRM and launched several programmatic initiatives focusing on it.

23. **FAO's Conceptual framework for integrated land and water resources management:** in response to the Evaluation of FAO's contribution to SDG 6 and FAO's Management Response to it, FAO developed a Conceptual framework for Integrated Land and Water Resources Management.²¹ The Framework provides a corporate-level vision on the land, soil and water resources for food security, programmatic actions on IWRM and operational means and partnerships, fully aligned with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31. The Conceptual framework was recommended for Council

²⁰ NERC/24/INF/22 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/0d496e1f-e41a-4179-b2e5-85e17e5d84d1/content>

²¹ PC 176/6 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/NN077EN>

endorsement by the 137th Session of the Programme Committee in November 2023,²² and endorsed by the FAO Council at its 174th Session in December 2023.²³

24. **AWSAME:** The implementation of the Value-Added Impact Area (VAIA) on *Addressing Water Scarcity in Agriculture and Environment* (AWSAME) started with the development of four global project proposals to promote indigenous drought-resilient and nutritious crops and saline agriculture to cope with water scarcity. AWSAME has developed a compendium on indigenous drought resilient and nutritious crops and will pilot them in Cabo Verde, Malawi, Morocco and South Sudan. AWSAME used WASAG's *Farmers' guidelines on soil and water management on salt affected areas* to train farmers, extension officers and researchers on saline agriculture and halophytes in Cabo Verde and Uzbekistan.

25. **SoLaWISE:** The first phase of the *Soil-Land-Water Information System* (SoLaWISE) initiative was launched and supported by USD 500 000 from FAO's Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanism (FMM) for 2023. The following countries across four regions have been selected for the development of the methodological framework and related tools: Colombia, Mozambique, Pakistan, and Tunisia.

26. **AQUASTAT:** The new AQUASTAT Dissemination Platform²⁴ is now available, resulting in improved speed and responsiveness for data download with a more user-friendly interface. AQUASTAT has also developed its geospatial platform – AQUAMAPS²⁵ – to complement the statistical data with disaggregated geospatial data.

27. **Mapping irrigation needs and potential:** FAO launched a new initiative to map national irrigation needs and potential for irrigation planning and development. The initiative introduces a multi-criteria framework to assess and reconcile the needs and the potential of irrigation. Beyond the assessment of biophysical suitability, it identifies and ranks areas with a solid socio-economic rationale for irrigation development. The framework is developed through a global consultative process including governments, financial institutions, private sector, and communities. The first consultative meeting was held in December 2023 with the attendance of 14 organizations from different stakeholder groups. Multiple countries have already joined the initiative, covering two regions. The goal is to gradually expand participation.

28. **Drought management:** FAO's comprehensive programme aims to tackle the multiple dimensions of drought and support countries' preparedness. It supports the Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought, the development of the Drought Toolbox and National Drought Plans (NDPs), capacity-building for the implementation of NDPs, institutional frameworks, and drought vulnerability assessment, monitoring and reporting. A series of regional workshops were organized in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Asia and the Pacific to enhance capacities in the effective implementation of NDPs, strengthen institutional mechanisms and adoption of gender-based approaches, and document in-country best practices for co-learning.

29. To support countries' preparedness, drought vulnerability assessment methodologies and a manual for drought risk profiles were developed with case studies, in order to illustrate national best practices for vulnerability assessments. Additionally, a web-based application, the Drought Vulnerability and Impact Assessment Platform (D-VIAP), is under development to support quantitative evaluations of drought risks and impacts.

30. **Drought Finance Tracker:** To raise awareness on the need for increased financial efforts, a digital tool - the Drought Finance Tracker²⁶ - has been developed to provide statistics and analyses on drought finance.

²² CL 147/8, Para 10 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/0ff05a46-1873-4959-8f2b-33cbb5a17aa8/content>

²³ CL 174/REP, Para 22c <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/ea99cfa4-a841-44b3-928c-823eca7c3da7/content>

²⁴ FAO. Aquastat <https://data.apps.fao.org/aquastat/>

²⁵ FAO. Aquamaps <https://data.apps.fao.org/aquamaps/?lang=en>

²⁶ FAO. Drought Finance Tracker <https://www.fao.org/in-action/drought-portal/drought-finance-tracker/en>

31. An **FAO Drought Portal**²⁷ is being developed as a global knowledge-sharing platform to foster the transition from crisis-led and reactive responses to risk-based and proactive measures in Integrated Drought Management (IDM), for resilient agriculture and improved food security. The portal includes FAO's project database on IDM and knowledge resources to foster the translation of policies into actions, in line with the call of the 15th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), held in Abidjan, the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, from 9 to 20 May 2022, for halting land degradation and building drought resilience.
32. **Regional Water Scarcity Initiatives (WSI):** FAO has been supporting the NENA countries through the WSI in coping with one of their most striking challenges, the pursuit of food and water securities, through enhancement of cross-sectoral coordination, leveraging partnerships to advance informed strategic planning management, improving water productivity and water efficiency in both rainfed and irrigated farming systems and advancing the use of non-conventional water resources. FAO and partners have developed the action-oriented *Inter-Regional Technical Platform on Water Scarcity* (iRTP-WS) to collect and disseminate up-to-date innovations and best practices among experts, stakeholders and donors.²⁸
33. Water scarcity is increasing in Asia and the Pacific Region, even in seasonally wet tropical countries that have historically been viewed as having plentiful water resources. Building upon the experience and lessons learned from the WSI for NENA, FAO developed a five-year Water Scarcity Programme (WSP) for Asia and the Pacific that focuses on practical aspects of water accounting, allocation and associated adaptation in agricultural water management.
34. **Integrated flood management:** FAO's new technical Report *on Integrated flood management for resilient agrifood systems and rural development* (2023) provides a comprehensive perspective on the impact of flooding in rural areas and proposes integrated solutions and recommendations that improve flood resilience in rural areas and offer multiple long-term benefits for people and nature.²⁹
35. **Water Productivity through Open access of Remotely sensed derived data (WaPOR):** With support from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, WaPOR has been freely providing users with near real time data (every 10 days) since 2017. In 2023, the programme has undergone major improvements, and currently it covers the whole globe with a spatial resolution of 300 metres. Data on water productivity and other related variables lend themselves to a variety of uses, such as irrigation scheduling advice for farmers, monitoring and improving agricultural production, water accounting, irrigation performance assessment, drought monitoring, assistance for transhumance, among others.
36. **National Water Roadmaps:** during the UN 2023 Water Conference, FAO presented its new initiative *National Water Roadmaps towards the 2030 Agenda*. This initiative entails a country-led water dialogue and country-owned National Water Roadmaps or strategies that will help to strengthen the inter-sectoral coordination on water resources management and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through this initiative, FAO is supporting Members, upon request, in the development of country-specific National Water Roadmaps through country-led dialogues and participatory processes. This initiative was officially launched during the 10th World Water Forum that took place in Bali, Indonesia, from 18 to 26 May 2024, joined by high-level representatives of six participating countries and the People's Republic of China, that provided financial support to the initiative through the South-South Cooperation Trust Fund.
37. **AQUALEX:** the world's largest open-access free online collection of national and international freshwater-related laws and policies provides free and open access to such texts (at this date approximately 22 000). The texts are all indexed, and the full text is available, either translated or in the original language. In addition, AQUALEX provides selected country and transboundary water legal expert reports and various advanced search functions, and covers the whole range of freshwater

²⁷ FAO. Drought portal <https://www.fao.org/in-action/drought-portal/en>

²⁸ FAO. Inter-Regional Technical Platform on Water Scarcity <https://www.fao.org/platforms/water-scarcity/about/en>

²⁹ FAO. 2023. Integrated flood management for resilient agrifood systems and rural development. Rome. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cc9058en>

issues, including but not limited to, governance, water supply, use of water in agriculture and aquaculture, water and the environment, and climate change.

III. Governance of Tenure of Water Resources for Food and Agriculture

38. In view of increasing water allocation challenges, COAG, at its 28th Session,³⁰ held in 2022, “*recommended* FAO to undertake an assessment of existing water tenure arrangements and their components, building on FAO’s work to date; *recommended* FAO, in close collaboration with relevant UN agencies, to support Members, upon request, in building and developing capacities to produce data on available and actual use of water resources for agriculture; *recommended* FAO, in close collaboration with relevant UN agencies, to initiate a Global Dialogue on Water Tenure on matters that include water rights’ administration, tenure arrangements within water user organizations, and to provide regular updates to the Committee on Agriculture; and, *encouraged* Members to participate in a series of exchanges among countries at regional and global levels, including through the Global Dialogue on Water Tenure, in identifying principles for the responsible governance of water tenure.”³¹

39. FAO developed a methodological framework to assess water tenure arrangements as part of a comprehensive water resources assessment with a view of improving water allocation systems. The methodology has been applied in five countries (Indonesia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam), and is currently being implemented in Cambodia, Colombia and Thailand.³² The water tenure assessment methodology will be published in the course of 2024. The country experiences on water tenure assessment were widely publicized by FAO during the World Water Day 2023,³³ and on the UN-wide observance website on World Water Day 2024: Water for Peace and Prosperity.³⁴

40. FAO officially launched the Global Dialogue on Water Tenure at the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York in March 2023. The Organization presented the Global Dialogue as a commitment to the water action agenda.³⁵

41. As part of the Global Dialogue on Water Tenure process, FAO has consulted with the UN Water Task Force on Country Level Engagement on the Dialogue. A regional consultation with participation of more than 40 African countries, held in Harare, the Republic of Zimbabwe from 22 to 24 February 2023, recommended: (i) to create multi—stakeholder national and regional dialogues and to define principles for a responsible governance of water tenure; (ii) to recognize customary water tenure systems, also in conjunction with land, forests, and fisheries rights; and (iii) to strengthen the enabling environment including through capacity development at all levels, to implement agreed principles on water tenure governance, and to provide for its regular review and reform.

42. In October 2023, the Global Dialogue on Water Tenure was featured at a side event of the 51st Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS 51), co-sponsored by six countries and partners from academia and civil society. In 2024, the Dialogue was featured at several global events: the 10th World Water Forum, World Bank Land Conference, as well as Stockholm World Water Week.

43. The Government of Germany is funding a three-year global project *Scaling up capacities for water tenure for food security, social inclusion and climate resilience* (November 2023 – October 2026) in support of the Global Dialogue. The project provides conceptual support to the dialogue process, supports the organization of multistakeholder dialogues on responsible governance of water tenure in Latin America and in South-East Asia regions, as well as in two countries - Colombia and Thailand, and develops countries’ capacities on water accounting and water tenure assessment.

³⁰ COAG/2022/15 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b48e286a-9109-4637-95e5-3aa752875a18/content>

³¹ C/2023/22, para 21. <https://www.fao.org/3/nj925en/nj925en.pdf>

³² FAO. KnoWat <https://www.fao.org/in-action/knowat/assessment/country-assessments/en/>

³³ <https://www.fao.org/fao-stories/article/en/c/1634593/>. (link to be updated)

³⁴ UN World Water Day <https://www.un.org/en/observances/water-day>

³⁵ UN Global Dialogue on Water Tenure. <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/global-dialogue-water-tenure>

IV. The Way forward: priorities

44. **Implementation of FAO's Conceptual framework:** following the endorsement by the 137th Session of the Programme Committee in November 2023, and the 171st Session of the FAO Council in December 2022, the implementation of *FAO's Conceptual framework for integrated land and water resources management* is ongoing through PPAs, VAIsAs, impactful partnerships and relevant programmes and projects, including those submitted for resources from vertical funds. Additionally, as recommended by the Programme Committee, an assessment on resources and capacity is currently being conducted, which will provide an overview of FAO's existing capacity and available resources to implement this Conceptual framework and suggest actions to address capacity gaps and mobilize resources.

45. **WASAG:** the High-Level Dialogue on WASAG, which will take place on 17 October 2024 during the World Food Forum,³⁶ is expected to adopt a 'Rome Declaration on Water Scarcity in Agriculture' as well as new operating mechanisms providing for an interface between technical expertise and policy for increasing the impact of WASAG. A draft declaration will be submitted to Members for comments before the High-Level Dialogue (see COAG/2024/INF/8).

46. **Governance of Water tenure:** In Asia and the Pacific Region, a regional dialogue on water tenure will be organized in Bangkok, the Kingdom of Thailand in December 2024, as part of the International Land, Soil and Water Forum. In Latin America, a regional dialogue on water tenure is planned for mid-2025. A side event at COAG 29 is proposed to present the results of FAO's work on water tenure.

47. **UN System-wide Strategy on Water and Sanitation:** through its IWRM actions, FAO contributes to the collaborative implementation plan 2025-2028 of the UN system-wide strategy on water and sanitation which was adopted by the UN High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) in March 2024. The Plan will be discussed by the UN Water Principals in July 2024, and its implementation will be assessed during the UN Water Conferences in 2026 and 2028.

³⁶ COAG/2024/INF/8