

December 2010



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THIRTIETH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Khartoum, the Republic of the Sudan, 4 – 8 December 2010

**Report on FAO Activities in the Region in 2008-09 and Actions Taken on
the Main Recommendations of the 29th Regional Conference for the Near
East**

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I. Introduction

1. The 30 Member Countries of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East represent 10 percent of the world population, 6 percent of the world agricultural labor force and contribute about five percent of the world Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Nonetheless, in 2005–2007 the Region was home to some 93 million hungry people, equal to about ten percent of the world's hungry. In 2000–2002 the number of undernourished in the region had been estimated at 88 million.
2. As shown in Table 1, huge disparities exist among Region countries in terms of the level and prevalence of undernourishment and in the progress in meeting MDG targets on hunger. About 80 percent of the undernourished people in the region live in Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia and Yemen. However, it is worth noting that in more than half the Region countries, the proportion of undernourished people is less than five percent of their total populations.

II. Actions Taken for the Implementation of the 29th FAO Regional Conference Recommendations

3. General Recommendations

a) Provide the necessary technical support, in collaboration with ICARDA, on the Black Stem Rust wheat disease known as Ug99;

FAO launched its Wheat Rust Disease Global Programme (WRDGP) in July 2008 to complement the efforts of its research partners in the Borlaug Global Rust Initiative (BGRI). Through this programme, covering 29 countries, including those in the Near East, FAO is taking the lead in supporting national governments in their preparedness to manage the Ug99 threat.

b) Continue its efforts for the establishment of the Animal Health Commission for the Near East and North Africa (AHCNENA);

Two follow-up meetings were held in Cairo. The meetings recommended that each member country donate no less than USD 10 000, establish an information network and a database for animal diseases and issue quarterly reports on avian influenza.

c) Assistance to countries to increase their investment in agriculture;

Country case studies on investment in agriculture were prepared for Egypt, Morocco and Sudan.

4. Round Table Discussions on Climate Change: Implications for Agriculture in the Near East

d) Provide assistance in formulating strategies and action plans for drought mitigation and early warning;

A regional workshop on *Drought Management and Preparedness in the Region* was held in November 2008. Assistance also included: capacity building in Syria for the implementation of the country's national drought strategy; launching a drought-mitigation plan for the West Bank and Gaza; and, elsewhere in the Region, promoting the inclusion of drought measures within the framework of several on-going projects.

A drought-planning manual, *Guidelines for Drought Mitigation and Preparedness Planning*, was produced by the FAO Regional Office and widely distributed in the Region.

e) Prepare studies that would examine possible impact of climate change on agriculture, food security and natural resources;

An FAO multi-disciplinary Working Group has conducted a review of the likely climate change impacts in the Region and has prepared a regional “multi-disciplinary project concept note” to address these impacts, focusing on adaptation and mitigation measures.

f) To assist member countries in the promotion of practices that reduces greenhouse gas emissions;

FAO participated actively in a series of meetings aiming at advocating policies and promoting practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These included: the meeting of the – International Secretariat for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) in Cairo to launch the Regional Centre for Disaster Reduction; the ISDR meeting in Jeddah, called to prepare an Arab strategy for climate change adaptation and mitigation; and, also in Cairo, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Climate Change.

g) Work with concerned international, regional and national organizations to improve the use of tools to assess the impact of weather conditions on crops;

Together with the World Bank and the Moroccan Government, FAO conducted a study on the *Impact of Climate Change on Moroccan Agriculture Toward the end of the 21st Century*.

h) Provide technical assistance to member countries to study how small farmers could benefit from opportunities within the framework of the Clean Development Mechanism (including the carbon tax);and

FAO and several other UN organizations are working closely with the Egyptian and Jordanian authorities for the implementation of a Joint Programme on Climate Change Risk Management that is designed to help these two countries mitigate risks of climate change with a view towards achieving MDGs and preparing for the next phase of the Kyoto Protocol.

i) Promote the integration of climate change preparedness, biodiversity conservation, and desertification control into natural resources management programmes and activities in the Region.

These issues have been addressed in the above-mentioned multidisciplinary concept note.

5. Near East Agriculture Towards 2050: Prospects and Challenges

j) Ensure that future studies include alternative policy scenarios and their implications on the Region;

FAO, in collaboration with the World Bank and IFAD, conducted a comprehensive study on *Improving Food Security in the Region*.

k) Support member countries in developing studies for their agricultural sectors by 2030 or 2050;

FAO provided assistance to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Yemen in formulating food and agriculture development strategies through 2015-30 that are based on a comprehensive assessment of long-term perspectives in food and agriculture.

l) Organize expert consultations on key policy issues involving the rapid expansion of bioenergy use;

In June 2008, FAO organized a regional workshop on *Expansion in Bio-fuels and Soaring Food Prices and their Implications for Agricultural and Food Policies* that was attended by 12 countries.

In addition, FAO organized a regional symposium on *Oil Trees for Energy Production and for Valorization of Marginal Land and Water Resources* in Luxor, Egypt, in February 2009.

m) Facilitate analysis of sector trends in updating disease control plans that reflect reports and statistical material developed by FAO;

FAO established decentralized units of the Emergency Center for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) in Beirut (for the Middle East/Gulf Countries) and in Tunis (for North Africa) and developed and implemented an action plan for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) preparedness and response in the Region. The Action Plan provided a framework for improved and coordinated disease control strategies through networking activities, including laboratory, epidemiology, and communication networks and socio-economic studies. Technical advice was provided on disease recognition and sampling techniques, information systems, compensation policies, vaccine and vaccination efficacy, marketing structures and targeted surveillance (including wildlife) and international standards requirements. In addition, a regional training workshop on *Epidemiology Data and Organization for Effective Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases* was held in Cairo in February 2009.

Other regional workshops were organized by ECTAD on surveillance and diagnosis of avian influenza in Amman (November 2008) and on poultry biosecurity concepts and practices in Damascus (July 2009).

FAO's Crisis Management Centre – Animal Health responded to urgent request by Morocco for assistance in controlling an outbreak of peste des petits ruminants (PPR). The support provided by TCE and AGAH (including FAO/IAEA Joint Division expertise) supported Moroccan authorities to contain the outbreak and prevent further spread of PPR to neighboring countries.

n) Support sharing of plans within the Region to contain outbreaks quickly and with minimal socio-economic damage;

Socio-economic studies were conducted in several pilot countries to study market chains and ways to mitigate market shocks and the impact of animal diseases on poor farming communities. National preparedness plans have also been studied in selected countries to ensure that their responses to the disease are designed to protect not only overall biodiversity but the livelihoods of the most vulnerable. A regional workshop on *Improvement of Small Ruminant Production in the Near East* convened in Tunisia in November 2009.

o) Support member countries in conducting national and regional risk assessments of TADs;

FAO provided technical assistance for accreditation of rinderpest freedom according to the pathway set by the OIE (Office International des Epizooties) as well as for control of TADs and other zoonoses such as foot and mouth disease, Rift Valley fever and brucellosis. A regional training workshop on *Camel Health and Transboundary Animal Diseases* was held in Tunisia in March 2009.

In addition, a technical meeting was organized in Rome on *Brucella melitensis Infections in Eurasia and the Middle East*. Another training workshop, this time on *Risk Assessment and Epidemiology Surveillance for the Effective Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases*, convened in Cairo in October 2009.

The FAO developed and promoted Progressive Control Pathway for foot-and-mouth disease held workshops in the region (Shiraz, Iran 2008; and Istanbul, Turkey 2009) to validate regional roadmaps for disease prevention and control, including the identification of critical control points for intervention and surveillance.

A disease information database developed by FAO (TADinfo) was deployed in several countries of the region (Egypt, Iraq, Oman, WBSG and Yemen) for better animal disease information management.

p) Assist members to safeguard human as well as animal health and wealth;

During the year, FAO convened three regional capacity building workshops: (i) A workshop on *Milk Chain from Stable to Table in Countries of Near East and North Africa* was held in Amman in November 2008; (ii) a workshop on *Animal Identification, Traceability and Performance Recording* convened in Aleppo in February 2009; and (iii) a workshop to discuss *Rift Valley Disease Recognition Epidemiology and Preparedness Plans* held in Tunis in July 2009. A working session of RVF forecasting models for the Middle East was held during in Paris with the OIE (May 2009).

FAO staff have participated on several OIE-led missions to countries in the region for the evaluation and performance of the veterinary services and gap analysis.

6. Global and Regional Emergency Issues

q) Pay particular attention to requirements for capacity building;

In close cooperation with ICARDA, short and long-term training programmes were provided in wheat rust race analysis and trap nurseries to researchers from: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Eritrea, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Yemen, Sudan, and Syria, as well as other countries outside the Region.

r) Continue to coordinate closely with other UN agencies;

Complementary training on the management and assessment of trap nurseries (in close cooperation with ICARDA and CIMMYT) has been provided to scientists from Eritrea, Egypt, Pakistan, Turkey, Yemen, Sudan, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The “One Health” agenda which encompasses a multidisciplinary and integrated approach to disease prevention and control at the human-animal-environment interface provides the backbone of the animal health strategy recently developed for Near East countries. The One Health initiative fosters strong collaboration with WHO and OIE and is to engage other relevant partners and stakeholders (i.e., UMA and GCC).

In Egypt, FAO, WHO, UNICEF and UNSIC/UNRC undertook a joint United Nations assessment of government control efforts against H5N1 influenza virus of avian origin. The report served as a basis for the revision of the existing government strategy that promoted a risk reduction and longer term control approach. In addition, key structural changes recommended by the joint UN mission are now implemented.

s) Strengthen capacity for plant pest emergency management and animal diseases;

The needs for upgrading facilities for wheat rust race analysis in Turkey, Azerbaijan, Egypt and Yemen were assessed and direct support was provided to upgrade these facilities. Saudi Arabia was also assisted in conducting a wheat rust survey.

t) Place more emphasis on the establishment of early warning systems;

A Global Cereal Rust Surveillance Programme, in support of early warning systems for wheat rusts, is being established at FAO headquarters in Rome, using the experience and model of the Desert Locust. An International Focal Point to manage and support all Programme-relevant activities within the scope of the Borlaug Global Rust Initiative and of FAO’s Wheat Rust Disease Global Programme has been hired by FAO. The system will help with prevention and

disease management of Ug99 and other threatening wheat rusts. In animal health, the Global Early Warning System (GLEWS) for transboundary animal diseases and zoonoses based in FAO Headquarters provides support to the region through early warning messages and forecasting analyses.

u) Closely monitor the impact of emergency intervention programmes.

Support to surveillance has been provided to all concerned countries through the purchasing and distribution of several GPS units for use in national surveys. This was in addition to the direct financial and technical support provided during field surveys.

III. SUMMARY OF OTHER ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED DURING 2008-09

7. Within the broader Regional Thematic Priorities as identified by the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East and its Regional Commissions, FAO continued to fulfill its core functions of monitoring and assessment of long-term and medium-term trends and perspectives; assembly and provision of information, knowledge and statistics; development of international instruments, norms and standards; providing policy and strategy options and advice; technical support to promote technology transfer and build capacity, advocacy and communication; inter-disciplinarity and innovation; and partnerships and alliances.

8. The overall delivery of the FAO field programme in the Region during 2008-09 reached USD 100.9 million; which is 29 percent more than in 2006-07. More than 105 regional and national projects (excluding emergency and Tele-food projects) were operational in the region during the biennium, thereby providing support to countries in a wide range of priority areas in agriculture, food security, fisheries and forestry.

9. The major activities undertaken during the 2008-09 biennium are briefly summarized below under different technical areas of FAO work in the Region.

Land and Water Resources

10. **Scarcity of land and water resources** is a formidable challenge facing agriculture and food security in the Near East Region. In 2008-09, FAO continued its efforts to support countries in land and water development and in management for improved food security. Fao also sought to enhance agricultural productivity through sustainable development and the improved management of land and water resources. Consequently, more than 30 regional and country projects were implemented in the Region during 2008-09. The main achievements in this area during this biennium included:

- Capacity development in the management of irrigation modernization;
- Support to strengthen water management capacities for improved productivity intensification and diversification of agricultural production systems. Specialized technical assistance and policy advice was provided to Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS);
- Technical assistance was provided to enhance countries' capacity to formulate and implement drought mitigation and preparedness strategies. Assistance included capacity building support for the implementation of the National Drought Strategy in Syria; the launching of a "Drought Mitigation Plan for the West Bank and Gaza Strip; and promoting the inclusion of drought measures within the framework of several on-going projects in the Region. A *Manual on Guidelines for Drought Mitigation and Preparedness Planning* was produced by RNE and widely distributed in the Region;

- Policy advice and awareness-raising addressing issues on climate change and the future of agriculture and food security in the Near East;
- As part of the rehabilitation and recovery efforts in Iraq, FAO rehabilitated a number of irrigation and drainage projects, as well as several large-size capacity pumping stations used for irrigation and drainage purposes throughout the country. FAO is also heavily involved in developing an integrated framework of assistance to Iraq in the area of water resources;
- FAO provided support to Algeria and Tunisia in the identification of components in Globally Important Heritage Agricultural Systems in order to establish the basis for national and global recognition. The components of this project relate to the dynamic conservation and sustainable management of agricultural heritage systems and their associated biodiversity, knowledge systems and cultures;
- FAO also supported the assessment of Land Degradation in Dry Lands (LADA), as a tool to enable development of a database for an accurate and objective land management system. Tunisia has received training in the LADA system and in the future will be the platform to articulate the training of other countries in the Region soon;
- The development and dissemination of more than 15 publications on technical issues and guidelines, relating to Water and Land Management.

Crop Production and Protection

11. In response to Members' requests, FAO has supported national efforts to implement the Rotterdam Convention. Capacity building assistance was provided to member countries on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and International Standards of Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) as well as in Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE). Saudi Arabia was assisted in assessing the use of pesticides in agriculture, and Farmer Field Schools on IPM were established in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, the Palestinian Authority and Iran, and have been expanded into North Africa. FAO also assisted in the dissemination of a wide range of guidelines and other material relating to specifications for pesticides, pesticides management and IPM and their role in promoting crop quality in the Region.

12. Support in the techniques of rapid seed multiplication was provided to Egypt, Iraq, Oman and Yemen. Iraq was also given assistance in developing its national seed policy, which is considered a milestone in the country's agricultural growth in as much as it will provide a blueprint for the development of a genuine seed industry.

13. FAO provided support for the exchange of information and expertise on phytosanitary control policies and techniques across the Maghreb region. This included measures to strengthen surveillance of palm trees for Bayoud fungal infections in countries that are currently disease-free, drawing on the experience of affected countries. One result has been the sensitization of member countries regarding the Red Palm Weevil and on measures to combat this pest through procedures such as surveillance and border controls along with import and export restrictions for dates and palm tree species. Similar efforts are underway to combat new diseases afflicting tomatoes.

14. Conservation agriculture was introduced in Egypt as a cropping system to deal with the rice straw problem. The solution has been to leave the straw as residue in the field and to adopt zero tillage technology which has proved most effective.

Transboundary Animal Diseases

15. Given the importance of the issue of HPAI in Egypt, FAO's ECTAD Unit in Egypt focused its attention in 2008-09 to its support to the government, providing technical advice and capacity building. Major achievements of the unit in Egypt in 2008-09 included:

- Better **detection and response** to HPAI outbreaks in poultry with HPAI detection rates progressively improving from 6 percent to 18 percent, and passive surveillance positive detection rates rising from 25 percent to 43 percent ;
- Improved **on-farm biosecurity** and hygiene practices;
- Establishment of an **epidemiology-surveillance** system;
- Promoting **policy dialogue and information/knowledge sharing**;
- Improved **coordination** between central and local veterinary services;
- Strengthened **institutional capacity** leading to faster times in confirmatory diagnosis of avian influenza A/H5N1 and outbreak reporting;
- Establishment of effective **laboratory network**. Laboratory data and genetic material shared on time with all relevant national and international partners and published on GeneBank.

16. Assessment and recommendations for Egypt's H5N1 avian influenza government efforts (FAO, WHO, UNICEF and UNSIC/UNRC) undertaken. The report served as a basis for the revision of the existing government strategy that promoted a risk reduction and longer term control approach.

17. Specific emergency TCP animal disease assistance has been provided to Egypt (FMD; EU funding) and Morocco (PPR).

Desert Locust Control

18. In 2008-09, the Desert Locust Commission and EMPRES (Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases) facilitated rapid responses to outbreaks of the Desert Locust in the Near East region. These rapid responses helped mitigate the impact of locust outbreaks.

19. Support was provided by the Desert Locust Commission and EMPRES to Member States in conducting survey and control operations, building capacities and in disseminating relevant information. Special attention was given to front-line countries (Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Yemen along with northern Somalia) where technical assistance and information was provided for the formulation of regional and national action plans, early warning systems and in carrying out relevant surveys. Comprehensive and specialized training on surveys and control operations were provided to both front-line countries and others.

20. The Desert Locust Commission supported the implementation of joint border surveys between neighbouring countries and encouraged the exchange of expertise to enhance skills, and enable monitoring of inaccessible areas. The joint border surveys between Saudi Arabia and Yemen and between Egypt and Sudan represent an example.

21. The Commission also supported member countries in carrying out research to improve capacity in Desert Locust management. A large number of publications were prepared and disseminated by the Commission to all member countries.

Fisheries

22. FAO is assisting Member States in building regional cooperation that will help them to develop the scientific and institutional capacities needed for the implementation of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. FAO support was focused particularly on assisting the Regional Commission for Fisheries (Bahrain, Iran, I.R., Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) in implementing its Biennial Fisheries and Aquaculture Workplans.

23. In the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden area, FAO held consultations with coastal states for the establishment of a Regional Fisheries Management Mechanism, a body that would then establish a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) for the area. Moreover, FAO provided help to member countries seeking to jointly address common concerns and priorities through regional initiatives such as: *Adapting to Climate Change: the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Near East and North Africa Region*, and *Fish Trade and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing in the Near East and North Africa: Implication of Certification and Traceability Schemes for the Region*.

24. The regional dimension has been given particular emphasis in the Mediterranean area, largely through the formulation and implementation of a network of regional projects supporting sustainable fisheries development and involving up to 18 coastal countries including those Near East Members that are situated in the southern Mediterranean basin. As a result, some countries – in particular, Morocco and Tunisia – have seen improvement in their capacities. There has also been an increase in regional cooperation in fisheries stock management and in the protection and conservation of marine aquatic halieutic resources (for example, the COPEMED, ARTFIMED and MEDSUDMED projects). Morocco received further support involving elaboration of the terms of reference for a survey on the modernization of its fishing fleet while Tunisia was given assistance in acquiring frigorific refrigeration equipment for nine fishing ports and the establishment of a relevant maintenance system.

Nutrition and Consumer Protection

25. FAO continued providing technical assistance to enhance the effective participation of Member States in *Codex Alimentarius* and in the implementation of the latter's recommendations, guidelines and standards. This was done through FAO support to the Codex Coordinating Committee for the Near East and through the organization of capacity building workshops in the Codex sector. Not surprisingly, then, the Technical Assistance Projects (TCP) in the Region have focused on strengthening Morocco and Tunisia's institutional capacities in food safety and, in particular, on the introduction of quality control labels linked to origin. Tunisia has also received assistance through another TCP in the elaboration of a strategy of quality promotion and of marketing for agriculture products. Lebanon is being helped, through a GCP project, to improve the quality, production and marketing of its agricultural products, with a heavy emphasis being given to improving the capacity of national staff and producers in safety and quality control for agricultural produce and products. Another aspect of this project involves the modernization of the country's food inspection system.

26. Nutritional assistance to member countries has continued with the development of Food Based Dietary Guidelines. Following the joint efforts of FAO and WHO in this field that led to the establishment in 2007 of Regional Food Based Dietary Guidelines, FAO/RNE assisted the Gulf Corporation Countries (GCC), that is Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman, in building their capacities to accelerate the process of establishing national food based dietary guidelines. Egypt was also assisted through a TCP project in building a Food Security Information and Mapping System. This helped national staff to develop capacity in undertaking rapid assessments of household food and nutrition security.

Forestry

27. FAO provided support to member countries through field projects and meetings on issues including: forest policy, sustainable forest management, national forest programmes, wildlife protected areas, forest fires, bio-energy and climate change.

28. FAO prepared a set of Guidelines for Forest Policy Development, focusing on forest policies, legislation and institutions. FAO also provided support, through the TCP programme, for the implementation of a national forest policy in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Syria. Furthermore, FAO supported the implementation of a forestry sanitary control system in Morocco and the development of tools and mechanisms to promote private investments in forestry as well as co-management of forests and rangelands in Tunisia. It also provided assistance to five countries (Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen) designed to strengthen capacity and to boost the increased involvement of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of those countries' national forest programmes.

29. Considering that the Near East Region is particularly prone to climate change risks, FAO, in collaboration with the University of Alexandria in Egypt, launched a study on Forests and Climate Change in the Region that was scheduled for discussion by the Near East Forestry Commission during Near East Forestry Week in Hammamet, Tunisia in April 2010.

30. To strengthen national capacities and promote collaboration and the sharing of information and knowledge in the region, during 2008-09 FAO organized several regional workshops: on forests and fire management; wildlife and protected areas management; bio-energy plantations (oil trees), forests and water.

31. On resources managements, FAO worked together with an Expert Group from the Region and with partner regional organizations on the development of a set of regional guidelines on *Best Forestry Practices in Arid and Semi-arid Zones*. The Near East Task Force of the Forestry Commission recommended that the Expert Group be transformed into a Regional Arid Zone Forestry Network that in the future will play an active advisory role in the implementation and follow-up of these guidelines.

32. In collaboration with the UN Commission to Combat Desertification and the Mountain Partnership Secretariat, FAO is preparing a publication (for release in 2010) focusing on issues related to the sustainable management of arid and semi-arid mountain ecosystems.

33. The last meeting of the Forestry Commission's Near East Task Force recognized that the field programme in the region has been running out of steam. It was therefore strongly recommended that possibilities of mobilizing greater regional resources should be explored including financing through Unilateral Trust Fund (UTF) projects as currently is happening in Morocco and Tunisia.

Agriculture and Food Security Information Systems

34. Assistance was provided to 13 member countries for developing their capacities in agricultural statistical systems measuring food security information and prices as well as in using tools such as Country STAT and other modern methodologies of agriculture census. More specialized technical assistance in updating these systems was provided to Egypt, Iran and Lebanon. Support was provided to the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) in compiling and developing a complete metadata system and a Country STAT system with regional application.

35. FAO assisted countries in building national capacities for effective information management and knowledge exchange in the sector of rural and agricultural development. In the context of the Rural and Agricultural Development Communication Network (RADCON), support was provided to Egypt, Jordan, Oman and Syria. FAO also provided support to the region for the establishment of the Near East and North Africa Rural Agricultural Knowledge and Information Network (NERAKIN). The latter boasts one regional gateway and 17 national knowledge and information portals that operate as a platform for knowledge sharing and collaboration for better regional networking. In addition, assistance was provided in building capacities in information and knowledge management within the Region's national agricultural research institutions. This was done in collaboration with the Association of Agricultural Research in Near East and North Africa (AARINENA), the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR), the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) and the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA). FAO also helped to promote, at a regional level, the pre-existing global programmes and initiatives designed to facilitate access to agricultural scientific information, to strengthen partnerships and everyday collaboration with key regional institutions and to implement national capacity building activities.

Food and Agriculture Policy

36. Policy assistance and capacity building remain an important area of concentration for FAO activities in the Near East Region. In 2008-2009, technical assistance focused on key priority issues in the Region, including the formulation of sustainable food and agriculture development strategies, water management and trade.

37. During 2008-09, FAO provided assistance to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen in formulating their long term food and agriculture development strategies (for the most part looking ahead to 2030). Egypt and Morocco received assistance in formulating a medium-term plan of action for the implementation of their agriculture development strategies. Support was also provided to the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran for the formulation of a National Medium-Term Priority Framework. Iraq also was given help in developing a three-year, medium-term strategy for FAO assistance *From Emergency To Development*. In addition, support was provided to the secretariat of the Arab Maghreb Union in designing a strategy for agriculture and rural development for the Maghreb Region.

38. Through its Initiative on Soaring Food Prices (ISFP), FAO provided policy advice along with technical and financial support to several countries in the Region in their attempts to cope with the soaring food prices of 2008. This included assessments of the magnitude of food prices changes, their implications for food security and the short and medium term actions needed to deal with the food price crisis. FAO has also provided farmers in Mauritania and Yemen with assistance in obtaining essential seeds and fertilizers. To address the long-term problem, FAO, in collaboration with the World Bank and IFAD, has prepared a regional study that outlines critical strategies for addressing the Region's vulnerability to price shocks.

39.. FAO helped Egypt strengthen its national capacities in the generation, analysis and utilization of food security information; specific assistance was provided for the design, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes aimed at poverty reduction.

40. FAO continued to support the Near East and North Africa Regional Network for Agricultural Policy in exchanging information and strengthening national capacities in agriculture and food security policy related issues. Assistance was provided both to non-WTO member countries in the Region on agriculture-related aspects of their preparatory work for accession to WTO

membership and to the North African countries negotiating bilateral association agreements with the European Union (EU).

41. Support in the formulation and implementation of policies relating to the UN Development Assistance Framework was provided to Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia. Through the implementation of two joint UN-FAO programmes, FAO provided assistance to Morocco with regard to activities related to the fight against gender violence and to Tunisia for policies designed to deal with youth employment.

42. Policy advice was provided to several countries in the region, particularly on the priority issues of water and trade. Examples included: qat production and policy options for water saving in Yemen; policy options for fodder crops in the Al-Batinah area in the Sultanate of Oman; and a national programme for food security in Syria. As part of a comprehensive UN programme (US\$90 million) in Iraq, FAO is providing support to promote private sector development and public sector modernization. A comparative situation analysis on the impact of supermarkets on small and medium sized farms was undertaken in Morocco and Tunisia. This led (in 2009) to the introduction of value chain concepts in a joint UNFPA-UNIDO-FAO Programme proposal.

Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities

43. FAO continued assisting countries in their attempts to prevent, mitigate, prepare for and respond to food and agricultural emergencies. FAO's Emergency and Rehabilitation Programmes are being implemented in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and Gaza Strip and Yemen. In addition, several regional transboundary plant pest and animal disease control programmes were implemented. Additionally, FAO has responded to the scale and complexity of disasters in the Near East by providing technical support to rebuild agricultural based livelihoods as well as seed supplies and tools.

44. In 2008-2009, FAO had a portfolio of 18 operationally-active emergency projects in Iraq, with a delivery of more than USD 30 million. The focus was on the promotion of employment generation through cottage industries and micro-enterprises such as dairy processing and bee-keeping, on restoring food safety and food processing capacity, on the resumption of fish farming and the commercial fish industry, on rehabilitation of the seed industry and the date palm sector and on strengthening the capacity of veterinary services for disease control.

45. In 2009, FAO assisted the Iraqi Government in formulating a Joint Programming Strategy for the Rehabilitation of Iraq's Marshlands. The programme aims at assisting the marshlands people and supporting agriculture production and other post production activities in the area, in particular fisheries, horticulture, livestock, agro-industries, GIS applications and food safety.

46. In the West Bank and Gaza, FAO has devoted time and energy to the rehabilitation and revitalization of the agricultural sector, and has implemented multi-disciplinary projects valued at about USD 14 million, funded by the Governments of Austria, Belgium, Canada, Italy, Japan, Norway, Spain and Sweden and the Qatar Charity. More than 12 500 households, or 80 000 people, have directly benefited from FAO projects, with special attention being paid to female-headed households and the most vulnerable farmers, herders and fishers. Successful projects include: helping women establish home gardens and livestock production units; improving water efficiency by installing grey-waste water treatment units and drip irrigation systems in home gardens and farms; providing training in meeting international standards in good agricultural practices; training women in food processing and packaging; working with youth through Junior Farmer Field and Life Skills Schools that teach agricultural and life skills; developing capacity to cope with avian influenza outbreaks; and building feed centers.

47. FAO played an important role in the Early Recovery of the agriculture sector in Lebanon by providing rural farming communities with much-needed technical and financial support. During 2008-09, five active emergency projects were operational in the country, with a value of USD 8.4 million. FAO has helped to improve the food security, nutritional and economic status of low-income rural families by helping increase harvest yields and animal production. Other assistance involved the introduction of new agriculture technologies for the increased production of vegetables, cheeses, yoghurt and milk.

48. Following the second consecutive drought in 2008/09 in Syria, which has seriously impacted crop and livestock production, FAO led a Joint Assessment UN Mission and supported the government's efforts to restore food production and to safeguard agricultural livelihoods. Projects amounting to USD 1.8 million were implemented in 2008 and about USD 3.5 million in 2009.

49.. In Yemen, FAO is running three emergency projects as part of the UNFPA Humanitarian Response Plan, for a total of US\$11.8 million, to address immediate needs in the agricultural sector. Their aim is to provide time-critical agricultural inputs to the worst-affected families. In addition, FAO is conducting an avian influenza response programme (USD 0.4 million), and a seed supply programme designed to repair the damages of the floods that in 2008 devastated part of the country (USD 0.5 million). It is also implementing a project for supporting livestock ownership by internally displaced persons. More recently, FAO has been actively involved in the preparation of the Humanitarian Response Plan 2010.

Table 1: Undernourishment in the Near East (1990-92 to 2005-07)

Country	Total population (millions)				Number of people undernourished (millions)				Proportion of undernourished in total population (%)			
	1990-92	1995-97	2000-02	2005-07	1990-92	1995-97	2000-02	2005-07	1990-92	1995-97	2000-02	2005-07
Algeria	25.9	28.7	31.0	33.4	ns	1.5	1.4	ns	—	5	5	—
Azerbaijan	7.3	7.9	8.2	8.5	2.0	2.2	0.9	ns	27	27	11	-
Cyprus	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	ns	ns	ns	ns	—	—	—	—
Djibouti	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	60	50	40	28
Egypt	59.1	65.1	71.5	78.6	ns	ns	ns	ns	—	—	—	—
Iran	58.0	63.2	67.7	71.6	ns	ns	ns	ns	—	—	—	—
Jordan	3.5	4.4	5.0	5.8	ns	0.2	ns	0.1	—	5	5	—
Kuwait	2.1	1.8	2.3	2.8	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.1	20	5	6	5
Kyrgyzstan	4.4	4.7	5.0	5.3	0.8	0.6	0.9	0.6	17	13	17	10
Lebanon	3.1	3.6	3.8	4.1	ns	ns	ns	ns	—	—	—	—
Libya	4.5	4.9	5.5	6.0	ns	ns	ns	ns	—	—	—	—
Malta	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	ns	ns	ns	ns	—	—	—	—
Mauritania	2.0	2.3	2.7	3.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	12	9	8	7
Morocco	25.3	27.3	29.2	30.9	1.5	1.6	1.6	ns	6	6	6	—
Pakistan	118.8	133.8	151.7	169.5	29.6	26.9	36.1	43.4	25	20	24	26
Saudi Arabia	16.7	18.7	21.4	24.1	ns	ns	ns	ns	—	—	—	—
Sudan	27.8	31.7	35.7	39.6	10.8	9.3	9.9	8.8	39	29	28	22
Syria	13.1	15.0	17.0	19.8	ns	ns	ns	ns	—	—	—	—
Tajikistan	5.4	5.9	6.2	6.6	1.8	2.4	2.9	2.0	3	42	46	30
Tunisia	8.4	9.1	9.5	10.0	ns	ns	ns	ns	—	—	—	—
Turkey	57.1	62.3	67.4	72.1	ns	ns	ns	ns	—	—	—	—
Turkmenistan	3.8	4.3	4.6	4.9	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	9	9	9	6
UAE	2.0	2.6	3.4	4.2	ns	ns	ns	ns	—	—	—	—
Yemen	12.9	16.1	18.7	21.6	3.8	5.0	5.7	6.7	30	31	31	31
Total Near East	501.3.	562.0	623.5	687.3	69.9	76.6	88.3	92.9	14	14	14	14

Source: FAO SOFI 2010

* Latest report period refers to 2005–07 estimates and the baseline refers to 1990–92. For countries that did not exist during the baseline period, the 1990-92 proportion of undernourished is based on 1993-95 and the number of undernourished is based on their 1990-92 population.

* Bahrain, Oman and Qatar, for which there were insufficient data, are not included in the list of countries in this table.

* Although not listed separately, provisional estimates for Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia have been included in the regional aggregates.

Key

— Proportion less than 5% of undernourished

0.0 Zero or less than half the unit shown

ns not statistically significant

na not applicable

Sources:

Total population: UN Population Prospects, 2008 revision