Regional Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2024–2027 for the Near East and North Africa region
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Acknowledgements

The development of the gender equality strategy and Action Plan (2024–2027) for the Near East and North Africa resulted from the collaborative agreement between FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (RNE) and the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization (ITCilo). Special acknowledgements are extended to the committed FAO RNE Gender Team, including Valentina Franchi, Omnia Rizk, Maggie Refaat and Léa Berthelin, whose expertise and dedication played a pivotal role in shaping this document. Gratitude is also expressed to the authors and contributors from the ITCilo, namely Maud Ritz, Paridhi Pathak, Guillaume Mercier and Luisa Guimaraes. Furthermore, sincere thanks are extended to the interviewees, gender focal points, senior managers and all individuals actively involved in the consultation and consolidation process. Their valuable insights and contributions have been instrumental in crafting a comprehensive and impactful strategy for advancing gender equality in the region. In addition, Nada Nosseir provided proofreading support, while Grazia Dammacco provided the layout design.
## Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ADG</td>
<td>Assistant Director-General</td>
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<td>CGAs</td>
<td>country gender assessments</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>GBV</td>
<td>gender-based violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEWE</td>
<td>gender equality and women’s empowerment</td>
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<tr>
<td>GFPs</td>
<td>gender focal points</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITCILO</td>
<td>International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logframe</td>
<td>logical framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>NENA</td>
<td>Near East and North Africa</td>
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<td>RNE</td>
<td>Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>Regional Priority</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>small and medium enterprise</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSFF</td>
<td>small-scale family farming</td>
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<tr>
<td>ToC</td>
<td>theory of change</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN-SWAP</td>
<td>United Nations system-wide action plan</td>
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# Glossary

<table>
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Socially constructed attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and how society defines masculinity and femininity in terms of what is appropriate behaviour for women and men; both women and men play a crucial role in the social construction of gender.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender equality</td>
<td>The state in which women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements in civil and political life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender equity</td>
<td>Fairness and impartiality in the treatment of women and men in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s empowerment</td>
<td>Women’s increased control over their lives through economic advancement and enhanced power and agency.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender analysis</td>
<td>The study of the different roles of women and men in order to understand what they do, what resources and capacities they have, what their needs and priorities are, and the power relations between them. The analysis provides the basis to address inequalities in policies and programmes.</td>
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<td>Gender mainstreaming</td>
<td>A globally recognized strategy for achieving gender equality; it is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women, as well as of men, an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender marker</td>
<td>A tool used to code to what extent a project or programme has the potential to contribute to gender equality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender-sensitive approaches</td>
<td>Gender-sensitive approaches identify and acknowledge the existing gender differences and inequalities between women and men. Gender is integrated as a means to achieve other objectives without seeking to change structural barriers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender-responsive approaches</td>
<td>Gender-responsive approaches recognize and address the specific needs and priorities of women and men, based on the social construction of gender roles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender-transformative approaches</td>
<td>Gender-transformative approaches examine, question and change gender social norms, attitudes, behaviours and social systems that reinforce inequalities. These approaches aim at transforming gender roles and power relations, and the mindsets of individuals from organization’s staff to household members, communities and actors in the market and state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender gap</td>
<td>The gap that women face in access to resources, assets, services, education and employment opportunities as a result of gender discrimination.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender roles</td>
<td>Behaviours, tasks and responsibilities that a society considers appropriate for men, women, boys and girls.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender relations</td>
<td>Ways in which society defines the rights, responsibilities and identities of women and men in relation to one another.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender-based violence (GBV)</td>
<td>Any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between women and men.</td>
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<td>Gender focal points (GFPs)</td>
<td>These individuals are part of FAO’s institutional architecture for gender, and play a key role in supporting the delivery of gender-related work by raising gender awareness among colleagues and partners, providing technical advice, and disseminating available knowledge and tools to integrate gender issues into FAO’s work.</td>
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As part of its commitment to advancing gender equality, the Regional Office of the Food and Agriculture Organization for the Near East and North Africa (FAO RNE), embarked on the development of an updated regional gender equality strategy. This initiative aligns with the broader FAO Policy on Gender Equality and is tailored to address the unique challenges and nuances prevalent in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region.

Objectives

This comprehensive strategy was meticulously crafted to navigate the intricate landscape of gender equality challenges prevalent in the NENA region. The process unfolded with a series of initial consultations, actively engaging gender focal points (GFPs) to discern and prioritize the key thematic areas that would form the foundation of the strategy and subsequent action plan.

These insightful consultations served as the bedrock, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the specific nuances and challenges within the region. The strategy’s objectives were thus intricately woven to respond effectively to the multifaceted dimensions of gender equality, ensuring a targeted and impactful approach tailored to the diverse contexts across the NENA region.
Methodology

A collaborative agreement with the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization (ITC-ILO) brought in experts in gender equality and results-based management. The process involved a comprehensive desk review of relevant global and regional FAO documents. Additionally, a series of interviews were conducted with 14 managers, GFPs and technical officers at both regional and country levels during August and September 2023.

Building on these foundational steps, a preliminary draft of the theory of change (ToC) and logical framework (logframe) was crafted and presented to the RNE Gender Team. Their valuable insights were incorporated, and the draft was subsequently shared with GFPs for further feedback and endorsement on 31 October 2023. The final validation of the Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan took place on 23 November 2023 in a session with senior managers, leading to its formal approval in mid-December.

Scope

The deliberately broad objectives of the strategy aim to ensure its applicability across the diverse and complex contexts within the NENA region. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of the region, characterized by a spectrum of situations, the strategy incorporates a precise set of indicators that extend until 2027. This extended timeframe facilitates a systematic review of the strategy, allowing for adjustments and refinements to be made, ensuring its continued relevance and effectiveness until the targeted horizon of 2030.
Addressing gender disparities within agrifood systems is crucial for the overall socioeconomic progress of societies in the NENA region. Such efforts contribute significantly to the well-being of women, girls, households and communities, offering solutions to challenges like poverty, food insecurity, and bolstering economic growth and resilience. Despite commendable strides in several NENA countries, persistent gender inequalities subsist in accessing assets, resources and technologies, hindering women’s participation and leadership in decision-making processes.

These disparities are exacerbated when gender intersects with factors like age, residency status, disability and socio-economic conditions, leading to increased marginalization. Specific groups within the NENA region, such as young women, widows and those with disabilities, face heightened risks of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, particularly in crisis-affected countries.

This overview encapsulates the prevailing landscape of gender equality and women’s empowerment in the NENA region, highlighting ongoing challenges and areas for improvement.
Gender discrimination in legal frameworks and policies within agrifood systems

The significance of gender-responsive legal frameworks and policies cannot be overstated in fostering inclusive socio-economic development, providing women with equal rights and opportunities as their male counterparts. Despite reform efforts over the years, the NENA region deals with substantial gaps in the legal framework for gender equality and women’s rights, positioning it as the region with the largest disparities (World Bank, 2023b).

Moreover, the NENA region records the highest proportion of policy documents lacking measures to promote gender equality, emphasizing the pressing need for policy reform (FAO, 2023b). Within agrifood systems, the unresponsiveness of policies and institutions further curtails women’s access to vital agricultural support services, encompassing rural advisory, financial and business development.

The exclusionary membership policies of producer organizations and the oversight of service providers exacerbate the issue, resulting in significant disparities in access to information, skills, technologies and practices. It is crucial to acknowledge that discriminatory social norms often override these legal frameworks and policies, influencing the practical implementation and effectiveness of gender-responsive measures. Consequently, women often find themselves confined to the informal sector and relegated to the low-skilled and less lucrative segments of agrifood value chains.
Underrepresentation of women’s voices in decision-making

Despite strides in advancing women’s representation in political institutions, the region lags behind in achieving equal participation and leadership. The 2023 Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum underscores the region’s subpar performance in women’s political empowerment, positioning it as the furthest from achieving gender parity compared to other regions (World Economic Forum, 2023).

This persistent gap in participation and leadership hampers women’s ability to influence policies, investments and strategies tailored to their specific needs and interests. This discrepancy is particularly pronounced in rural institutions, organizations and governance structures where women’s representation remains uneven, compounding the challenge of fostering inclusive decision-making processes.

Unveiling women’s unrecognized contributions in agrifood systems

The critical yet often underappreciated role of women in agrifood systems is a pervasive challenge in the NENA region. Official statistics routinely underestimate women’s contributions, particularly as unpaid family members, masking the diverse and indispensable roles they play. Recent gender assessments and analyses by FAO affirm that women are extensively involved in crucial agricultural tasks, such as backyard poultry farming, kitchen gardens and home-based dairy processing — activities fundamental for household nutrition and well-being but frequently overlooked in the realm of agricultural labour.¹

Studies indicate a notable increase in the activity of women workers, women-led cooperatives, associations, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across various segments of agrifood value chains in the NENA region.

Rural women also play pivotal roles, often unrecognized, in the use and management of natural resources, including land, water, drylands and forests, especially within the context of small-scale agriculture and family farming. In comparison to global regions, the NENA region exhibits lower women’s employment levels in agrifood systems.

¹. Country gender assessments (CGAs) of the agriculture and rural sector are available for several countries in the region at: https://www.fao.org/gender/resources/country-assessments/en
As of 2019, an estimated 20 percent of women were employed in both agricultural and non-agricultural components of agrifood systems, contrasting starkly with the global average of 36 percent (FAO, 2023b). The overall labour force participation of women in the NENA region remains modest, standing at approximately 19 percent, compared to male participation at 77 percent and a global average of women’s participation at 49 percent (World Bank, 2023a).

Despite incremental progress in recent decades, persistent structural barriers hinder the entry and sustainability of women, particularly rural and young women, in the labour force (ILO, 2022).

Agricultural production remains a key source of livelihoods and employment for women in the region, with almost a quarter of employed women engaged in the agriculture sector in 2019, surpassing the 17.6 percent of employed men (World Bank, 2021).

The phenomenon of the “feminization of agriculture” has been noted in some countries of the region, primarily driven by the departure of men and youth from the sector (Baruah and Najjar, 2022). Unveiling and recognizing these often-overlooked contributions is crucial for advancing gender equality and empowerment in agrifood systems throughout the NENA region.

**Gender disparities in women’s access to agrifood systems**

Within the region, women face formidable challenges in accessing essential assets, inputs, resources and technologies within agrifood systems. Although sex-disaggregated data is limited, estimates reveal that women regionally own less than 7 percent of agricultural land, with female landowners constituting as little as 5 percent of property owners (Popal and Langley, 2021).

This situation is alarming, as secure land rights are directly correlated with increased adoption of technologies, heightened resilience capacity, improved decision-making, greater investments and elevated levels of agricultural productivity and income (FAO, 2023b). The absence of secure land tenure further restricts women’s access to other vital resources, such as water, and services like credit, often necessitated with land as collateral. It also impedes their participation in rural and producer organizations, crucial avenues for accessing advisory services and market opportunities.
Gender disparities in accessing assets, resources and advisory services not only curtail women’s exposure to green, water-saving and climate-smart practices and technologies but also undermine their adaptive capacities and resilience to climate change. This, in turn, obstructs national and regional efforts aimed at greening agriculture and reducing environmental degradation.

Digitalization presents a potential avenue to enhance women’s access to information, services and market opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital solutions in the agrifood sector, offering new prospects for the economic inclusion of small-scale value chain actors. However, digital inclusion remains a pervasive challenge in the NENA region, where the intersection of rural and gender divides creates complex layers of marginalization.

Despite recent strides, 25 million women in the region do not own mobile phones, and approximately 60 million women do not use mobile internet (GSMA, 2023).

Persistent factors contributing to the digital gender gap include unequal access to quality education, digital literacy programs and financial resources for rural women and girls. Additionally, rigid gender norms and enduring legal barriers in some areas impede women’s access to technology and innovation. Addressing these challenges is crucial to unlocking the full potential of women within the NENA region’s agrifood systems.
The unseen burden: Unpaid care work and women’s empowerment

Undoubtedly, women bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work, playing a crucial yet often overlooked role in sustaining households and communities, particularly in rural areas where social services are often inadequate. This “reproductive work” includes child and elder care, food preparation, cooking and cleaning, significantly contributing to the food security and nutrition of households and communities. However, this contribution comes at a cost, as social norms in the region place the responsibility of unpaid care work primarily on women.

Women in the NENA region perform 4.7 times more unpaid care work than men, marking the highest female-to-male ratio globally (UN Women, 2020).

This stark reality is, in part, influenced by prevailing beliefs in the region, where a considerable number of people associate the well-being of young children with mothers refraining from work (FAO, 2023b).

The burden of unpaid care work not only directly impacts women’s ability to participate in paid work, education and public life but becomes even more critical during crises. In times of interruptions or reductions in public services, as witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic and in contexts affected by protracted conflicts and natural disasters, women’s unpaid care work compensates for the gaps (FAO and WFP, 2022).

Women and girls residing in remote rural areas or conflict-affected zones, where services and infrastructure are lacking or disrupted, face an increased risk of time poverty. Addressing this unseen burden is imperative for advancing women’s empowerment and fostering a more equitable and inclusive society.
Addressing gender-based violence in the NENA region

Gender-based violence (GBV) persists as a grave concern both in the NENA region and globally. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 37 percent of ever-partnered women in the region have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence at some point in their lives. This pervasive issue is particularly acute for women in conflict-affected areas, emergency situations, refugees, and internally displaced persons, exposing them to heightened risks of violence and eroding their resilience capacity. For example, in Yemen, women find themselves grappling with the harsh realities of both the ongoing war and deeply entrenched harmful social norms.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has alarming statistics to highlight the dire situation, revealing a staggering 50 percent increase in GBV incidents related to physical assault. Sexual abuse has risen by 35 percent, psychological abuse by 25 percent, while denial of resources and child marriage have seen increases of 17 and 11 percent, respectively (Al-Dhamari, R., 2021).

Rural women, facing the additional challenge of limited access to health and protection services in rural areas, often endure a double layer of marginalization. The challenges faced by rural women, including the increased risk of GBV exacerbated by natural disasters leading to internal displacement, underscore the immediate need to tackle GBV in the agricultural and rural sector. This is an area where prevention and mitigation efforts are often neglected.

Poverty and food insecurity, recognized drivers of gender-based violence, further exacerbate the vulnerability of women and contribute to harmful practices like early marriage and economic violence. The additional dimension of natural disasters heightening cases of gender-based violence underscores the urgency of addressing this issue comprehensively in the agricultural and rural context. Confronting GBV head-on is essential not only for breaking the cycle of violence, but also for fostering resilient communities and promoting the well-being and empowerment of women in the NENA region.

Gender dynamics in the face of climate change and conflict in the NENA region

The NENA region faces a dual challenge — the escalating impacts of climate change and the persistent spectre of conflicts and protracted crises. As temperatures soar in this already water-scarce region, social and economic inequalities widen, and access to vital resources like food and water becomes increasingly precarious.
Climate

The rise in temperatures in a region already the most water−scarce in the world is widening social and economic inequalities and endangering people’s access to food and water resources, and this is not gender−neutral. Yet, women’s participation and leadership in climate action remain limited, and gender concerns are only partially addressed in national adaptation plans and climate−related strategies.

Climate change is also an increasingly contributing factor to rural out−migration. A study of five NENA countries estimates that extreme climate events account for up to 20 percent of migration (World Bank, 2014), expected to increase with worsening climatic conditions. This has gender implications as migration patterns differ for women and men. Women whose fathers, brothers and husbands have migrated due to economic or climatic reasons may face additional work burden, economic vulnerability, food insecurity and even increased mortality risks (FAO, 2023b).

Conflicts and protracted crises

Conflict and protracted crises remain the main drivers of food insecurity in the NENA region. Hunger in conflict−affected countries has been much higher than in non−conflict countries. In 2020, the prevalence of undernourishment in conflict−affected countries was 34.7 percent, more than six times as high as in non−conflict countries (FAO, 2021g). While sex−disaggregated data from conflict−affected countries are scarce and fragmented, women and girls are likely to be particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition.

Data show that food insecurity affects women more than men globally due to persisting gender inequalities and discriminations, with women living in rural areas even more likely to be food insecure (FAO et al., 2023). For example, despite declining trends in the past two decades, anaemia continues to remain a severe public health problem in the low−income economies of the region, with Yemen reporting the highest prevalence of anaemia in 2020, affecting 61.5 percent of women of reproductive age (FAO, 2021g).

Men, women, boys and girls often experience emergencies and crises differently due to their distinct roles, responsibilities and vulnerabilities within societies. The situation is even more complex in the NENA region, where populations are increasingly affected by the compounded impacts of shocks and crises of different natures (conflicts, natural disasters, economic downturns, political instability) that disrupt gender roles and social norms in ways that are different and difficult to generalize.

Amidst these challenges, the NENA region grapples with diverse and intersecting shocks – conflicts, natural disasters, economic downturns and political instability – disrupting established gender roles and social norms in ways that are nuanced and defy easy generalization. Navigating this complex landscape requires comprehensive gender−sensitive approaches that address both the immediate and long−term impacts of climate change and conflicts on diverse populations in the NENA region.
A comprehensive look at gender challenges in the NENA region

Gender challenges in the NENA region are complex and interconnected, resembling a problem tree where the roots, branches and leaves intertwine to create a network of barriers. These challenges manifest across economic, political and social spheres, reinforcing each other and contributing to a web of obstacles that impede women’s access to equal rights and opportunities.

In this intricate problem tree, the roots delve into discriminatory norms and policies, forming the foundation for gender inequalities in the region. These deeply embedded norms shape legal frameworks and policies, influencing women’s economic participation and perpetuating gaps in their access to agricultural support services, financial resources and business development opportunities. This, in turn, hampers their engagement in decision-making processes, limiting their ability to shape policies responsive to their needs.

The branches of the problem tree extend into the realms of women’s voices and political empowerment. Limited participation and leadership in decision-making processes create a canopy that obstructs the pathways for women to influence policies and strategies, particularly in rural institutions where their representation is often unequal. The lack of women’s voices further exacerbates the challenges, as policies and programs fail to adequately address their needs within the agriculture and rural sector.

Leaves on this intricate tree could be represented by the lack of data and recognition of women’s roles in agriculture. Despite their significant contributions, women’s work often remains overlooked, leading to gaps in access to information, skills, technologies and practices. The leaves also extend to the burden of unpaid care and domestic work, where societal expectations place the responsibility disproportionately on women, impacting their ability to engage in paid work, education and public life.

The problem tree illustrates the interconnectedness of these challenges, highlighting the need for holistic and integrated strategies to address the roots, branches and leaves simultaneously. Untangling this complexity requires a comprehensive approach that recognizes the interplay of these issues and seeks transformative solutions to foster gender equality in the NENA region.
In this context, the collective effort of every organization is imperative to make strides and attain gender equality. It is crucial to guarantee that women and men in the NENA region enjoy equal access to resources, services and assets, fostering enhanced participation in agrifood systems and decision-making processes. This collective endeavour aims to reach improvements in production, nutrition, environment and overall well-being for all. The pivotal role of FAO, in collaboration with governments, rural institutions and the media, will be instrumental in steering this transformative process. Emphasizing the role of men in actively supporting and advocating for gender equality is particularly significant. Their alliance with women can catalyse a positive change, fostering a more inclusive and equitable future for the entire community.

Source: Authors’ own elaboration.

Figure 1. Problem tree

Source: Authors’ own elaboration.
Investing in women and girls stands as a catalyst to expedite advancements in agriculture, rural development, and, fundamentally, food security and nutrition. Numerous studies affirm that enhancing women’s access and control over assets and resources not only augments agricultural productivity and production, but also yields enduring benefits spanning generations, promising substantial dividends in the future. Addressing the gender gap in agriculture is thus imperative to fulfill FAO’s mandate. The Organization is unwaveringly committed to systematically integrating gender equality into all its normative and technical endeavours, advocating for integrated and transformative approaches that address the root causes of existing inequalities and champion inclusive agricultural and rural development.

Recognizing the indispensability of gender equality in realizing FAO’s mandate for a world free from hunger, malnutrition and poverty, the Organization acknowledges that persistent disparities between women and men pose significant hurdles to agriculture and rural development. Eliminating these inequities is essential for constructing sustainable and inclusive food systems and fostering resilient, peaceful societies.

Aligned with the priorities outlined by the international agenda, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, international conventions and UN–SWAP, the FAO Policy on Gender Equality provides the Organization with a framework to orient its technical and normative work towards explicit gender equality objectives relevant to its mandate. Acknowledging that a gender-responsive organizational environment is pivotal for making progress towards these objectives, the following theory of change from the FAO Policy on Gender Equality has been embraced to guide the formulation of this strategy:
In this framework, FAO RNE is committed to keep working on the following areas:

- Continue investing in the **generation and dissemination of sex- and age-disaggregated data and information** to inform evidence-based and targeted policies and programmes. This includes accelerating efforts on the reporting against SDG indicators and targets relevant to gender and agrifood systems, such as SDG 5.a.1 and 5.a.2, for which FAO is the custodian agency;

- **Foster the adoption of policy and legal frameworks** that ensure women’s equal rights to and control over assets (land in particular), resources, services and technologies, and promote their equal participation and leadership in rural organizations, institutions and governance mechanisms;
• **Implement strategies, programmes and initiatives** that promote gender and age-responsive rural and agrifood systems transformation, by providing incentives to women’s decent employment and entrepreneurship, and by mitigating the impacts that multiple shocks and stresses (including climate change, natural disasters and conflicts) have on women of different age and socio-economic conditions; and

• Support and enhance the systematic adoption of **gender-transformative approaches** that help tackle the discriminatory social norms, practices and behaviours that perpetuate gender inequalities in agrifood systems.

In alignment with the FAO Strategic Framework, the Regional Priorities, and the objectives of the Policy on Gender Equality 2020–2030, FAO RNE’s key areas of work on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the NENA region focus on:

• Strengthening women’s role in agrifood systems through improved access to and control over assets, resources, skills development opportunities and services;

• Promoting equitable access to climate-smart, water-saving and environmentally friendly practices, technologies and services;

• Enhancing women’s equitable participation and decision-making in relevant rural organizations, institutions and governance mechanisms; and

• Restoring women’s livelihoods and improving their resilience capacities to cope with the impact of multiple shocks and crises, including conflicts and natural disasters.

FAO works on its priority areas through multiple functions and types of interventions, which build on its comparative advantages in the NENA region.

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**Figure 3. FAO’s priority areas of work and functions in the NENA region (2024–2030)**

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4 Gender mainstreaming in the four regional priorities

In this framework, an important step will be to mainstream gender equality in its four regional priorities, as follows:

Priority 1. Rural transformation and inclusive value chains

The prevailing disparities between urban and rural living conditions in the region reveal distinctive challenges experienced by women in rural communities. Within this context, women often face compounded disadvantages, including limited access to basic services such as health, education and communications. The majority of impoverished individuals in rural areas are women, highlighting their vulnerability to economic and social disparities. In addition to inadequate exposure to innovation and restricted investment, women in rural areas encounter barriers to participation in productive infrastructure, services and value chains. Furthermore, women’s access to long-term decent employment opportunities is constrained, exacerbating their economic marginalization.

Small-scale family farming (SSFF), while fundamental to rural communities, reflects gender-specific dynamics, with women constituting a substantial yet often overlooked segment of the agricultural workforce.
With over 80 percent of agricultural production originating from SSFF on 75 to 85 percent of agricultural landholdings in the NENA region, women’s pivotal role underscores the urgency of addressing gender-specific challenges within rural transformation and inclusive value chains.

To comprehensively address the situation of women in the context of this regional priority, it is essential to mainstream gender equality and women’s empowerment. The following recommendations offer targeted strategies to ensure that women’s specific needs, roles and contributions are recognized and addressed within the broader framework of rural transformation and inclusive value chains:

• **Gender-responsive income enhancement**: Implement programmes and policies specifically tailored to address the gender gap in incomes faced by women engaged in small-scale family farming, ensuring their economic empowerment.

• **Inclusive value chains**: Strengthen institutions supporting market-oriented agriculture for smallholders, placing a particular emphasis on the integration of women into value chains; and enhance the capacities of women producers and their associations to ensure their active and equitable participation.

• **Youth and women’s employment**: Prioritize youth and women’s employment, investing in infrastructure and services designed to benefit women and youth, fostering an environment conducive to both farm and non-farm job opportunities.

• **Rural entrepreneurship**: Facilitate rural entrepreneurship, specifically emphasizing the establishment of small businesses led by women. Develop support mechanisms that address the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in rural settings.

• **Trade capacity building**: Strengthen the capacities of smallholder farmers, particularly women, to engage in intra-regional and international trade. Identify barriers and opportunities, implementing policies and programmes that facilitate inclusive trade practices, acknowledging and addressing the challenges faced by women.

• **Innovation and technology transfer**: Foster the development of new approaches and innovative technologies, ensuring their effectiveness in transferring knowledge and exchanging experiences. Address the needs of women in accessing and utilizing these innovations, recognizing the potential of technology to empower women in rural areas, while contributing to overcome the gender gap in technology.

By integrating these gender-responsive measures across the intervention areas, FAO can significantly enhance its impact on rural transformation and inclusive value chains, contributing to a more equitable and sustainable agricultural sector in the region.
Priority 2. Food security and healthy diets for all

The complex dynamics surrounding food security and nutrition in the region demand a nuanced understanding of the specific challenges faced by women. The structural deficit between production and consumption places the region in a precarious position, susceptible to uncertainties related to global food commodity markets. Additionally, the increasing rates of overweight and obesity, particularly among women, present a multifaceted health challenge.

In light of these challenges, mainstreaming gender equality and women’s empowerment in this priority is crucial. The following recommendations aim to integrate a gender-responsive approach within the broader framework of enhancing food security and promoting healthy diets for all:

- **Gender-inclusive food systems approach**: Adopt a food systems approach that explicitly recognizes and addresses the challenges faced by women in ensuring food security and nutrition. This involves examining and mitigating gender-specific barriers within the entire food value chain, their pivotal role in preparing healthy diets due to the gendered division of labour, and the fact that women are the first to deprive themselves from food in case of crisis.

- **Promoting women’s health**: Recognize the gender-specific nutritional needs and challenges faced by women, particularly in the context of maternal and reproductive health.

- **Reducing economic risks for women**: Mitigate economic risks associated with the growing dependence on food imports, with a particular focus on how this impacts women; and develop strategies to empower women economically within the context of food production and trade.
Priority 3. Greening agriculture, water scarcity and climate action

The critical challenges posed by the scarcity and degradation of land, water and agrobiodiversity in the region underscore the need for a comprehensive and gender-responsive approach to address the root causes and environmental drivers impacting food security, nutrition and the well-being of the population. In this context, women, particularly those in smallholder and vulnerable populations, are disproportionately affected.

Recognizing the urgent need for sustainable solutions, the greening agriculture priority, coupled with the Blue Transformation of aquatic food systems, aims to equip FAO member countries with the tools and strategies to navigate the region’s complex challenges. The scarcity of water resources, degradation of arable land and the imminent impacts of climate change demand concerted efforts, especially considering the gender-specific dimensions of risks and adaptation.

Mainstreaming gender equality and women’s empowerment within this priority is essential. The following recommendations highlight key areas to integrate gender-responsive measures:

- **Awareness and social benefits:** Protecting and restoring natural resources should include a gender lens, raising awareness of the state of these resources and their direct relation to social benefits, such as food security and income. Recognize and amplify the often-overlooked contributions of women in resource protection and restoration efforts and work of their entitlement to social benefits.

- **Valuation of ecosystem services:** Promote the valuation of ecosystem services with a specific focus on understanding the gendered impacts and contributions. Recognize the role of women in the sustainable management of ecosystems and integrate their perspectives into policies that address negative externalities and degradation of natural resources.

- **Afforestation/reforestation and biodiversity preservation:** Tighten the tide on deforestation, encouraging afforestation and reforestation efforts that consider the gender-specific implications. Mainstream biodiversity preservation across agricultural sectors by acknowledging the distinct roles and knowledge of women in maintaining biodiversity.

By intentionally incorporating these gender-responsive measures, the programme can significantly contribute to improving the food security and nutrition of women in the NENA region, fostering healthier and more equitable food systems.
• Blue Transformation for fisheries: Implement effective management of fisheries through a Blue Transformation of aquatic food systems, recognizing the role of women in fisheries and ensuring their equitable participation and benefits.

• Sustainable land management (SLM): Encourage sustainable land management practices that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, with a specific focus on how these practices impact women in rural communities.

• Nature-based solutions: Promote nature-based solutions, such as integrated agriculture-aquaculture, assess and recognize the role of women in implementing and sustaining these practices.

• Climate change knowledge and action: Promote knowledge, awareness and action on climate change adaptation in the agriculture sectors, ensuring that gender-specific vulnerabilities are considered and that women are actively involved in climate change mitigation efforts. In addition, emphasize the significance of incorporating gender minimum standards and mainstreaming in emergencies within the strategy. It is crucial to outline the nexus among climate change, natural disasters and their impact on gender.

• Water resource management: Protect and sustainably manage water resources through the use of appropriate technologies and policies, recognizing and enhancing women’s roles in water management and promoting their access to and control over non-conventional water resources.

By incorporating these gender-responsive measures, FAO can enhance its effectiveness in addressing the environmental challenges in the NENA region while promoting the active participation and empowerment of women in sustainable agriculture and natural resource management.
Priority 4. Building resilience to multiple shocks

Strategic action area 1: Understanding multiple risks

In this priority, it is crucial to analyse the situation of gender inequalities concerning resilience capacities. Women often face distinct challenges in anticipating, preventing, absorbing, adapting to, and transforming in the face of shocks. To address this:

• **Comprehensive gender-sensitive risk assessments**: Ensure that multi-risk assessments consider the differentiated impacts on women, recognizing their roles in agriculture, food production and household resilience.

• **Capacity building on gender-inclusive early warning systems**: Support countries in developing and institutionalizing functional agroclimatic, disaster and crisis risk information systems that consider the specific factors of vulnerability, but also roles and strengths of women.

• **Gender mainstreaming in vulnerability assessments**: Strengthen country-level capacity for gender-sensitive assessments of immediate damage, loss and resilience, acknowledging the risks faced by women, including their social, economic and environmental contexts.

Strategic action area 2: Strengthening disaster risk and crisis governance

• **Inclusive disaster risk reduction policies**: Support countries in developing/updating gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and management policies, ensuring they address the specific needs and roles of women in agriculture and food systems. Simultaneously, establish minimum standards for gender equality in emergencies to respond to the risk of inclusive disaster and risk mitigation. These gender minimum standards will help communities to be prepared to risk.

• **Gender and age considerations in disaster risk management**: Develop national and regional institutional capacities to mainstream gender and age considerations, recognizing the different risks and coping strategies of women and men.

• **Regional collaboration on gender-responsive resilience**: Contribute to the regional resilience agenda by collaborating with regional organizations and coalitions focused on gender equality in the face of multiple shocks.

Strategic action area 3: Reducing risks and vulnerabilities

• **Gender-sensitive risk reduction interventions**: Support countries in adopting/expanding risk and vulnerability reduction measures that consider the differentiated impacts on women and men, recognizing their roles in agriculture and food systems.

• **Integration of gender considerations in social protection systems**: Develop and strengthen shock-responsive, and risk, gender and nutrition-sensitive social protection systems, acknowledging the unique factors of vulnerability faced by women in times of crisis.
• **Conflict-sensitive resilience programming:** Integrate multiple risk vulnerability reduction measures within FAO programs, with a focus on resilience programming in conflict-affected areas, recognizing the challenges faced by women in such contexts.

### Strategic action area 4: Strengthening a One Health approach against biological threats

Implement a One Health approach that addresses gender-specific factors of vulnerability and integrates gender considerations into strategies, research and measures to combat biological threats effectively.

### Strategic action area 5: Enhancing anticipatory actions, emergency preparedness and response

- **Gender-responsive emergency preparedness:** Support countries in strengthening emergency preparedness for effective response and response capacities, ensuring that contingency planning and mechanisms consider the unique needs and capacities of women.
- **Gender-inclusive emergency response:** Strengthen the quality of emergency response programs by supporting and building capacities for applying the principles of humanitarian-development-peace and accountability to affected populations, with a focus on nutrition, gender and inclusion.
- **Long-term resilience building with a gender lens:** Embed longer-term resilience building within humanitarian activities, recognizing the critical role of women in building sustainable and transformative resilience to multiple shocks.
To close the gender gaps that affect agrifood systems in the region and achieve the commitments of the 2030 Agenda, it is fundamental to promote integrated, systemic and transformative interventions that explicitly address the harmful practices, unequal social norms and gender-blind discriminatory policy frameworks that create inequality.

FAO RNE developed a regional gender strategy and action plan to sharpen the focus of its programme of work on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the NENA region. The strategy also aims to facilitate the reporting of the progress achieved.

**Theory of change**

Grounded in FAO’s commitment to gender equality, the theory of change (ToC) for the NENA region represents a strategic framework that resonates with FAO’s overarching policy on gender equality. This transformative approach is intricately intertwined into the fabric of FAO’s regional priorities, aligning with the unique challenges and opportunities of the NENA region. The ToC encapsulates the collective wisdom emanating from the outcomes of regional conferences, and harnesses the valuable recommendations offered by dedicated staff members across various levels. Serving as a dynamic guide, this ToC envisions a future where agrifood systems are not only productive and sustainable but also synonymous with gender equity and women’s empowerment.
**FAO institutional mechanisms and processes should:**

Facilitate the integration of a gender perspective into all its normative and technical work by requesting that it:
- responds to the diverse needs, interests and capacities of women and men, while considering intersectionality;
- is informed by gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data; and
- includes gender-related results and indicators in relevant measurement frameworks (from projects to country programming frameworks).

Where FAO employees and stakeholders have the capacity and share the responsibility to promote gender equality as part of the different technical areas and functions

FAO is committed and equipped with the necessary tools and resources to coordinate efforts, generate knowledge and promote innovative solutions to address the gender-based discriminations that still hold back rural women and girls.

**FAO’s gender equality goal:** Achieving equality between women and men in sustainable agriculture and rural development for the elimination of hunger and poverty.

### FAO’s gender equality objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equal voice and decision-making power.</th>
<th>Equal rights, access and control over resources.</th>
<th>Equal rights and access to services, markets and decent work.</th>
<th>Reduction of women’s work burden.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Priorities for action (2024–2027 Action Plan) at FAO RNE

- Supporting the adoption of policy and legal frameworks and the implementation of strategies, programmes and initiatives that promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in agrifood systems.
- Strengthening women’s access to and control over assets, resources, services, skills development opportunities, technology and innovation.
- Promoting equal participation and enhanced leadership and decision-making power in rural organizations, institutions, and governance mechanisms.
- Fostering the transformation of unequal social norms and behaviours to promote more equitable and healthier relationships between women and men, at household, community and institutional levels.

A twin-tracked approach (gender mainstreaming and women-targeted interventions) for the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment.
## Enablers

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<tr>
<th>Enablers</th>
<th>Impact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expanding evidence through sex-disaggregated innovative quantitative and qualitative data and gender-related information collection, analysis and use.</td>
<td><strong>Women and men in the NENA region have an equal access to resources, services and assets, and a strengthened participation in agrifood systems and decision-making processes, leading to better production, better nutrition, better environment and better life for all.</strong></td>
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<td>Strengthening institutional and individual capacities to promote gender equality in agrifood systems.</td>
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<td>Ensuring resource mobilization for programmes and initiatives on gender equality and women’s empowerment.</td>
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<td>Enhancing the institutional setup (including through human and financial resources) for gender mainstreaming at the regional and country office levels.</td>
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<td>Promoting the application of context-specific, intersectional and transformative approaches, ensuring active participation and consultation of different stakeholders on all levels.</td>
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<td>Consistent monitoring, reporting and evaluation of gender-related results (positive and unintended negative results) and contexts.</td>
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<td>Fostering innovative partnerships for gender equality and women’s empowerment in agrifood systems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promoting gender equality and gender equity at all levels across FAO offices in the region by <strong>demonstrating joint efforts</strong> to bring about concrete results, better working environments for female staff at FAO.</td>
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<td>Ensuring visibility and effective communication and advocacy to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment.</td>
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### Logical framework

At the heart of FAO’s commitment to gender equality in the NENA region lies the logical framework (logframe), a strategic tool crafted to translate the theory of change into actionable and measurable outcomes. Rooted in the overarching goal of achieving equal access to resources, services and assets for women and men, the logframe envisions a paradigm shift in the agrifood systems of the region. This transformative framework builds on the belief that a strengthened participation of women and men in decision-making processes will not only enhance production and nutrition but also contribute to a healthier environment and an improved quality of life for all. Adaptable to diverse contexts, the logframe serves as a beacon guiding interventions towards a future where gender equity is intrinsic to the very fabric of agrifood systems across the NENA region:
Improved adoption of legal and policy frameworks and implementation of strategies, programmes and initiatives promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) in agrifood systems.

**Output 1.A**
Fostered policy dialogue and advocacy on GEWE in agrifood systems with decision-makers and governmental institutions.

**Output 1.B**
Improved capacities of decision-makers and practitioners to mainstream gender in relevant policy-making and programme development processes, including investment plans.

To achieve this outcome, a dual-pronged approach is deployed, focusing on fostering robust policy dialogue and advocacy while concurrently enhancing the capacities of decision-makers and practitioners. Through **Output 1.A**, dynamic policy dialogues and targeted advocacy initiatives are planned, creating a space for meaningful conversations with decision-makers and governmental institutions. This strategic engagement aims to champion the GEWE cause in agrifood systems, influencing the adoption of progressive legal and policy frameworks.

**Output 1.B** constitutes a pivotal component of Outcome 1 directed towards building the capacities of decision-makers and practitioners. By providing tailored training and support, this output ensures that gender mainstreaming becomes an intrinsic aspect of policy-making and programme development processes. The emphasis extends to the integration of gender perspectives into investment plans, fostering a comprehensive approach that resonates with the diverse and evolving dynamics of agrifood systems.

Together, these outputs synergize to advance Outcome 1, steering the region towards a future where legal and policy frameworks resonate with gender equality principles and where strategies and initiatives are not mere documents but transformative tools shaping the reality of women’s empowerment in agrifood systems.
Outcome 2 focuses on transformative changes in the landscape of women’s participation and influence within agrifood systems. The triad of outputs under this outcome aims at addressing critical dimensions of women’s empowerment. Output 2.A takes centre stage by bolstering women’s capacities and expanding their access to decent employment and entrepreneurial opportunities within agrifood systems. This involves not only enhancing individual skills, but also creating an enabling environment for women to thrive in diverse roles.

Complementing this, Output 2.B directs efforts towards fostering an environment where women’s participation and leadership in rural organizations and cooperatives are not only encouraged but also strengthened. This output recognizes the pivotal role these organizations play in shaping agrifood systems and seeks to ensure that women contribute as decision-makers and influencers within these structures.

Simultaneously, Output 2.C addresses the critical need to enhance women’s adaptive and resilience capacities. By preparing women to navigate and withstand the impacts of multiple shocks and stressors, including climate change and crisis, this output contributes to creating a robust and sustainable foundation for women’s empowerment in the face of evolving challenges.

Collectively, these outputs underpin Outcome 2, envisioning a future where women not only gain equitable access to resources and opportunities within agrifood systems but also actively shape the trajectory of these systems through their leadership and adaptive capacities.
Outcome 3

FAO champions gender equality and women’s empowerment in the NENA region

Output 3.A
A solid institutional setup for facilitating and coordinating FAO’s regional gender.

Output 3.B
Staff capacities to mainstreaming gender in their respective areas of work are regularly assessed and enhanced.

Output 3.C
Approaches that promote equitable relationships through the transformation of discriminatory social norms are more systematically used in FAO’s interventions.

Outcome 3 serves as the cornerstone for FAO’s commitment to advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment across the NENA region. Embodied through three strategic outputs, this outcome reflects FAO’s dedication to institutionalizing gender-responsive practices and fostering transformative change.

Output 3.A underscores the importance of a robust institutional foundation. By establishing a solid setup for facilitating and coordinating FAO’s regional gender initiatives, this output ensures that gender equality becomes an integral part of FAO’s organizational fabric. The institutional framework created becomes the skeleton upon which other gender-responsive efforts are constructed.

Complementary to this, Output 3.B is tailored to enhance the capabilities of FAO staff. By regularly assessing and augmenting staff capacities to mainstream gender in their respective areas of work, this output positions FAO as an organization where gender considerations are not only acknowledged but actively incorporated into the daily functions and decision-making processes.

Anchored in societal transformation, Output 3.C aligns FAO interventions with approaches that challenge and reshape discriminatory social norms. This output ensures that FAO’s impact goes beyond immediate project outcomes, contributing to the broader goal of creating an environment where gender equity is not only advocated but becomes an inherent part of the societal fabric.
In essence, Outcome 3 envisions FAO as a pioneer in championing gender equality and women's empowerment, not only within its operational framework but also as a transformative force in the wider NENA region.

**Detailed action plan**

The detailed action plan acts as a comprehensive roadmap, intricately designed to propel FAO’s commitment to gender equality in the NENA region. Rooted in targeted interventions, this plan strategically aligns with standards and indicators, ensuring a nuanced approach towards measurable progress.

Leveraging existing standards and indicators, the plan introduces a refined set tailored to the NENA context. Benchmarks include increased percentages of women with capacities strengthened and enhanced women’s access to resources and heightened institutional capacities. Targets are set for specific timelines, providing a clear trajectory for progress tracking.

Recognizing the importance of collaborative efforts, the plan delineates stakeholders ranging from government bodies and rural institutions to academia and the private sector. Their involvement is integral to ensuring that interventions resonate with diverse perspectives and contribute to sustainable change.

To ensure accountability, the plan establishes a robust framework. Regular progress assessments, transparent reporting mechanisms and periodic evaluations should become instrumental components.

This detailed action plan stands as a testament to FAO’s commitment to fostering lasting change in the NENA region. It harmonizes targeted actions, tailored indicators, stakeholder collaboration and an accountability framework, collectively propelling the journey towards gender equality.

**Impact**

Women and men in the NENA region have equal access to resources, services and assets, and a strengthened participation in agrifood systems and decision-making processes, leading to better production, better nutrition, better environment and better life for all.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Partners and stakeholders</th>
<th>Indicators and targets</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.A. Fostered policy dialogue and advocacy on GEWE in agrifood systems with decision-makers and government institutions.</td>
<td>• Policy makers • Think tanks • Academia • Private sector • Government institutions • Media • UN sister agencies</td>
<td>Percentage of flagship publications, disseminated in the reporting year that include sex-disaggregated data and/or analyse gender dimensions. Target: 20% by 2027; 5% by 2024; 10% by 2025; 15% by 2026; and 20% by 2027.</td>
<td>20% by 2027</td>
<td>The RNE Gender Team and technical officers, especially working on data and knowledge management and GFPs.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1.A.1. Generation and dissemination of data and knowledge on GEWE and other relevant thematic areas for agrifood systems development in the NENA region.</td>
<td>• Parliamentarians • Governments (including at the decentralized level) • Civil society organizations • Women’s organizations</td>
<td>Number of advocacy events and policy dialogues held with decision makers and relevant stakeholders on topics related to GEWE. Target: 6 per biennium (1 at the regional level and 2 at the country level, for the whole region, every year).</td>
<td>12 by 2027</td>
<td>• FAO representatives • Technical officers with the support of the RNE Gender Team and GFPs</td>
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<td>1.A.2. Technical assistance to generate and disseminate sex- and age-disaggregated data and report on FAO-relevant gender-related SDG targets.</td>
<td>• Parliamentarians • Governments (including at the decentralized level) • Civil society organizations • Women’s organizations</td>
<td>Number of trainings/webinars held in the reporting year dedicated to sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive statistics. Target: 2 per year (1 for the whole region/ 8 by 2027).</td>
<td>8 by 2027</td>
<td>Technical officers with support of GFPs and the RNE Gender Team</td>
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<td>1.A.3. Organization of advocacy events and policy dialogues with decision makers and relevant stakeholders at country and regional level.</td>
<td>• Parliamentarians • Governments (including at the decentralized level) • Civil society organizations • Women’s organizations</td>
<td>Number of policy changes proposals presented to decision-makers. Target: 2 per year (total in the region, to be implemented at the country level).</td>
<td>8 by 2027</td>
<td>The RNE Gender Team with the support of GFPs and technical officers</td>
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<td>1.B. Improved capacities of decision-makers and practitioners to mainstream gender in relevant policy-making and programme development processes, including investment plans.</td>
<td>• Policy makers • Think tanks • Academia • Private sector • Government institutions • Media • UN sister agencies</td>
<td>Number of trainings/webinars held in the reporting year dedicated to sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive statistics. Target: 2 per year (1 for the whole region/ 8 by 2027).</td>
<td>8 by 2027</td>
<td>The RNE Gender Team with the support of GFPs and technical officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>02. Improved women’s access to and control over assets, resources, skills development opportunities, services, technologies and innovation.</td>
<td>2.A. Enhanced women’s capacities and access to decent employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in the agrifood systems.</td>
<td>2.A.1. Research, advocacy and technical support on gender-responsive service provision and women’s economic empowerment in agrifood systems.</td>
<td>Rural women • Cooperatives • Service providers • Funding institutions • Implementing partners • UN sister agencies • Development partners</td>
<td>Share of projects approved in the reporting period whose main objective is to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) (GM2 marker). Target: 20% by 2027 (5% by 2024; 10% by 2025; 15% by 2026; 20% by 2027).</td>
<td>18 by 2027</td>
<td>Technical officers in the RO and country offices with the support of the RNE Gender Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.A.2. Capacity building of women on technical and soft skills (leadership, decision-making, management, communication, associativity, knowledge on how to advocate for their rights, etc.) adapted to local context.</td>
<td>2.B. Strengthened women’s participation and leadership in rural organizations and cooperatives.</td>
<td>2.B.1. Capacity-strengthening of rural organizations, especially women-led ones, to facilitate members’ equal access to inputs, services and market opportunities.</td>
<td>Number of women who have improved soft and hard skills through FAO capacity-building. Target: 300 women every year (measurable through KAP surveys).</td>
<td>Number of rural organizations with strengthened capacities on GEWE by FAO. Target: 50 organizations every year (measurable through KAP surveys).</td>
<td>200 by 2027</td>
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<td>2.B.2. Provision of assets, productive resources and investments to cooperatives, SMEs and informal associations, especially women-led ones.</td>
<td>2.C. Enhanced adaptive and resilience capacities of women to cope with the impacts of multiple shocks and stressors, including climate change.</td>
<td>2.C.1. Conducting gender-sensitive baselines and assessments as well as gender-sensitive stakeholder analyses to understand women’s and men’s vulnerabilities, resilience and adaptive needs and capacities.</td>
<td>Academia • Funding partners • Governments and other decision-makers</td>
<td>Number of Country Gender Assessments (CGAs) finalized within the reporting year. Target: 1 assessment per country by 2027 (at least 4 per year for the whole region).</td>
<td>18 by 2027</td>
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<td>2.C.2. Strengthening of rural organizations, especially women-led ones, to facilitate members’ equal access to inputs, services and market opportunities.</td>
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<td>2.C.3. Provision of assets, productive resources and investments to cooperatives, SMEs and informal associations, especially women-led ones.</td>
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<td>2.C.4. Conducting gender-sensitive baselines and assessments as well as gender-sensitive stakeholder analyses to understand women’s and men’s vulnerabilities, resilience and adaptive needs and capacities.</td>
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<td>2.C.5. Strengthening of rural organizations, especially women-led ones, to facilitate members’ equal access to inputs, services and market opportunities.</td>
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<td>2.C.6. Provision of assets, productive resources and investments to cooperatives, SMEs and informal associations, especially women-led ones.</td>
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An action plan to achieve gender equality
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<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
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<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.C.2. Capacity-building of rural women on climate-smart, water-saving and environmentally friendly practices and technologies.</td>
<td>Women in agrifood systems</td>
<td>Number of women who have improved knowledge on climate-smart, water-saving and environmentally friendly practices and technologies.</td>
<td>600 by 2027</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.C.3. Implementation of gender-responsive livelihoods restoration and humanitarian interventions.</td>
<td>Funding institutions, Governments, Implementing partners and other decision-makers</td>
<td>Percentage increase of restoration and humanitarian interventions with a G1 or G2 marker. Target: 20% increase by 2027.</td>
<td>20% increase by 2027</td>
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<tr>
<td>03. FAO champions gender equality and women’s empowerment in the NENA region.</td>
<td>3.A. A solid institutional set-up for facilitating and coordinating FAO’s regional gender work is maintained and reinforced</td>
<td>Number of gender experts available at regional level and number of appointed GFPs (Gender network). Target: At least 5 gender experts for the RNE Gender Team and at least 1 GFP per country by 2027.</td>
<td>5 gender experts as part of RNE Gender Team by 2027 and 15 GFPs</td>
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<td>3.A.1. Allocation of sufficient resources (human and financial) to the FAO RNE gender team to deliver on the regional and country level gender priorities, provide technical support to the regional and country offices, and monitor progress on the Gender Strategy and its associated Gender Action Plan.</td>
<td>Number of reports on GEWE presented to the regional management. Target: 1 report every year.</td>
<td>4 by 2027</td>
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<td>3.A.2. Periodic reporting on the Regional Gender Strategy and action plan to the management, during the Regional Conference and through the UN- SWAP.</td>
<td>Number of training sessions dedicated to gender (face-to-face sessions, webinars) organized at headquarters and in decentralized offices in the reporting year. Target: 15 training sessions per year. Number of offices that completed/updated a gender stock-taking exercise in the reporting year. Target: 2 countries per year / 8 by 2027.</td>
<td>60 by 2027 8 by 2027</td>
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<td>3.A.3. Active coordination and capacity-building of the regional FAO GFP network.</td>
<td>Number of offices that completed/updated a gender stock-taking exercise in the reporting year. Target: 2 countries per year / 8 by 2027.</td>
<td>4 by 2027</td>
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<td>FAO senior management</td>
<td>5 gender experts as part of RNE Gender Team by 2027 and 15 GFPs</td>
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<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Partners and stakeholders</td>
<td>Indicators and targets</td>
<td>Timeframe</td>
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<td>3.A.4. Promote gender equality at all levels across FAO offices in the region by demonstrating joint efforts to increase career development opportunities for female’s staff at FAO.</td>
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<td>Number of capacity-strengthening activities held on gender parity, women’s leadership and unconscious biases in promotion and recruitment processes.</td>
<td>4 by 2027</td>
<td>• Senior management • Human resources</td>
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<td>3.A.5. Establishing and strengthening strategic partnerships with key stakeholders (including government institutions, academia, civil society organizations, international development agencies and regional networks), to enhance GEWE efforts in the NENA region.</td>
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<td>Number of regional or national strategic dialogues, donor consultations and meetings with resource partners, held in the reporting year, which discuss gender priorities as part of its agenda. Target: at least 1 per year for the whole region.</td>
<td>4 by 2027</td>
<td>Partnership division with the support of the RNE Gender Team and technical officers</td>
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<td>3.A.6. Develop a robust communication strategy and tools to raise awareness and share the results of GEWE initiatives in the NENA region.</td>
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<td>Number of gender related stories and achievements published on a yearly basis published on the corporate and internal website and social media. Target: 2 per year / 8 by 2027. Number of campaigns dedicated to GEWE only. Target: 2 per year for every country.</td>
<td>8 by 2027</td>
<td>Communication officers with the support of GFPs and the RNE Gender Team</td>
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<td>3.B. Staff capacities to mainstreaming gender in their respective areas of work are regularly assessed and enhanced.</td>
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<td>A course on gender equality in agrifood systems is made mandatory for all FAO employees by 2027. Target: Course developed and made mandatory for all employees.</td>
<td>Course developed and made mandatory by 2027</td>
<td>The RNE gender team with support of HQ Gender Team, GFPs and technical officers.</td>
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<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Partners and stakeholders</td>
<td>Indicators and targets</td>
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<td>3.B.2. Development and dissemination of tools and guidance materials to support FAO staff with the mainstreaming of gender in their respective areas of work.</td>
<td>Number of tools and guidance materials produced to mainstream gender in specific areas. Target: 3 per year for the whole region (1 at the regional level and 2 at the country level).</td>
<td>12 by 2027</td>
<td>The RNE Gender Team with support of HQ Gender Team, GFPs and technical officers.</td>
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<td>3.C. Approaches that promote equitable relationships through the transformation of discriminatory social norms are more systematically used in FAO’s interventions.</td>
<td>Number of newssletters or other tools dedicated to share results, lessons learned and good practices regarding GEWE. Target: 4 per year (1 every 4 months at the regional level).</td>
<td>16 by 2027</td>
<td>The RNE Gender Team with the support of the communication team (for the newsletter); and GFPs (to share results, lessons learned and good practices).</td>
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<td>3.C.1. Gather and disseminate results, lessons learned and good practices related to approaches and methodologies that explicitly challenge unequal gender norms within FAO projects and programmes in the NENA region.</td>
<td>Number of FAO staff members, partners and government counterparts who increase their knowledge on context-specific and gender-transformative approaches within agrifood systems. Target: 30 per year.</td>
<td>120 by 2027</td>
<td>The RNE gender team with the support of GFPs.</td>
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<td>3.C.2. Provide training and capacity-building programmes to FAO staff, as well as partners and government counterparts, to promote the adoption of context-specific and gender-transformative approaches within agrifood systems.</td>
<td>Number of FAO staff members, partners and government counterparts who increase their knowledge on context-specific and gender-transformative approaches within agrifood systems. Target: 30 per year.</td>
<td>120 by 2027</td>
<td>The RNE gender team with the support of GFPs.</td>
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Roles and responsibilities

In accordance with the FAO Policy for Gender Equality (2020–2030), it is the responsibility of every FAO employee to actively contribute to the achievement of gender equality objectives and adhere to the implementation of minimum standards. Specifically, senior managers are entrusted with the duty of ensuring that the staff under their supervision possess the requisite skills and resources to effectively integrate gender equality considerations into their respective domains of work. The delineation of responsibilities is elaborated in the detailed framework presented below:

ADGs (headquarters and regional), Subregional Coordinators, Directors and FAORs:
• Ensure the implementation of the Policy in their divisions, centres and offices;
• Ensure that technical and normative gender related work is systematically planned, resourced, implemented and monitored, and that lessons learned are documented;
• Ensure gender focal points are appointed and enabled to dedicate the expected percentage of time to gender-related work;
• Hold staff accountable for gender-related results through performance appraisals; and
• Invest in strengthening the capacities of staff to work on gender.

Gender Team (RNE and HQ):
• Coordinate the implementation of the Policy by providing strategic guidance and capacity development to all staff, particularly to members of the gender focal point network;
• Generate and disseminate gender-related evidence and knowledge;
• Develop tools and guidance materials;
• Provide technical advice and policy support to members and development partners; and
• Coordinate the implementation of projects and programmes targeted to women or aimed at promoting gender equality.

Gender focal points:
• Devote 20 percent of their time to gender-related work and include specific gender objectives or indicators in their performance evaluation and management system;
• Support the implementation of the Policy, particularly of the minimum standards that fall under the responsibility of respective divisions and offices;
• Support their colleagues and managers in the planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of gender-related work; and
• Disseminate relevant information related to FAO’s work on gender.

All employees:
• Invest in strengthening their knowledge and skills on gender in their areas of work, including completing mandatory and optional e-learning courses available at FAO;
• Familiarize themselves with the Policy and its requirements;
• Make use of available tools and guidance materials that can support the integration of gender in their areas of work; and
• Document and report on gender-related achievements.
In conclusion, this comprehensive Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan (2024–2027) for the NENA region represents a pivotal commitment by FAO RNE to address and rectify gender disparities within agrifood systems. The strategic focus on legal and policy frameworks, women’s access and control over resources and FAO’s institutional role exemplifies a holistic approach. By aligning with FAO’s global gender equality policy and incorporating regional priorities, this document aims to catalyse transformative change.

The concerted efforts outlined in the action plan, grounded in accountability, stakeholder involvement and a robust monitoring framework, underscore FAO RNE’s dedication to fostering inclusive, resilient and equitable agrifood systems in the region. This Strategy not only recognizes the multifaceted challenges but also sets forth a roadmap for empowering women, championing gender equality and advancing sustainable development across the NENA region.
References


