



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations

Organisation
des
Nations
Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная
организация
Объединенных
Наций

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION

TWENTIETH SESSION

SECOND NEAR EAST FORESTRY WEEK

ANTALYA, TURKEY
29 JANUARY - 02 FEBRUARY 2012

Good Governance of Forests and Rangelands : Pillar of Food Security

THE MANDATE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE REGIONAL FORESTRY AND RANGELAND BODIES IN THE NEAR EAST: AN OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

1. Forests and rangelands are closely inter-related natural resources often operating in one ecosystem as a continuum rather than discrete and autonomous forms. Forestry and rangelands management as practices to promote goods and services for the society in arid and semiarid lands can operate in one production system such as the silvo-pastoral system, and there is a great potential of creating a strong rural economy based on utilizing the diversity produced by the conjunction of both systems. Moreover, the combination and/or full synergy of range science and forestry approaches in natural resource management and development can provide an opportunity to address the issue of environmental degradation and desertification in a well – rounded and more holistic approach. The concept of Sustainable Forest management to be conducive to the expected social, economic and environmental functions should encompass range management in the Near East Region.

2. This overview is intended to look into the mandate, activities, and operational set-up of forestry and rangeland regional bodies in the Near East. The major objective is to review the mandate and activities of these organizations to see if, and how, they could work collaboratively with NEFRC. The document also proposes a set of recommendations on support intervention

This document is printed in limited numbers to minimize the environmental impact of FAO's processes and contribute to climate neutrality. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and to avoid asking for additional copies. Most FAO meeting documents are available on the Internet at WWW.FAO.ORG

options at policy, institutional and technical levels for the Committee on Forestry (COFO), the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC), the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions-*Silva Mediterranea*, the new Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests, FAO and member states. It is hoped that this will help to shift gears towards full synergy in the rational use and development of forests, rangelands and environmental protection.

FORESTS AND RANGELANDS IN THE NEAR EAST

3. Briefly, rangelands and forests in the Near East countries are included in four different phytogeographical zones, each with its distinctive climatic conditions and thereby, its associated vegetation. These are: The *Mediterranean*, *Irano-Turanean*, *Saharo-Sindian* and *Sudano-Deccanian* zones. However, some authorities may also categorize forests and range in the Near East on geographical/geo-political clustering such as *East of the Mediterranean*, *Arabian Peninsula*, *Middle Region* and *West Arabian Region*.

4. In the various ecosystems in these arid/semi-arid zones, invariably all natural life forms are encountered (trees, shrubs and herbaceous species) and their use depends, more or less, upon the interest of the community, where maximization of the returns is a prominent priority. Due to this communal utilization of the resource-base and other many interacting factors and mismanagement practices, large areas of forests and rangelands in the Near East have been described as severely degraded and severely affected by desertification. Therefore, concerted efforts from all partners are needed to restore the situation and attain sustainable development.

FORESTRY AND RANGE MANAGEMENT

5. Both forestry and range management have a lot to do with the environment, and the ecosystem approach in conservation, management and development of natural resources is well conceptualized by both foresters and range managers. However, what is needed is guidance on how to attain full synergy and reach a point where all those who are concerned with sustainable natural resource management and development could speak a common language and join hands to achieve common goals. Hence, concerted efforts and close coordination in ecosystem and natural resource management is required in which all players could work in a well-knit multi-disciplinary team for the sustainable development of this prominent natural resource base.

BODIES / INSTITUTION'S MANDATE, POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES

6. In the Near East proper, the bodies and institutions whose jurisdiction covers, more or less, the regional dimension in forestry, range and related ecosystems are many indeed. But there is minimum collaboration, joint ventures and synergy amongst them. For example the issues of conservation and development of forests and rangelands are always tackled on a sectoral basis without giving due attention to the totality of the ecosystem; an approach that may often result in seriously debilitating effects on other elements of the environment.

7. Based on the mandate and nature of activities, the regional forestry and rangelands bodies in the Near East can be broadly grouped into six groups. These broad groups include (i) the United Nations and International Bodies/Organizations (besides FAO), (ii) Regional Development Bodies, (iii) Regional Research Bodies, (iv) Regional Multilateral Financing Bodies (v), Regional Education and Training Bodies, (vi) International Bilateral Development Agencies and (vii) National Forestry and Range Bodies.

8. Before taking a closer look into the various bodies relevant to the complex of forestry, range, natural resources, ecosystem management and the environment in the Near East, one has to make it very clear that there is apparently a great deal of overlap as exhibited in the set of mandates of each of these bodies. However, this apparent overlap is extremely useful, because they often operate in a networking fashion rather than isolated islands. While each body has its

own broad organizational uniqueness, it also has its own functional niche. It is the tunes or overlapped areas between them that would attract them to cooperate and collaborate.

(i) The United Nations and International Bodies / Organizations

• **The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)**

9. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) is a voluntary arrangement among 14 international organizations and secretariats, with substantial programmes on forests. The CPF's mission is to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and strengthen long term political commitment. The CPF is chaired by FAO and is serviced by the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) Secretariat. CPF advocates the concept of sustainable forest management.

10. One of the objectives of CPF is to support UNFF and its member countries. CPF provides support to UNFF and other important international forest dialogues, including UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD. The CPF usually convenes to discuss strategic areas of coordination between CPF members and to work towards better coherence among countries' positions in international fora and meetings (e.g., COPs, biodiversity, etc).

• **The Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions-*Silva Mediterranea*** is one of the statutory body that cover the Mediterranean region. It is a forum for advising and taking action on key forestry issues for Mediterranean countries including several members of the Near East Regional Forestry Commission.

It remains the only international forum dedicated to Mediterranean forest issues in which the Mediterranean countries from the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission, the European Forestry Commission and the Near East Forestry Commission can meet, share experiences and establish cooperative programmes.

11. The new Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests (CPMF), launched by several partners in April 2011 during the II Mediterranean Forest Week in Avignon, has been established to support Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey to adapt their Mediterranean forests and other wooded lands to climate change. This CPMF is chaired by the Secretariat of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions-*Silva Mediterranea*.

• **The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)**

12. UNEP is the lead United Nations body mandated with global environmental affairs. The prominent task of UNEP is to initiate and coordinate the activities of all global environmental conventions such as Climate Change (UNFCCC), biodiversity (CBD) and the convention to combat desertification (UNCCD).

• **The United Nations Development Program (UNDP)**

13. The UNDP's primary mandate is to advocate for change and connect countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. UNDP focuses primarily on five developmental challenges. Environment and Energy is one of these five prominent developmental challenges. In this particular functional niche, UNDP's environmental strategy focuses, *inter alia*, on access to sustainable energy services, sustainable land management to combat desertification and land degradation, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and policies to control emissions of harmful pollutants and ozone-depleting substances. No doubt that the concept of putting forestry and range together can fit nicely with the goals and objectives of the UNDP's Environment and Energy activities. In this regards it is expected that UNDP can give support to FAO at policy level in the Near East Region.

- **The United Nation Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO)**

14. UNSO is specifically mandated to initiate and coordinate international and national efforts to combat desertification and droughts in the Sahel and North African countries. In this particular area, UNSO has implemented several activities to combat desertification and develop biomass cover. Its working modalities are closely linked with the UNDP. It can also be considered as subsidiary UNDP body specialized in the matter of desertification control in the Sahel area. As developing forestry and range is central in the process of desertification control, a great deal of UNSO mandate and activities can be fostered by NEFRC.

- **The Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE)**

15. The League of Arab States through CAMRE adopted a political declaration that outlines the main elements of the Arab position in the climate change negotiations. The declaration recognized that the Arab region, located within a dry and arid region, will be one of the most vulnerable areas to the potential effects of climate change. These include increased intensity of drought, desertification and scarcity of water resources. It emphasizes the need to mainstream climate change in development policies, strategies and programmes of the Arab countries. It stresses that governments play the major role in addressing the climate-change challenges, but in coordination with all parties concerned, including the scientific community. To this end CAMRE can be approached by FAO for support and intervention options at policy level in the member states in the Near East.

- **The Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE)**

16. CEDARE is an international inter-governmental organization whose strategic objective is to promote the advancement of “environmental action for development” through investment in human capital, with the aim of building qualified human cadres, capable of leading the development process, especially in the fields of sustainable development. CEDARE actively cooperates with the European Commission, international and national organizations in implementing sustainable development, research and environmentally related projects in Arab Region. CEDARE often collaborates on setting project frameworks, and recommending the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. CEDARE also act as project multiplier with the participation in symposia and conferences where results of interventions can be disseminated. In the matter of policy measures and proper technical interventions for sustainable development of natural resources (forestry/ range) and environmental protection, CEDARE as an Arabian and European initiative can play an effective role in support of NEFRC.

- **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**

17. It constitutes a forum for governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Scientists and local communities. It is mandated with global conservation of nature to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. Its interventions include extensive activities, field projects and research on biodiversity and ecosystems. IUCN can collaborate with NEFRC on conservation of forest and range biodiversity and in the sustainable management of this important natural resource base.

(ii) Regional Development Bodies

- **The Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD)**

18. AOAD is mandated with the regional development of all agricultural and natural resource aspects through collecting, disseminating and facilitating exchange of knowledge and information

on research, training and innovations. The ministers of Agriculture in the member states constitute the governing council of AOAD. They convene annually to discuss and approve policies and regional strategies for agricultural development. In the area of forests, rangelands and grazing resources, AOAD has genuinely conducted thorough reconnaissance surveys/studies in almost all Arab countries. Despite its effective role in forestry and range, AOAD cannot be considered as specialized in this area. Therefore, it is expected that AOAD can effectively collaborate at policy and technical levels with NEFRC in the Arab States.

- **Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD)**

19. IGAD was originally founded as a regional body for drought, desertification control and development in seven countries in East Africa. Currently IGAD is strictly mandated to manage drought and combat desertification in the Horn of Africa.

20. In its endeavors to implement UNCCD, IGAD conducted studies, prepared strategies and regional plans to combat desertification where forestry and range were essential elements, and thereby NEFRC can strengthen links with IGAD in the implementation of the UNCCD.

- **The Tehran Process on Low Forest Cover Countries Secretariat (TP LFCCs).**

21. The major mandate of the TP LFCCs Secretariat revolves genuinely around fostering national forest programmes in all member states and promotes regional and sub-regional arrangements for the exchange of experience and for support to national processes, in close partnership with the international like-minded community.

22. In achieving its prominent objectives, LFCCs Secretariat has established strong linkages with the objectives and proposed actions of the three global conventions (CCD, CBD, FCCC) as well as with other multilateral organizations, and drawn the attention of the international community to the unique needs of LFCCs.

23. Immediately after its establishment, the TP Secretariat involved actively and participated in forest-related national, regional and international meetings such as IFF and UNFF, Near East Forestry Commissions and regional committees, Silva-Mediterranean, FAO's Committees on Forestry, international and national meetings on Criteria and Indicators and organized its own regional workshops. In addition, TP LFCCs Secretariat cooperated with FAO, UNEP, UNDP and UNFF on LFCC related matters and formulated a strategy and action plan whose implementation is actively followed-up in close cooperation and with assistance of the FAO.

24. With its mandate, modalities and all these great activities and achievements, one can say with great certainty that there is a lot in common and close similarities between TP LFCCs and the NEFRC mandate and objectives. However, the aspects of strengths and uniqueness of NEFRC may come from its focus on forestry and range as one ecosystem; an approach that for the first time will be able to look into the totality of the environment and promote agro-silvo-pastoral production system in the Near East, and therefore, could effectively contribute to the international and regional efforts of poverty alleviation.

(iii) Regional Research Bodies

- **The Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD)**

25. ACSAD is mandated with research and development of Rangelands in Arid and Semiarid Zones in all Arab countries. Again since its inception, ACSAD has launched genuine research in almost all key ecological zones in the Near East. This regional research body also was involved in formulating and executing some range development and management activities in various

Arabian countries. In the matter of forestry and range research in arid lands, NEFRC can work in close partnership with ACSAD.

- **International Center for Agricultural Research Development (ICARDA)**

26. ICARDA has a global mandate for the improvement of legume crops through active research, training and policy advice in the Near East Region. It serves the non-tropical dry areas to improve on-farm water-use efficiency, rangelands and small-ruminant production. It also works on improved land management and land use diversification with the vision of contributing to the improvement of livelihoods of the resource-poor in dry areas, while ensuring the efficient and more equitable use and conservation of natural resources. With this global mandate and its immense experience in improving the quality of agro-pastoral system and livelihoods of the resource-poor in dry areas, ICARDA can collaborate nicely and serve the objectives of NEFRC.

- **International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)**

27. This international research institute is the result of a transformation of the former International Livestock Center for Africa (ILCA). ILRI is currently mandated with developing new knowledge as well as technological and policy options on livestock – based rural economy in pastoral and livestock rearing areas in Africa. Most intervention activities of ILRI in Africa are confined to sedentary and village – based livestock rearing production system. To this end ILRI is very much similar to ICARDA and the chances of collaboration with NEFRC in North African countries are great.

- **International Center for Research in Agro-forestry (ICRAF)**

28. This regional research center is mandated with promotion and technology transfer on forestry and agro- forestry, socioeconomic, farming systems and soil science. The most important activities of this center are education and dissemination of knowledge, training and research. As an eminent agro-forestry research body, ICRAF can serve the objectives of NEFRC in the area of range and pasture improvement.

(iv) Regional Multilateral Financing Bodies

- **International Fund for Agricultural Development(IFAD)**

29. IFAD is one of the most prominent financing agencies for agricultural development and finances projects that include forestry and rangelands. IFAD is actively involved in financing several intervention activities in the area of rangelands management, agro-forestry, rural development, desertification control and environmental protection. Similar to many financing agencies, IFAD work modalities include preparation of thorough environmental impact assessment (EIA) and sound mitigation measures in all phases of the financed projects. According to these modalities and areas of interest, IFAD may constitute the right financing mechanism for most of the NEFRC member states in the Near East.

- **The African Development Bank (AfDB)**

30. The AfDB is a regional multilateral Financing Institution for all aspects of development in Africa. It co-financed several huge projects in the area of range management, reforestation and pasture development in Africa. AfDB work modalities pay close attention to the environment and EIA and sound mitigation measures are essential in the AfDB lending process.

- **The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)**

31. IsDB is an International Financing Agency mandated with economic development and social progress in the Islamic countries. In areas related to forestry and range development, environment and alleviating poverty, IsDB co-financed many activities in the Islamic countries. Alleviating poverty, promoting human development, environment and food security are priority areas. Again IsDB like IFAD and AfDB may collaborate financially with NEFRC in its various forestry, range, ecosystem management and poverty alleviation activities in the member states.

(v) Regional Education and Training Bodies

32. These include the Arab Institute for Forestry and Range (AIFR) and various universities and training institutes in the Near East countries. AIFR is a regional training institute mandated with mid-level education and training in forestry and range management. Currently, the AIFR is offering an effective 2 year training package in forestry and range management for students from all Arabian countries. Other universities and training centers can also collaborate with NEFRC in designing and offering training packages in all aspects of forestry, range, integrated ecosystem and natural resource management.

(vi) Some Relevant International Bilateral Development Agencies

33. There are many eminent international bilateral development agencies operating in the area of environment, rural development, desertification control, ecosystem management, forestry, range and natural resource development in the Near East. These agencies can collaborate with NEFRC at grass –roots and national levels in almost all member states. NEFRC can approach and attract some of these agencies to join hands with it to serve the rural communities in sustainable development of forestry, range and natural resources. Examples of these agencies may include OXFAM-GB, GTZ, NORAGRIC, FINIDA, SIDA and CIDA.

(vii) Some National Forestry and Range Bodies

34. Examples of national forestry and range bodies in the region include Saudi Arabia -Range and Forestry Administration (RFA), Sudan -National Forests Corporation (NFC) / Range and Pasture (RPA), Syria -the Syrian Badeya Development and Improvement Program and Tunisia - the National Plan to Combat Desertification.

35. These national bodies are specifically mandated with conservation, research and development of the vast rangelands and forests cover with top priority to the development of the pastoralists' production systems. All of them are focusing on range reserves (*mahmeyat*) and shelter belts development as strategy to conserve and develop the forests and range covers in their respective countries. Most salient activities included desertification control and environmental protection, establishment of range reserves, seeds bulking of native shrubby and herbaceous fodder plants, seeding/reseeding operations, training/capacity building and extension work among local communities.

36. In these particular countries there are good examples in forestry and range development can be adopted by NEFRC for replication in other countries having similar ecological and socioeconomic conditions.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- There are great chances among regional bodies, policy makers, planners and practitioners in the Near East to achieve full integration and synergy in conservation, management, improvement and sustainable development of forestry and range.

- Relevant regional bodies mandated, in a way or another, with forests and range include, besides FAO as major player, some United Nations and International Bodies / Organizations, Regional Development Bodies, Regional Research Bodies, Regional Multilateral Financing Bodies, Regional Education and Training Bodies and International Bilateral Development Agencies. At the national levels invariably, in all countries, there are at least two or more government bodies and institutions mandated with forestry and range management affairs.
- Eminent United Nations and International bodies that may collaborate with NEFRC include UNEP, UNDP, UNSO, CAMRE, CEDARE and IUCN. These bodies have a lot to do with the objectives and proposed actions of the three global conventions CCD, CBD and FCCC. NEFRC has greater chances to establish bonds with these eminent United Nation bodies and collaborate in the implementation of these global conventions.
- Likewise, NEFRC can establish collaborative avenues with like-minded regional development bodies such as AOAD, IGAD and the TP LFCCs. There is a lot in common and close similarities between the mandate and objectives of TP LFCCs and the NEFRC. However, the strengths and uniqueness of NEFRC may come from its focus on forestry and range as one ecosystem; an approach that for the first time will be incorporated in natural resource management plans and strategies. It is expected that this concept in ecosystem management will promote agro-silvo-pastoral production system in the Near East, and therefore, could effectively contribute to the international and regional efforts of poverty alleviation.
- Examples of the Regional Research Bodies that may closely collaborate with NEFRC include ACSAD, ICARDA, ILRI, and ICRAF. These regional research bodies can join hands with NEFRC in improving the quality of agro-pastoral system and livelihoods of the resource-poor in dry areas.
- The Regional Multilateral Financing Bodies include IFAD, AfDB and IsDB. They may collaborate financially with NEFRC in its various forestry, range, sustainable ecosystem management and poverty alleviation activities in the member states. The policy framework of these regional financing bodies is centered on the empowerment and support of the rural poor to overcome poverty.
- Regional Education and Training Bodies such as the AFRI and various universities and training institutions in the Near East may collaborate in training to meet the interest of NEFRC member states.
- Some eminent International Bilateral Development Agencies such as OXFAM-GB, GTZ, NORAGRIC, FINLAND, SIDA and CIDA can be approached by NEFRC to help in some bilateral development activities to serve the rural communities in sustainable development of forestry, range, natural resources and the environment at large.
- In this overview a sample of some national forestry and range bodies in the region is presented with some reflections on their mandates, activities and sound achievements. The good examples in forestry and range development in some countries can be adopted by NEFRC and replicated in other countries having similar ecological and socioeconomic conditions.

THE WAY FORWARD

- It is strongly recommended here, that the /NEFRC should come out with a definition or an acceptable technical description for forestry and range ecosystem in arid and semi-arid areas in the Near East. This may help in delineating the jurisdiction of NEFRC and make its agenda and interests more conspicuous as compared with other like-minded bodies operating in the area.

- It is also recommended that /NEFRC open avenues and strengthen bonds with CPF, UNFF and UNEP on all levels of global environmental conventions (UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD). CPF can support the work of the UNFF and its member countries and foster increased cooperation and coordination on forests and range ecosystem in the Near East. Specifically, it is recommended that FAO puts forestry and range together as the focus area and objectives of CPF, particularly in the arid and semi-arid ecosystems in the Near East and elsewhere. To do so, FAO may come out with a specific technical definition or reasonably accepted description of the new concept of forestry and range in ecosystem management. Through this proposed technical definition from the FAO to combine forestry and range, CPF can support the work of the UNFF and its member countries and foster increased cooperation and coordination on forests and range ecosystem in the Near East.
- There is no doubt that the concept of putting forestry and range together can fit nicely with the goals and objectives of the UNDP's Environment and Energy activities. In this regards it is recommended that strong bonds be established with UNDP to give support to COFO/FAO at policy level in the Near East Region.
- It is recommended that FAO/NEFRC approach CAMRE for support and intervention options at policy level in the member states in the Near East.
- Likewise, strong working relations should be established with CEDARE for support in the matter of policy measures and proper technical interventions for sustainable development of natural resources (forestry/ range) and environmental protection.
- IUCN can collaborate with NEFRC on conservation of forest and range biodiversity and in the sustainable management of this important natural resource base.
- NEFRC should approach and open avenues for collaboration with AOAD at policy and technical levels in the Arab States and strengthen links with IGAD in the implementation of the UNCCD.
- Despite the slight difference and uniqueness of either body, the TP LFCCs and NEFRC are closely related and like-minded in their mandate and objectives. There should be close collaboration between them at institutional, structure, policy and technical levels.
- In the matter of research on ecosystem management, forestry, range, agro-pastoral system and livelihoods of the resource-poor in dry areas, NEFRC should work in close partnership with ACSAD, ICARDA, ILRI and ICRAF as eminent research bodies in the region .
- IsDB, IFAD and AfDB constitute prominent financing agencies in the region and may collaborate financially with NEFRC in its various forestry, range, ecosystem management and poverty alleviation activities in the member states.
- In the area of training and education in all aspects of forestry, range, integrated ecosystem and natural resource management NEFRC is recommended to collaborate with AFRI and the various universities and training institutes in the Near East to design and organize training and education packages.
- Should its mandate allows, NEFRC is strongly recommended to advise and collaborate with national forestry and range bodies in preparing comprehensive national strategies or plans for sustainable forests and range development, modifying bodies and institutional structures, legislative reforms, and dissemination of knowledge and experience on successful technical interventions.

Delegates may wish to provide their guidance and contributions to the following questions:

- How can better coordination and synergies be achieved between the NEFRC and regional organizations with a mandate to work on forests and rangelands?
- What specific role should the Near East Forestry and Range Commission play in improving coordination across organizations that work on forests and rangelands?
- Are there examples in the region of successful coordination across organizations that could be used as learning models?