



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



In preparation for the **NERC 37**

A Concept note

For

FAO-RNE Regional Technical Dialogue on Water

Under the Theme

“ Water Use Efficiency and Water Productivity within
Sustainability Boundaries for Resilient Transformation of
Agrifood Systems in the NENA Region ”

Date: Monday, 25 September 2023

Time: 11:00 – 14:00 (Cairo Time)

Place: Virtual (Zoom Platform)

Background

In February 2022, the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (FAO-RNE) organized the 36th Session of its Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC 36) hosted by the Republic of Iraq. During the NERC 36 conference, ministers of agriculture, partner organizations, sister agencies, and senior officials of member countries gathered to elaborate on regional challenges and priorities related to the Near East and North Africa region and to ensure the effectiveness of FAO's impact in the region in defining its work priorities for the next biennium.

FAO Regional Conferences are generally organized with the aim of bringing together major stakeholders and actors to strengthen joint action in supporting countries to overcome the complex challenges faced and achieve food security and nutrition through sustainable, inclusive, and resilient agrifood systems.

Next year, FAO-RNE will organize the 37th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC 37) under the theme **“Accelerating the Transformation of Agrifood Systems”**. Agrifood systems transformation is seen as one of the few entry points to accelerating progress towards achieving the SDGs. Consequently, the expected outcome of NERC-37 is to agree upon and launch a Regional Agrifood Systems Transformation Agenda 2023-2028. The Regional Agenda would include the elements for operationalization of the agrifood systems transformation with clearly defined pathways and action plans for the member states and FAO.

Water is a foundational component of agrifood systems and critical for their transformation, yet it is the number one limiting factor for agriculture in the NENA region. Water is currently facing increased challenges that undermine regional efforts toward achieving Sustainable Development Goals (i.e. water scarcity and climate variability, extreme events, and

water pollution and quality deterioration). [The State of the Land and Water Report \(SOLAW\)](#) for the Near East and North Africa produced by FAO in 2022 illustrates that freshwater availability per capita declined in NENA by 78 percent between 1962 and 2018.

It also emphasizes the need to increase the resilience of agricultural production systems by promoting efficient water management and climate-proof practices to optimize the use of limited water resources and reduce the pressure on existing water systems that are nearly at breaking point, threatening food security, livelihoods, and the lives of billions of people.

To ensure efficient management of limited water resources, it is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships between water use efficiency and productivity approaches and land and water sustainability, as well as to conduct an in-depth review of the main transition pathways required to accelerate the transformation of agrifood systems. Furthermore, the enabling environment must be strengthened by advancing the transformation of existing governance and institutional frameworks into more cohesive policies and inclusive strategies.

In light of the above and considering the recent outcomes of the 43rd session of the FAO conference, where the general debate theme was on water resources management culminating with its approval of the theme *“Water resources management for the four betters: better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”* as the biennial theme for 2024/25, FAO-RNE is organizing a **virtual** Regional Technical Dialogue on water titled **“Water Use Efficiency and Water Productivity within Sustainability Boundaries for Resilient Transformation of Agrifood Systems in the NENA Region”**.

The event will take place on September 25, 2023, from 11:00- 14:00 (Cairo time).

Objective

The Regional Technical Dialogue on Water aims to provide a forum through which member countries, stakeholders and development partners can exchange information and lessons learned, and propose joint action at regional and sub-regional levels. It also seeks to assist FAO in identifying water-related regional priorities, gaps, and challenges to better shape potential future work programmes in the Region.

With the aim of reviewing the aforementioned issues within the context of enhancing water use efficiency and productivity as a means of accelerating the transformation of agrifood systems in the Near East and North Africa region, the discussions on technical cooperation during the meeting will seek to break

down the available courses of action required to accelerate agrifood systems transformation, using four related response areas:

1. Facilitating the transformation of legal and institutional frameworks by promoting multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral governance and by strengthening policy coherence.
2. Advancing water and agriculture sustainability by investing in improved water efficiency and productivity tools to meet sustainable boundaries of water use towards a more resilient economy.
3. Fostering a solid & standardized knowledge base for adaptive decision-making.
4. Managing sustainability within uncertainty by maintaining a climate-smart transformation.

Tentative Agenda

Time	Presentation/Topic	Proposed Speakers/Panelists
5 min	Opening remarks: Statement by the FAO Regional Representative for the Near East and North Africa (Dialogue objectives, structure, and expected outcomes)	Dr. Abdul Hakim Elwaer , FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for the Near East and North Africa.
15 min	Overview presentation: <i>“FAO Regional Water Scarcity Initiative: Promoting Transition Pathways for Sustainable Water Use in Agriculture”</i>	Dr. Mohamed Al-Hamdi , Senior Land and Water Officer and the Delivery Manager for the Regional Water Scarcity Initiative (WSI).
30 min	Panel Discussion 1: <i>Facilitating the Transformation of Governance and Institutional Frameworks for Sustainable Agricultural Production</i> Moderator: Heba Al-Hariry, Water Scarcity Adviser, FAO-RNE	
	Main discussion topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Water Reallocation in Scarce Contexts: Impacts on Productivity, Production, and Food Security. » Groundwater Reallocation: Case Study from Tunisia. » Policy Coherence and Inclusive Cross-sectoral Governance as Key Enablers for Agrifood System Transformation. 	Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Dr. Frank Van Steenberg, FAO Consultant on Water accounting for improved water allocation. » Dr. Gabouj Ridha, Secretary of State in charge of Water, Ministry of Agriculture Water Resources and Fisheries. » H.E Prof. Ibrahim Adam Dukheri, the Director-General of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD).

Time	Presentation/Topic	Proposed Speakers/Panelists
15 min	Open Discussion	
30 min	<p>Panel Discussion 2: <i>Advancing Water Efficiency and Productivity to Meet Sustainable Boundaries of Water Use</i></p> <p>Moderator: Heba Al-Hariry, FAO-RNE</p> <p>Main discussion topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Promoting the Role of Innovation and Technology Transfer in Incentivizing Agrifood System Transformation. » Water Accounting and Water Tenure as Key Building Blocks for Efficient Agricultural Water Productivity. » Water Productivity and Better On-Farm Water Management for Increased Resilience. 	<p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Dr. Vinay Nangia, Research Team Lead, ICARDA. » Dr. Amgad El Mahdi, Water Sector Lead at Green Climate Fund-GCF. » Jippe Hoogeveen, Technical Officer, FAO-NSL.
15 min	Open Discussion	
15 min	Break	
30 min	<p>Panel Discussion 3: <i>Managing Sustainability within Uncertainty by Maintaining a Climate-Smart Transformation.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Dr. Mohamed Al-Hamdi, FAO-RNE</p> <p>Main discussion topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Brackish Water Use: Incentivizing Change in Water and AgriFood Systems » Sanitation Safety Planning: Challenges and Lessons Learned. » Water, Energy & Food Nexus: Unlocking Incentives for Comprehensive Agrifood Systems Transformation. 	<p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Dr. Qtaishat Moh'd Rasool, FAO Consultant. » Dr. Maha M.I. Halalshah, FAO Consultant. » Dr. Jauad El Kharraz, Executive Director of the Regional Center for Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency (RCREEE).
10 min	Open Discussion	
10 mn	Commitments, Summing up, and the way forward.	Ambassador Shahira Wahbi , Chief of Natural Resources Sustainability, Partnerships, & Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) at the League of Arab States (LAS).
5 min	Closure of the Regional Dialogue	Dr. Mohamed Al-Hamdi , FAO-RNE

Expected Outcomes

The deliberations and consultation process during the meeting will lead to the formulation of the following products:

- » Review of the regional progress on SDG 6.4.1 and 6.4.
- » Stocktaking on effective management response options in the agriculture water sector, potential areas of work to improve governance, policy coherence and assist partner countries to implement adaptive management in the agriculture water sector using appropriate and newly developed tools and methodologies (i.e. water productivity, water efficiency, water accounting, non-conventional water resources, inclusive land, and water governance among other topics)
- » Collect Inputs to guide and influence NERC-37 water-related discussion topics, with a special focus on primary response options required to accelerate agrifood systems transformation and bring back agricultural water use within sustainable limits towards a more productive future.
- » Recommendations on the modalities and transition pathways for addressing regional priorities in preparation for the Regional Conference.

Reference documents

- » Water Scarcity Initiative
- » The State of Land and Water Resources for Food and Agriculture - in the Near East and North Africa Region
- » Guidelines for the Calculation of the Agriculture Water Use Efficiency for Global Reporting.
- » Improving Water Allocation for Agriculture in the Arab Region.
- » Guidelines for Brackish Water Use for Agricultural Production in The Near East and North Africa Region