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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

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Outcomes of COP27 and COP28 for the NENA region

Executive Summary

Two consecutive sessions of the Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) took place in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region: COP27 from 6 to 20 November 2022 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt; and COP28 from 30 November to 13 December 2023 in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates. Following the special session convened at the 36th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC 36) in Baghdad on “Water, Energy and Food in the Context of COP-27 and CO-P28”, the last two years have seen heightened engagement amongst Members in climate change dialogues and action in the region. The Regional Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) funds helped to support regional NENA engagement, including capacity building, Members’ participation and advocacy and information sharing.

Agrifood systems featured prominently in the outcomes of COP27 and COP28. At COP27, a decision was agreed on the launch of the Sharm El-Sheikh *Joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security*, which provides continuity from the earlier Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture. In 2023, 159 states and territories signed the [COP28 UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action](#) which recognized the adverse impacts of climate change on the sectors and the potential of agriculture and food systems to drive innovative responses to these risks. The decision to establish a [Loss and Damage \(L&D\)](#) funding facility at COP27 made progress on the operationalization of the fund to respond to L&D. Agriculture was included in the concluding text of the [global stocktake](#) under the Paris Agreement. Reducing climate-induced water scarcity and attaining climate-resilient food and agricultural production, supply and distribution of food were among the targets identified in the [global goal on adaptation](#) (GGA) text.

At COP28, FAO launched its global roadmap to eradicate hunger within 1.5 degrees Celsius limit. To further support the agriculture and food security track of the UNFCCC, the COP28 Presidency, FAO, CGIAR, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank launched the [Agrifood Sharm-El Sheikh Support Programme](#). The [inception phase](#) of the COP27 Presidency Food and Agriculture for Sustainable Transformation Initiative (FAST) partnership was launched at COP28, inviting countries and organizations to pledge technical and financial support towards improving the quantity and quality of climate finance for agriculture and food systems to

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adapt within a 1.5-degree pathway. FAO is part of the taskforce to produce the [COP28 Agriculture, Food and Climate Action Toolkit](#) to support countries in undertaking transformative actions in food systems. Agrifood systems gained substantial visibility through investments by FAO to stage the [Food and Agriculture Pavilion](#) at both COP27 and COP28, hosted by FAO and key partners, and supporting the Water for Climate Pavilion to amplify priorities related to water scarcity and adaptation. The Pavilions drew thousands of visitors. Agrifood systems events programmed by FAO over the last two COPs included 35 UN-system events and over 60 high-level, Presidency, or UNFCCC mandated events.

Suggested action by the Regional Conference

The Regional Conference is invited to urge Members to:

- a. seize opportunities to align the outcomes of UNFCCC COP27 and COP28 with ongoing UN processes towards a programmatic approach, particularly that of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and Food Systems national pathways integrated in climate action.
- b. invest in building capacities of agricultural sectors stakeholders – national institutions, civil society, women’s groups and farmers’ organizations – on climate change impacts and solutions, enhancing their engagement with national climate change planning processes, including National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Long-Term Strategies (LTS).
- c. use FAO tools and knowledge to knowledge implementation of climate change actions in agricultural sectors that transform agrifood systems to become more sustainable, resilient to climate stress and shocks, and a viable source of livelihoods, especially for small-holder farmers faced with short- and long-term changes in temperature, precipitation and the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.
- d. adopt systematic programming approach to climate finance by strengthening coordination between agricultural sectors towards whole-of-government, evidence-based national climate change actions.

The Regional Conference is invited to call upon FAO to:

- a. continue to advocate for the strategic inclusion of agrifood systems in climate solutions in global climate fora, ensuring climate action is inclusive and responsive to all segments of the society including women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, marginalized communities and the most vulnerable.
- b. continue supporting countries to mobilize technical and financial resources towards climate resilient agrifood systems, including support to assess climate-related Loss and Damage.
- c. support countries in capacity building and knowledge exchange in partnership with regional institutions, drawing on new and enlarged networks and partnerships with climate change and food systems actors, such as civil society and the private sector.

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

RNE NERC Secretariat
FAO-RNE-NERC@FAO.ORG

I. Introduction

1. The latest Sixth Assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) [report](#) shows that current rates of emissions reduction are not sufficient to limit global

temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius by the year 2100 in line with the 2015 Paris Agreement goal. As a result, the impacts of climate change such as droughts, floods and heatwaves are expected to intensify and become more frequent. Such impacts when interacting with geopolitical and food crises will become a multiplier of food insecurity, poverty and malnutrition. Currently, up to 783 [million people face food insecurity and a third of the world's population lacks access to adequate food](#)¹.

2. FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031 aims to ensure that while agrifood systems contribute to, and are affected by, the impacts of the climate crisis, they are also part of the solution for transforming agrifood systems through innovative solutions and while playing a key role in climate change mitigation. This was the key message of FAO to the UNFCCC COPs.

3. The 27th Conference of Parties (COP27) to the =UNFCCC took place from 6 to 20 November 2022 in Sharm El-Sheikh, under the Presidency of Egypt representing the African nations. COP28 took place in Dubai from 30 November to 12 December 2023, hosted by the United Arab Emirates representing the Asian group of nations.

4. The role of FAO at the UNFCCC COPs is to:

- a. advocate for linkages between agriculture and food systems, food security and nutrition and climate change;
- b. support countries in the climate negotiations, particularly on agriculture and for scaling up climate commitments related to food systems transformation and reversing biodiversity loss;
- c. reinforce FAO's commitment to supporting countries to raise ambition and enhance action in agrifood related sectors, ecosystems and biodiversity, working through countries' NDC and NAP targets; and to access climate finance and mobilize additional financial resources including through the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility, the Adaptation Fund, Multilateral Development Finance and bilateral donors; and
- d. offer practical solutions to tackle climate change for achieving sustainable development.

5. Under Regional Priority 3 (RP3): Greening agriculture, water scarcity and climate action, FAO is providing support to highlight regional agriculture and food security priorities at COP27 and COP28, seizing the opportunity of a heightened role of regional actors and institutions, as well as the attention to topics of significance to Near East Member Countries, such as water, climate-resilient agriculture, innovation and finance. Under RP3, FAO has also taken the opportunity to enhance advocacy for integrating climate action with actions addressing water scarcity, disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action, gender-responsive programming, forest-based adaptation and ecosystem restoration.

6. This paper highlights how advocacy for sustainable agrifood systems as one of the solutions for climate change was enhanced at COP27 and COP28 through: 1) regional activities in the lead-up to COP and in support of the Egyptian COP Presidency; 2) achievements for agrifood systems in mandated work and COP27 decisions; and 3) advocacy for agriculture and food systems issues at regional and global fora.

II. Regional activities in the lead-up to UNFCCC COP27 and COP28

7. At the regional level, FAO provided support NENA countries and the Government of Egypt in the run-up to COP27² in the form of regional Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) funds. The funds supported enhanced regional engagement in the two COPs, including: 1) capacity building of agrifood systems actors to participate in COPs, including an in-person workshop, a webinar series and roundtables; 2) participation of countries in COPs, Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Climate

¹ FAO, 2023. State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023. Available online: <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc3017en>

² TCP/RAB/3806

Weeks and other UNFCCC mandated events; 3) supporting advocacy and programming on cross-cutting issues, such as loss and damage; bioeconomy; disaster risk reduction and adaptation; and gender and climate change; 4) coordinating [regional NENA engagement](#) and sponsorship of COP Pavilions and side events, including on youth and gender; and 5) support to the Egyptian COP27 Presidency, including initiatives such as the FAST Partnership, the Initiative on Climate Change and Nutrition (I-CAN), Action for Water Adaptation and Resilience (AWARE), Climate Responses for Sustaining Peace (CRSP), and others.

8. The 36th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC 36) addressed the opportunity of leveraging climate action momentum in Member Countries in the following ways:

- a. The NERC36 Senior Officers' Meeting (10-13 January 2022) took stock of Members' articulation of climate change as a major risk for the region's food security and agro-ecosystems, especially on water availability, and called for support on climate finance. It called for Members to leverage the opportunities of COP27 and COP28 being held in the Arab region in 2022 and 2023 to highlight regional priorities in water and agriculture.
- b. FAO convened a special session on climate change at the NERC36 Ministerial Session in Baghdad, with a paper tabled on the climate finance needs in agriculture and land use of the NENA countries (7-8 February 2022).
- c. The NERC36 Ministerial Declaration "welcomed the organization of the UNFCCC COP27 in Egypt and COP 28 in the United Arab Emirates and resolve to use the opportunity to accelerate climate action in support of sustainable agrifood systems in our region, making best use of climate finance."

9. At the inaugural UNFCCC MENA Climate Week in Dubai (30 March-2 April 2022), FAO highlighted the major priorities of NENA countries in their NDCs on agriculture and food security by organizing side events on: NDCs and food security, water scarcity, conflict and water, and the "Blue Transformation" of fisheries and aquaculture. Representatives from Ministries of Agriculture and Water of two countries were supported to participate and speak.

10. FAO participated in around a dozen events at the 2nd edition of MENA Climate Week in Riyadh, in October 2023, reinforcing its partnership with Members, UN agencies and others to highlight the needs and solutions related to climate action in agrifood systems, including in ecosystem restoration and addressing land degradation.

11. FAO supported the participation of national representatives especially of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) at the National Adaptation Plans Expo in Botswana (August 2022) to enhance the capacities of representatives on adaptation planning and climate finance (Egypt, Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen).

12. FAO technically and financially supported the Local Conference on Youth (LCOY) held in Sharm El-Sheikh in September 2022, which highlighted the concerns and solutions for agrifood systems issues brought by Egyptian youth to the wider Global Youth Conference (global COY) and COP27.

13. FAO organized a Pre-COP27 workshop on agriculture and climate change in the Arab region in Cairo (1-3 November 2022), joined by representatives of Ministries of Agriculture and Environment from 11 countries in the region. The workshop focused on knowledge building and exchange, in preparation for COP, on topics such as Arab region and national priorities for climate action in agriculture; the *Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture* (see Section III); and challenges and best practices for scaling up climate-resilient actions and leveraging climate finance.

14. Responding to the needs articulated at the Pre-COP27 workshop, FAO together with the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) and the League of Arab States (LAS) organized a [webinar series](#) to build capacities of agriculture sector stakeholders in the region on climate change and agriculture. Topics covered included: net zero solutions in agriculture, Loss and Damage, agriculture in the UNFCCC negotiations, and the use of climate information for NAPs.

III. Support to the Egyptian COP27 Presidency

15. On request of the Government of Egypt and the Egyptian COP27 Presidency, FAO supported the Presidency on a number of areas in preparation for COP27, including the development of Presidency Initiatives, capacity building, technical support and financial support.

16. FAO convened the first kick-off stakeholder dialogue for an agrifood-related Presidency initiative. This initiative developed into FAST. A second consultation on the FAST initiative was held with Permanent Representatives to Egypt, with a third consultation held at the Bonn Climate Conference. FAST was launched at COP27 (see paragraphs 16 and 17).

17. The FAST initiative is a global initiative that will support climate action in agrifood systems through three pillars: 1) access to finance and investment; 2) knowledge and capacity development; and 3) policy support and dialogue. FAST will contribute to the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), National Adaptation Plans (NAP), and Long-term Low Emissions and Development Strategies (LTS).

18. With the inception phase launched at COP28, the [FAST](#) initiative is being envisioned as a partnership hosted by FAO as a Secretariat, inviting countries and organizations to offer technical and financial support towards improving the quality and quantity of climate finance for transformation to resilient agrifood systems.

19. FAO supported and continues to support other COP27 Presidency initiatives within its mandate:

- a. [AWARE](#) (Water): FAO is an implementation partner on Workstream 1 “Promoting measures to relatively or absolutely decouple economic growth from freshwater use and degradation”. FAO joined the first consultation and provided inputs to the initiative, and subsequently organized, on request of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, an AWARE meeting on the sidelines of Cairo Water Week.
- b. [CRSP initiative](#): Launched by the Cairo International Centre for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding with the support of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). FAO is the co-implementing partner of Pillar 2: Sustaining peace through climate-resilient food systems, and aims to build capacities, convene exchanges and share best practices relevant for the African context.
- c. [I-CAN](#): Organized the first stakeholder dialogue in Cairo for the COP27 Nutrition initiative led by WHO Egypt, for which FAO has become a major technical partner.
- d. [50 by 2050 Global Waste Initiative](#): This initiative aims to treat and recycle at least 50 percent of the solid waste produced in Africa by 2050. FAO joined the first consultation and provided technical inputs highlighting the tools and knowledge base for tackling food loss and waste.
- e. [Egypt Smart Green Initiative](#): Provided technical support on agriculture project applications to the initiative and support to the travel of winning participants to Sharm El-Sheikh for presentation of projects at a COP27 event.

20. Planning for side events with partners for COP27 began in early 2022. FAO provided financial and technical support, as well as leadership to amplify water and agriculture priorities for climate change. Support from the Regional Office to COP27 pavilions included:

- a. [Water & Climate Pavilion](#): As the main institutional partner in this Pavilion, FAO provided financial support and led the organization of the Pavilion with partners International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) and others and organized the Water Pavilion Steering Committee meeting to finalize the Pavilion programme on the side of Cairo Water Week in October 2022. Together with IWMI, FAO led the programming for one thematic day at the Pavilion, including high-level sessions.
- b. [United Nations in Egypt Pavilion](#): As part of the UN Coordination Team (UNCT) in Egypt, FAO contributed financial support to Pavilion costs. FAO Egypt and the Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (RNE) programmed three side events at the Pavilion,

including one high-level event featuring Their Excellencies Minister of Environment and Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation of Egypt.

21. FAO supported the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MALR) to assess climate-smart agricultural practices and opportunities through the publication of [Towards Climate-Smart Agriculture in Egypt](#) and accompanying video, both launched at COP27.
22. FAO supported the participation of five countries' national government representatives from agriculture sectors or environment, focusing on agriculture to COP27, and three to COP28.

IV. Agrifood systems at the heart of climate solutions: Highlights from COP27 and COP28

23. The *Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture* (KJWA) was a landmark decision adopted at COP23. KJWA had been the only UNFCCC agenda item dedicated to agriculture, food security and climate change. Since 2017, FAO has provided substantial support to countries to engage in the KJWA process. Discussions at COP27 drew the KJWA roadmap to a close, with Parties agreeing to launch another four-year period for countries to continue working on issues related to agriculture and food security.

24. The new COP decision, entitled *Sharm el-Sheikh Joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security*, has a focus on implementation. The decision highlights the following:

- a. Notes key outcomes of the KJWA in-session workshops and invites to consider the outcomes for national policies.
- b. Requests the Secretariat to prepare an annual synthesis report on activities related to agriculture undertaken by constituted bodies, financial mechanisms and international organizations; to organize in-session workshops related to agriculture and food security.
- c. Decides to establish the Sharm El-Sheikh online portal for sharing information on projects, initiatives and policies to increase opportunities for implementation of climate action to address issues related to agriculture and food security.
- d. Invites stakeholders to share views on the elements of the joint work, topics for the upcoming workshops, and the operationalization of the online portal by 27 March 2023.

25. This decision is a direct outcome of the extensive support FAO had provided over the past four years to strengthen countries' capacities in negotiations and support to implement the Koronivia roadmap.

26. Since the decision, FAO has made a submission to the UNFCCC in response to the call for sharing of views. This submission highlighted FAO's support through the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031 and its Action Plan to scale up climate action and finance, and the availability of tools and expertise in the six areas suggested by the outcomes of the KJWA roadmap, including the possible role of the FAO Climate Change Knowledge Hub in serving the online portal proposed for the Sharm- El- Sheikh (SES) Joint Implementation Plan.

27. In addition, at COP28, to further support the agriculture and food security track of the UNFCCC, the COP28 Presidency, FAO, CGIAR, IFAD and the World Bank launched the [Agrifood Sharm-El Sheikh Support Programme](#).

28. FAO is also part of the taskforce to produce the [COP28 Agriculture, Food and Climate Action Toolkit](#) to support countries in undertaking transformative actions in food systems.

29. A breakthrough agreement was reached on Loss and Damage at COP27. In particular, Parties agreed on the establishment of the funding arrangements for responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, with special attention on addressing loss and damage for vulnerable countries affected by climate disasters. A transitional committee was established to make recommendations on how to operationalize the new funding arrangements.

30. Related to this, FAO has been engaging with the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage which was established to highlight issues related to loss and damage and link developing countries with

technical support. Countries agreed on the institutional arrangements to operationalize the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage with representation across regions and organizations representing Indigenous People, women and youth.

31. Altogether at the two COPs FAO coordinated more than 35 UN-system events and its leadership participated in more than 60 high-level events.

32. FAO hosted the first ever Food and Agriculture Pavilion at COP27 in collaboration with CGIAR and the Rockefeller Foundation with the addition of IFAD as partner at COP28. A range of events and dialogues were held on climate solutions implemented in agrifood systems, including presentation of the new FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031 to inform the global community of FAO's vision for ensuring global food security under the climate crisis.

33. Three FAO NENA regional assessments were launched during the two COPs: the [Regional State of Land and Water Report for Food and Agriculture in the Near East and North Africa region; Towards Climate-Smart Agriculture in Egypt; Climate change, migration and rural adaptation in the Near East and North Africa region.](#)

34. At COP27 and COP28, FAO was the main institutional partner for the Water for Adaptation Pavilion, which mobilized more than 30 different institutions, national governments and companies. FAO was a member of the steering committee and programme committee, helping to oversee the programming of submissions into Thematic Days and supporting the validation of the final programme on the side of Cairo Water Week in mid-October 2022.

35. At COP27, together with IWMI, FAO co-curated Thematic Day 4 at the Pavilion with a focus on "Climate-smart agriculture for food security, adaptation and sustainability", covering a variety of topics including agriculture in water-scarce contexts and a segment on water management systems of Indigenous Peoples. The Thematic Day included a high-level segment that included the participation of the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Acting Assistant Administrator, Deputy Minister for Environment of Armenia and FAO's Deputy Director-General Ms Semedo.

36. The FAO State of Land and Water Resources Report for the NENA Region was launched during the day and featured speakers from the NENA region who highlighted the challenges and opportunities of implementation and governance of water resources in the context of water scarcity and climate risk.

37. On 18 November 2022, FAO organized Resolution Day: Roadmap from COP27 to UN Water 2023 and COP28 in collaboration with the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation (MWRI) of Egypt and the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) to discuss key takeaways from the Pavilion and how these would be incorporated into the subsequent roadmap for COP28 and the UN Water Conference in March 2023.

38. At COP28, 159 countries signed the *COP28 UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action* which recognized the adverse impacts of climate change on the sectors and the potential of agriculture and food systems to drive innovative responses to these risks.

39. FAO continues to follow mandated processes such as the Sharm el-Sheikh *Joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security*, the First Global Stocktake, the Global Goal on Adaptation, mitigation workstreams, the Marrakesh Partnership for Global Climate Action, and Loss and Damage associated with climate change.