

REGIONAL WATER SCARCITY INITIATIVE IN THE NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

OVERALL GOAL

FAO supports member countries with innovative approaches to identify and streamline policies and best practices in agricultural water management. The Initiative will contribute to boosting agricultural productivity, improving food security and sustaining productive water resources in the near East and North Africa region (NENA)

About the Regional Initiative

The escalation of water scarcity in the Near East and North Africa countries is severe and unprecedented. Fresh water resources in the region are among the lowest in the world; figures confirm that water availability has decreased by two third during the last 40 years and is expected to fall by another 50 percent by 2050.

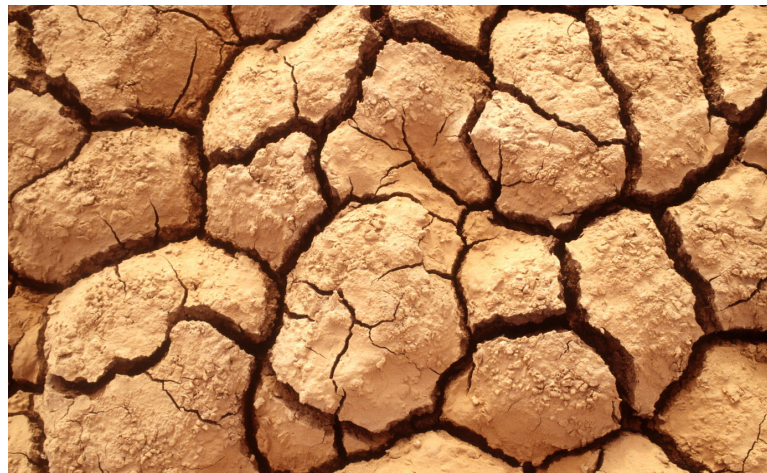
If smart changes in agriculture water strategies, policies and governance are not adjusted and urgently applied, the water and food security of the region and its sustainable development will be compromised, seriously affecting the livelihood of farmers.

In response to the growing needs of member countries and to help them cope with this enormous challenge, FAO and partners launched in 2013 the Regional Water Scarcity Initiative in the Near East and North Africa (WSI). The Initiative is a regional mechanism that will help implement the FAO's Strategic Objective 2.

The Initiative will advise governments and the private sector on the adoption of modern technologies, practices and institutional solutions to increase the efficiency and productivity of water use in agriculture for the benefit of rural communities and millions of farmers.

Data collection, analysis and management will constitute the backbone of the Initiative to support strategic vision and planning of water resources, providing evidence for national policy formulation across the NENA region.

Although there are no simple solutions to the water scarcity in the region, there are smart choices. The Initiative will inject innovative thinking into the way water resources are used and managed for the benefit of the food security of the region. Cost-effective water investments and management practices, reduction of food waste and loss will be some of the options the Initiative will put forward to address the challenges. The Initiative will promote cost-effective water investments and management practices, while encouraging governments and the private sector to promote incentive frameworks.



IN PRACTICE

Some examples of current activities:

- Development of a Regional Collaborative Strategy focusing on policies, investments and practices that are necessary to the sustainable intensification of agricultural production under water-scarce conditions.
- Development of the Regional Collaborative Platform to coordinate, guide and provide strategic orientation to countries.
- Expert contributions to the Action Plan of the "Arab Water Security Strategy".
- In Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia: Increasing water productivity in irrigated agriculture at community level to include integrated mechanized raisedbed and deficit supplemental irrigation production packages; greywater system for irrigation; and, the establishment of water-saving knowledge and innovation platform.
- In the UAE: Developing federated water laws and water accounting mechanisms for advanced water governance and testing new generation of green houses that can decrease up to 10% the consumption of water compared to the open field.
- Assessment of the institutional capacities of member countries in dealing with the impacts of climate change and drought on agriculture and food security.

At Country level

- Water accounting and auditing will be performed to assess the use of national water resources in agriculture and explore ways to make it more efficient.
- Water and food supply cost curve will be used to assess water requirements and the financial costs involved in available options for sustainably increasing food availability.
- Knowledge gap analysis will focus on the successes and failures of existing and past agriculture water policies, strategies and programs.

At regional level

A network of partners, which currently includes over 19 regional and international organizations, is already creating a critical mass of expertise and capacities to deliver a positive impact in water management in the region. The regional network of partners will also support member countries in the implementation of a Regional Collaborative Strategy to create broad consensus and ownership on the water reform agenda across the region

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Investing in the WSI will contribute to evidence-based water policies, improved planning and better governance of water resources.

The Initiative will help strengthen collaboration among countries and with international partners for a common approach to the challenges related to water scarcity in the region.

Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Tunisia, and Yemen are already in the pilot phase of the WSI and the network of regional and international partners is now providing countries with a wealth of opportunities to learn and share practices in the sustainable use and management of natural resources.



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MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.fao.org/about/what-we-do/so2>