



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

WASAG | The Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture

Rome Statement on Water Scarcity in Agriculture

Meeting on 19–20 April 2017 at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy, the partners and stakeholders of the *Global Framework for Action to Cope with Water Scarcity in Agriculture in a Changing Climate (the Global Framework)* agree to this statement.

Preamble

Water scarcity is one of the leading challenges of the twenty-first century. Simply put, it is water demand in excess of available supply, but it can have a range of different drivers. It can be simply the lack of water, i.e. physical scarcity; it may be caused by a lack of adequate infrastructure because of financial, technical or other constraints, or by a lack of access to water services, or by deteriorating water quality. Water scarcity is often due to the failure of institutions to ensure the reliable, secure, affordable and equitable supply of water to all users.

Population growth, economic development, urbanization, dietary changes, migration, regional conflicts, civil unrest, pollution, and climate change, all place pressure on water resources and drive further water scarcity. In the twentieth century, water use worldwide grew at a rate more than twice the rate of population increase, and water withdrawals have increased threefold in the past 50 years. There is a need to manage escalating demand to avoid current projected increases of 40 percent globally by 2030.

Of all the economic sectors, the issue of water scarcity has the greatest relevance for the agriculture sector. Agriculture accounts for 70 percent of global freshwater withdrawals and for more than 90 percent of its consumptive use (from both surface and groundwater sources). It is also the sector with the largest scope and potential for adjustment in water consumption, but this will need to take place against a backdrop of increasing food demand. Due to the joint pressures of population growth and changes in dietary habits, it is expected that demand for cereals and meat will increase significantly.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change projects that, by the end of the twenty-first century, meteorological droughts (less rainfall) and agricultural droughts (drier soils) will become longer or more frequent, or both, in various regions and for some seasons, because of reduced rainfall or increased evaporation, or both.

Across the world it is the most vulnerable, such as the poor, youth and indigenous people, who suffer disproportionately when water is scarce. Additionally, women constitute 40 percent of the world's farmers and are often responsible for collecting the water required for household use and food production. It is therefore often women who are primarily impacted when water is scarce. The unique expertise and knowledge held by women and indigenous people will be vital in efforts to address water scarcity.



©FAO/Giulio Napolitano



©FAO/John Isaac



Photos: ©FAO/H. Null

The **vision** of the Global Framework is a world whose food systems are secure and resilient to increasing water scarcity in a changing climate. The **mission** is to support measurable, significant and sustainable progress on improving and adapting agricultural systems in conditions of increasing water scarcity and a changing climate, using the combined expertise and resources of its partners.

Countries worldwide, therefore, need to urgently adapt their agricultural and food systems to, and mitigate the impacts of, water scarcity and climate change. Among other things, this requires a stronger focus on water governance to address the underlying causes of water scarcity. To advance this need, the FAO Director-General, in his statement at the 22nd Conference of the Parties (COP22) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held in Marrakech, Morocco, in November 2016, invited countries and partners to join the *Global Framework for Action to Cope with Water Scarcity in Agriculture in the Context of Climate Change*.

Global policy context

The 193 member states of the United Nations adopted, in September 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. The Agenda commits the international community to ending poverty and hunger and achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions (social, economic and environmental) by 2030. The SDGs are now the main reference for development policies and programs at the national and regional levels. Sustainable, equitable and effective water management in agriculture is fundamental to the achievement of many of the SDGs.

There is also strong justification for focused work on sustainable agricultural water management and water scarcity in the Paris Agreement adopted by member states at UNFCCC COP21 in December 2015. The vast majority of developing countries have included agriculture and/or water scarcity in their nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

The Global Framework has been presented and discussed at a number of international events, including: the International Water and Climate Conference in Rabat, Morocco, in July 2016; World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden, in August 2016; the Adaptation African Agriculture Conference in Marrakech, Morocco, in September 2016; and the World Irrigation Forum in Thailand in November 2016. After its official launch at UNFCCC COP22, the Global Framework was endorsed firmly by 83 Ministers of Agriculture, who assembled on 21 January 2017 at the 9th Berlin Agriculture Ministers' Conference at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA). The G20 Agriculture Ministers, meeting in Berlin, Germany, on 22 January 2017 immediately after the GFFA, agreed on an action plan for the sustainable use of water resources, which acknowledged the Global Framework as an emerging option for coping with water scarcity.

Scope of the Global Framework

The Global Framework recognizes the intricate links and complex feedback loops between sustainable agriculture, food security, water scarcity and climate change; therefore, it is holistic and multidimensional in scope. Water scarcity is the main entry point for the Global Framework. One key dimension comprises agriculture and food systems, which includes crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry, as well as value and supply chains, consumption and trade. A second dimension is climate change, encompassing both adaptation and the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions.

This broad scope means that the Global Framework encompasses a wide range of available coping mechanisms, both in the agriculture sectors and beyond. It addresses food loss and waste, diets and nutrition, nexus approaches, diversification, wastewater reuse, trade, sustainable livestock and forest management, innovative landscape approaches, water productivity and how private sector actors can integrate such measures into their practices and operations, as well as their supply chains.

Consensus statement

Partners and stakeholders to the Global Framework:

Agreeing that the overall intent of the Global Framework is to assist the governments, public agencies, private sector actors and other stakeholders in their efforts to cope with water scarcity in agriculture in a changing climate;

Realizing that no single stakeholder can solve the complex, multifaceted issues facing the agriculture sectors today and that new and innovative partnerships are needed to tackle them effectively, including governments, civil society (including women and their representative organizations), the private sector, donors, academia, research institutions, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental and multilateral organizations;

Convinced that sustainable, equitable and effective water-scarcity management in agriculture has a key role to play in the attainment of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the mitigation and adaptation commitments (NDCs) made by parties to the Paris Agreement;

Recalling that SDG6 on water and sanitation establishes six targets that are all relevant to water scarcity, with Target 6.4 (water use and scarcity) and Target 6.5 (integrated water resources management) directly related to water scarcity management for food security;

Acknowledging that, in addition to SDG6, effective water management is related to the targets contained within all 17 SDGs, and also acknowledging that in order to remain focused, work under the Global Framework will focus in particular on water scarcity as it relates to SDG2 (zero hunger), SDG6 (water and sanitation), SDG12 (consumption and production) and SDG13 (climate action) and SDG15 (life on land);

Recognizing that healthy ecosystems and the services they provide are essential underpinnings of sustainable agriculture systems, and that in addition to local level environmental action there is a need to synergize commitments across the full range of relevant conventions such as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and also the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction;

Recalling the recent 'Water for Food Security and Nutrition' policy recommendations by the Committee on World Food Security;

Recognizing that sufficient investment and sustainable financing (including climate financing) are critical to successful water scarcity management;

Acknowledging that each region, country and community (differentiated by class, ethnic, caste and gender) faces specific and varying challenges and that there is a need to move away from global prescriptions and blueprints by adapting water scarcity solutions to local contexts;

Agreeing that an integrated approach to coping with water scarcity in agriculture is essential and that this includes the consideration of the entire food system (from field to fork), including how this system interacts with key issues such as poverty, climate change adaptation, resilient livelihoods, gender equality, human health, land tenure and use, sustainable soil management, energy, urbanization, transboundary waters, food losses and waste, trade, ecosystem services and biodiversity; and



©FAO/Dipesh Sr



©FAO/Giuseppe Bizzari



Also agreeing that the Global Framework is open, consensual, inclusive, based on knowledge and mutual respect, built on voluntary stakeholder engagement, and embodied in SDG17 (partnerships for the goals).

Partners and stakeholders to the Global Framework agree to:

Coordinate work plans among partners under the Global Framework to make effective use of available resources and expertise on addressing water scarcity in the agriculture sectors, including collaborative proposal development, resource mobilization and implementation;

Actively engage in the Global Framework as a dynamic and inclusive partnership for evidence-based policy dialogue, knowledge exchange and joint action at the global, regional, national and local levels, supporting the achievement of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the UNFCCC Paris Agreement and full range of related global conventions;

Contribute to a diverse portfolio of user-friendly tools and approaches shown to lead to concrete practice and policy change towards the better management of water scarcity in agriculture and food systems;

Ensure due consideration of water governance and politics, including supporting multi-sector and multi-stakeholder processes, providing appropriate legislative and policy support and promoting integrated watershed and landscape management approaches, from source to sea, that guide and enable efficient and effective planning, allocation and management of scarce water resources;

Use the Global Framework to continuously improve, promote and increase the impact of new tools and approaches for the better management of water scarcity in agriculture and food systems; including innovations to increase water productivity, natural infrastructure solutions, irrigation modernization, incentives for behavior change, use of alternative water sources, pollution control, sustainable soil management, multiple uses of water, efficient water use along the food chain, reducing food loss and waste, agricultural diversification and trade;

Prioritize the most vulnerable (such as subsistence farmers, the poor, women, youth and indigenous people) that have the least capacity to cope with existing and future water scarcity;

Ensure that all activities conducted under the Global Framework are closely aligned with country priorities, as stipulated in NDCs and in national development, climate, water and agricultural policies and plans;

Strengthen national government-led planning processes to guide the development and implementation of high-impact and coherent policies and working to ensure water scarcity management in agriculture maintains a place high on the political agenda;

Contribute to the significant improvement in water resource monitoring and measurement that is necessary to manage water and achieve the SDGs;

Facilitate the formation of cross-sectoral approaches that include actors from beyond the traditional agriculture and water sectors to develop the innovative solutions needed to tackle complex challenges in an increasingly interconnected and resource-constrained world; and

Report regularly on the experiences, innovative approaches and lessons learned through the development of actions under the Global Framework as part of the UNFCCC Global Climate Action Agenda.

Global Framework partners agree that they will join and coordinate their efforts through the Global Framework established and supported by FAO, and which will operate under the terms attached to the present Statement as agreed at the meeting from 19–20 April 2017 at FAO headquarters in Rome