

CSO cooperation in the field of food, nutrition and agriculture, Near East/North Africa 2017–18

FAO Regional Initiatives:

The CSOs in NE/NA take note of the continuity since 2014 with the continuation of the three FAO Regional Initiatives (water scarcity, support to small-scale agriculture [i.e., food producers] for inclusive development and building resilience for enhanced food security and nutrition, as well as attention to food safety, agricultural trade and market information) through the intersessional period (2016–18). At the regional CSO consultation in preparation for NERC33 (Beirut, 7–9 April 2016), civil society participants expressed approval of the FAO/NERC Regional Initiatives and their continuation in the current period. However, civil society participants issued caveats to each one:

- Focus on water scarcity should be from the norm-based “right to water” approach, beyond the present FAO/NE/NA technical approach;
- Small farmers actually should be understood to be “small producers,” including also fishers and pastoralists;
- “Resilience” has been distorted in development parlance and must be redefined within the frame of accountability, liability, reparations and eliminating/resisting the causal shocks, abuses and crises that necessitate recovery.

The CSOs’ response to the Regional Initiatives and corresponding priorities is found in the statement by spokesperson of the Civil Society Consultation at [NERC33](#).¹

CSO Specific Initiatives:

Aligned with FAO and NERC33 priorities, CSOs have expressed the need to cooperate with FAO and each other to advance food, nutrition and agriculture within our communities and constituencies in the NE/NA region. That expression has taken the form of specific proposals. The organizations meeting at the regional consultation in preparation for NERC33 (Beirut, April 2016) developed two specific proposals in workshop sessions (reported separately).

During the discussions, participants also recommended to promote agroecology in the region and to focus on women and youth, particularly among small producers, in their services to communities. Another immediate concern was a range of public-policy issues related to the rights of small producers, including farmers’ rights in the framework of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (IGPTRFA), especially the right to “save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seed and other propagating material,”² and the human right to free association and to organize. Related to the call for greater exchange of information and expertise among the region’s CSOs, a longer-term proposal also called for developing a database with information and statistics alternative to, and of greater reliability than that produced by governments. (See alignment of all CSO proposals to the NERC33 outcomes in the table below.)

Of these initiatives at the 2016 regional CSO consultation, the two most developed were the following:

1. Initiate and support a small-producer platform/forum/mechanism

The CSOs deliberated on the possible form and content of a civil mechanism to support small-scale food producers (SSPs), observing that (1) treatments needed for supporting SSPs differ from those serving large-scale farming or fishing operations, especially concerning the violation of economic rights; and (2) food security/sovereignty needs to be specified, differentiated and better understood for NENA, particularly as the NENA regional does not produce all of its food needs, including main staples.

Some of the principal challenges facing small producers in NE/NA are: water scarcity (farmers and pastoralists), the need to recover quickly from multiple shocks, the lack of sustainable and inclusive development opportunities, obstacles to accessing adequate natural resources, state policies and private sector practices that contradict small producers human rights and interests; conflict, occupation and war (COW); and social (urban) bias and stigma against small-scale producers. They noted that meeting many of these challenges also requires legal and technical knowledge and experience to empower affected communities to reverse them.

The proposed functions of such a mechanism, platform or network of SSPs would enable the participants to (1) share experiences, (2) determine challenges and lessons learnt in countries of the region, and (3) support farmers in crises and conflict zones, including those facing stifling laws and policies of various spheres of government and under occupation. The outcomes of the workshop were captured in a strategic planning exercise (SWOT analysis).

2. Develop and deliver training in TGs toward operationalize them in the NE/NA region

CSOs emphasized the need and willingness to engage in training and other efforts to popularize and operationalize the Tenure Guidelines (TGs), which are virtually unknown in the region. The CSOs concluded that NE/NA needs a regionally relevant program, beginning with a training curriculum. The initial training activities would serve the wider program of awareness-raising, policy analysis and advocacy in order to:

- (1) fill existing gaps in the TGs (e.g., rangelands, urban dimension, [human right to] water, seeds);
- (2) focus on regional specificity (e.g., traditional norms; conflict, occupation and war [COW] situations; freedom of association for small producers, proposing regionally specific RAI as a longer-term prospect);
- (3) make synergy between the TGs and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) “protected area matrix,” IGPTRFA, related FAO policy guidance (e.g., FFA on protracted crises), new and emerging human rights instruments and declaratory law [e.g., CEDaW General Comment 34³; coherence among relief, development and human rights,⁴ etc.];
- (4) focus on gender and patriarchy (esp. to compensate for an apparent lapse in FAO focus since 2014);
- (5) align with SDGs and the emerging new UN Sustainable Development System (UNSDS), within the priorities led by the Paris Agreement and 2030 SD Agenda, with other global policy processes (e.g., Habitat III, Financing for Development, Humanitarian Summit outcomes) within that hierarchy;⁵
- (6) contribute to the elaboration of constituency groups and work streams at regional and global levels (e.g., water-management/administration principles, landlessness, etc.).
- (7) applying the TGs and related guidance⁶ to indigenous peoples in the NE/NA region.

CSO Priorities

NERC33 Outcomes

(1) Fill gaps (e.g., rangelands, urban dimension, [human right to] water, seeds)

Requested countries to enhance policies in support of emergency and rehabilitation activities in the livestock sector (para. 17.i);

Urged FAO to strengthen support to Members by developing sustainable animal source food systems, particularly focused on rural poor, and their better integration into national value chains (para. 18.b).

Urged minimal use of fresh water resources in aquaculture (para. 21.a).

Requested FAO to develop a regional forestry and rangeland strategy for NE/NA (para. 33.a).

[The urban dimension, rangelands and seeds not addressed at NERC33; however, the conference “Noted that small family farmers are prone to droughts, floods and diseases, and may have limited access to improved agricultural inputs” (para. 24.c);]

(2) Focus on regional specificity (e.g., traditional norms; COW situations; freedom of association for small producers),

Requested countries to promote natural resource management systems built on participation of smallholders, pastoralists and communities at large (para. 17.k);

Urged countries, with FAO support, to enhance capacities and raise awareness on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in line with conference [resolution 4/2015](#) (para. 17.j);

Urged FAO to develop collaborative strategies and plans to manage transboundary animal disease risks, especially in times of crisis, improving disease reporting, monitoring of livestock movements, strengthening quarantine systems, and cross-border research and dialogue (para. 18.a);

Urged FAO to help develop nexus between emergency and rehabilitation in the livestock sector, especially in member nations affected by conflicts and protracted crises, through developing national and regional projects responding to threats of transboundary animal diseases and zoonoses as well as protecting and rehabilitating livestock sector (para. 18.c);

Recommended refraining from unilateral measures not in accordance with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, and which endanger food security and nutrition, as stated in the 1996 Rome Declaration, and speed up addressing the ongoing conditions in some countries of the region (para. 19);

Called on governments to sign FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU) agreement (para. 21.g);

Urged FAO and countries to strengthen the role of non-

	<p>governmental and civil society organizations at all levels for achieving better progress in the implementation of the regional initiatives and programs (para. 28.f);</p> <p>Urged FAO to support Somalia in resource mobilization and building national capacity and resilience for food security and nutrition in line with its new National Strategy (2016–19) (para. 28.j).</p> <p>Ministerial Declaration** begins with deep concern over deterioration of food safety, security and nutrition due to conflicts, occupation and protracted crisis in the region” (para. 1).</p>
<p>(3) Apply other related policy instruments and norms (FFA on protracted crises, TGs, localized RAI, new and emerging General Comments of human rights treaty bodies, etc.)</p>	<p>Urged all to disseminate, promote and use the “Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS-RAI),” “Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises (CFS-FFA)” and Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT) (para. 26.b);</p> <p>Urged FAO and countries to strengthen the role of non-governmental and civil society organizations at all levels for achieving better progress in the implementation of the Regional Initiatives and programs (para. 28.f).</p> <p><i>[neither the human right to food, nor other human rights were mentioned in NERC33 report, except whereas the Ministerial Declaration* recognized that “climate change is a threat to our most fundamental human rights...”]</i></p>
<p>(4) Focus on gender and patriarchy (esp. compensating for apparent lapse in FAO focus since 2014)</p>	<p>N/A <i>[only passing reference to (1) “women’s empowerment” among small-scale farmers and (2) Ministerial Declaration** mentioning the importance that development “gives equal employment and development to the vulnerable people including youth and women” (para. 5).]</i></p>
<p>(5) Align with SDGs and the emerging new UN Sustainable Development System (UNSDS), within the priorities led by the Paris Agreement and 2030 SD Agenda, with other global policy processes (e.g., Habitat III, Financing for Development, Humanitarian Summit outcomes) within that hierarchy</p>	<p>Recommended refraining from unilateral measures not in accordance with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, and which endanger food security and nutrition, as stated in the 1996 Rome Declaration and speed up addressing the ongoing conditions in some countries of the region (para. 19);</p> <p>Encouraged countries to engage actively in the ongoing CFS activities under the CFS Multi-Year Programme of Work for 2016-17, especially in areas of increasing importance to the region, such as the SDGs and Nutrition (para. 26.d).</p> <p>Welcomed “greater engagement of FAO in raising public awareness to the intricate link between food security, stability and peace, in the framework of the newly adopted Agenda 2030” (Ministerial Declaration** para. 7).</p>
<p>(6) Contributing to the elaboration of</p>	<p>Urged FAO and countries to strengthen the role of non-</p>

<p>constituency groups and work streams at regional and global levels (e.g., water-management/administration principles, landlessness, etc.)</p>	<p>governmental and civil society organizations at all levels for achieving better progress in the implementation of the Regional Initiatives and programs (para. 28.f).</p>
<p>(7) applying the TGs and related guidance to indigenous peoples in the NE/NA region</p> <p>Specific proposal 1: Initiate and support small-producer platform/forum/mechanism</p>	<p><i>[NERC33 makes no mention of indigenous peoples]</i></p> <p>Urged countries to reinforce, with the support of FAO and partners,⁷ the governance of the veterinary services to effectively prevent, control and eradicate animal diseases at national, regional and global levels (para. 17.f);</p> <p>Requested countries to enhance policies in support of emergency and rehabilitation activities in the livestock sector (para. 17.i);</p> <p>Requested countries to promote natural resource management systems built on participation of smallholders, pastoralists and communities at large (para. 17.k);</p> <p>Urged FAO to strengthen support to Members by developing sustainable animal source food systems, particularly focused on rural poor, and their better integration into national value chains (para. 18.b);</p> <p>Urged countries to expand the use of high-yielding and drought-tolerant varieties of crops, pasture and rangeland species (para. 24.e);</p> <p>Encouraged Member Nations to strengthen support to family farmers, invest in programs to reduce rural poverty and improve opportunities for market access and livelihoods (para. 24.f) through FAO promotion of more South-South cooperation to support family farmers (para. 24.g);</p> <p>Requested FAO support to organize knowledge and experience sharing events, and building capacity to develop sustainable and viable fishery and aquaculture industry in the region (para. 22.a);</p> <p>Requested FAO to develop guidelines on carrying out environmental impact assessments for aquaculture projects (para. 22.c);</p> <p>Urged FAO and member countries to strengthen the role of nongovernmental and civil society organizations at all levels for achieving better progress in the implementation of the Regional Initiatives and programs (para. 28.f);</p> <p>Noted that small family farmers are prone to droughts, floods and diseases, and may have limited access to improved agricultural inputs (para. 24.c);</p> <p>Noted the need for agricultural insurance to support small family farmers (para. 24.d);</p>

	Encouraged Member Nations to strengthen support to family farmers, invest in programmes to reduce rural poverty and improve opportunities for market access and livelihoods (para. 24.f);
Specific proposal 2: Develop and deliver training in TGs toward operationalize them in the NE/NA region (see priority (1) above)	Encouraged all stakeholders to disseminate, promote, make use of the “Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS-RAI),” “Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises (CFS-FFA)” and Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (TGs) (para. 26.b).
Specific proposal 3: Promote agroecology	<p>Requested countries to promote natural resource management systems built on participation of smallholders, pastoralists and communities at large (para. 17.k);</p> <p>Requested FAO’s technical assistance for safe use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers through good agricultural practices guided by the Codex Alimentarius Texts and Standards (para. 24.i).</p> <p>Encouraged countries to link agricultural policies in support to sustainable food consumption and production systems that are conducive to improved nutrition, health and protection of the environment and responsive to national needs (para. 35.c).</p> <p><i>[NERC33 report does not mention “ecology” in any form, but refers to Blue Growth as including ecosystem services (para. 21.c) and addressing climate change effects on marine ecosystems (para. 21.e). NERC33 asked FAO help in carrying out environmental impact assessments for aquaculture projects (para. 22.c.)]</i></p>
Specific proposal 4: Gather and produce alternative information, data and statistics	<p>Requested FAO to help share, compile and disseminate information by regional Fish Monitoring Centre to be established in Kuwait as data and information repository (para. 22.b);</p> <p>Urged FAO and member countries to strengthen the role of nongovernmental and civil society organizations at all levels for achieving better progress in the implementation of the Regional Initiatives and programs (para. 28.f).</p>
<p>* Ministerial Declaration on “Food Security and the Agricultural Sectors in a Changing Climate”</p> <p>** Ministerial Declaration on “Food Security, Stability and Peace”</p>	

The *People’s Manual on the Guidelines on Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests* has some helpful elements, but does not provide a basis for capacity building in promotion, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (the functions referred to in its subtitle). So, for both region-specific and pedagogical purposes, civil society has to build a program (e.g., training curriculum, awareness campaign, lobbying tools) to “operationalize” the very dense and encyclopedic TGs for practical use.

To the extent that the RAI Principles are relevant, those need to be considered within a regional focus and aligned with the TGs toward a (CS-initiated) set of principles for intra-regional trade and investment in food systems (a longer-term objective).

Applying the TGs and prioritizing the Regional Initiatives should be combined/aligned with:

- (1) Support for a small-producer mechanism or forum (no name yet determined) through which producers can build capacity technically and for purposes of influencing policy at all levels, share in a regional “diagnosis” of their situation, and self-determine their regional process (without CSO or other domination).
- (2) Promotion of agroecology, including the development of direct relationships between producers and consumers.
- (3) Greater awareness of extraterritorial obligations of states—under human rights and other international law norms—in the food, nutrition and agriculture/food-production contexts.
- (4) Contributing to the literature (e.g., RTFNW, *Land Times*, et al.).
- (5) Developing the land and water convergence (e.g., Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles).

Country Focus:

Palestine (all agree as a permanent priority);

Iran (to be more regularly incorporated in the region; i.e., through CSO exchanges, building and sharing dryland management experience and support for pastoralists);

Egypt (for many reasons, but also as a state requested at NERC33 to be a focus country for Regional Initiatives);

Lebanon (as a state requested at NERC33 to be a focus country for Regional Initiatives);

Morocco (for regional balance and to tap CSO capacity);

Western Sahara (as it is excluded by FAO, although food, nutrition and producer issues are urgent, and only CS has the ability/will to relate to/cooperate with legitimate (indigenous) partners in the region);

Sudan (although not represented in the consultation, is a “breadbasket” country embodying all priority issues).

These strategic lines are based on our record of the consultations; however, the priority country focus needs further discussion. If the priority question is related to resources, then the respective country criteria differ widely. For example, population size and numbers of active CSOs and producers are certainly not equal across all six. Each country has a distinct political context.

The CSOs have focused to date more on identifying their own capacities and roles within the wider fabric of the region's civil society and other relevant regional efforts.

The Gulf countries have not been considered in this discussion (except for Oman), but could be in connection with their investor and consumer dimensions, especially in the longer-term objective of developing a normative framework for trade and investment in food systems (NENA-RAI) aligned with the TGs.

Endnotes:

- ¹ Statement by Spokesperson of the Civil Society Consultation, NERC 16/INF/15, at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mr027e.pdf>.
- ² IGPTRFA enshrines small farmers' right to "save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seed and other propagating material and to participate in decision making regarding, and in the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from, the use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture." (Preamble, Article 9.3), at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i0510e.pdf>. [AR]
- ³ Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDaW), General recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women, CEDAW/C/GC/34, 7 March 2016, at: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CEDAW%2fC%2fGC%2f34&Lang=en.
- ⁴ As provided in Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises, 15 October 2015, para. 16, at: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1415/FFA/CFS_FFA_Final_Draft_Ver2_EN.pdf. [AR]
- ⁵ Actually, everything related to cooperation with and among UN implementer agencies has to fit within that over-arching frame to be established by the emerging new UNSDS architecture under the new deputy UNSG for Sustainable Development.
- ⁶ See ILO Convention 169: Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, 27 June 1989, at: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169 [AR]; also UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), 13 September 2007, at: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf. [AR] No NE/NA state has ratified ILO 169; however, the region's states voting in favor of UNDRIP are: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
- ⁷ The report and Ministerial Declarations refer to "partners" as international institutions, including international financial institutions. However, citing this outcome interprets "partners" more broadly to assume that it might also include CSOs, academics and an eventual small-producer platform/forum/mechanism.