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United Nations
Decade of
**FAMILY
FARMING**
2019-2028



INNOVATION IN **FAMILY FARMING** TO ACHIEVE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN THE NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA REGION

REGIONAL
ACTION PLAN
2022-2028

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INTRODUCTION

- » This United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDF) Regional Action Plan for the Near East and North Africa (RAP-NENA) should be read in conjunction with the [UNDF Global Action Plan \(GAP\)](#)¹ and the Action Plan of the Regional Initiative on Small-Scale Family Farming (RI-SSFF) implemented by FAO and partners in the region since 2015.
- » This document has been prepared through a [consultative process](#) with diverse stakeholders sharing a common concern to foster inclusive and sustainable family farming as the cornerstone for vibrant, productive and profitable agriculture in the NENA Region.²
- » The document was discussed at a regional e-Launch event jointly organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on 24 November 2020. This revised version takes into account participant perspectives

¹ See: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4672en/ca4672en.pdf>.

² See the summary of the global FSN Forum eConsultation: http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/discussions/UNDF_NENA. The results of the regional Google survey are available here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1oNWb_eDcNBNDhfV1oHvYVltscedzAngpENavONJzvjc/edit?ts=5fa007c1.

BACKGROUND

- » The NENA Region is the world's largest food importer, relying on world markets for more than 50 per cent of its food. Price rises, particularly wheat and rice, have given a strong rationale to the importance of boosting local production (Bush, 2016). Many countries in the region have also experienced socio-economic instability.
- » Family farming is the predominant form of food and agricultural production in both developed and developing countries, producing over 80 percent of the world's food in value terms. In the NENA Region, more than 80 percent of agricultural production is from small-scale family farming (SSFF). It is multidimensional and the farm, family, food production and work, and knowledge are intertwined. However, despite its enormous contribution to food security, SSFF faces constraints that undermine its profitability and economic growth. Agriculture will not lead to sufficient poverty reduction in the NENA Region without significant productivity increases. Business as usual will not enable the region to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2.3 Target of doubling agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, particularly women, youth, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers.
- » The proposed RAP-NENA takes account of the dramatic changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. It has hit the 19 countries in the NENA Region hard in all areas of life and the economy with implications for all agricultural development, food production and trade. Since March 2020, most governments have implemented measures to slow the spread of the pandemic and maintain food supplies and reserves. Small-scale family farmers are particularly exposed to the effects of the pandemic and movement restrictions hinder access to inputs, technology and markets. Nonetheless, observers note that the COVID-19 crisis could lead to a new development model that is conducive to resilience and sustainability, for building back better. Hence, the RAP-NENA proposes measures to mitigate the economic and food crisis, to protect vulnerable food producers and consumers and to build back better.
- » Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, key challenges faced by family farmers in the NENA Region included: rapid population growth; increasing urbanization; low growth in food production; climate variability; water scarcity, droughts and salinization; land, natural resource and environmental degradation; land fragmentation; soil erosion and contamination; high youth unemployment; competition with large-scale commercial agriculture and agribusiness; lack of smallholder finance; dysfunctional institutions; weakness of producer organizations; and poverty related to poor living conditions. The inequalities and power imbalances faced by youth and women have hindered inclusive agricultural transformation and were already key challenges limiting agricultural production and SSFF livelihoods in the region. Conflict and insecurity are also major challenges to lives and livelihoods.
- » To address these challenges technological, social and institutional innovation are vital. Research has shown that for small-scale family farmers to adopt innovations they need to be included in the selection, co-development and adaptation of those innovations. They must provide solutions to the pressing problems family farmers face in agriculture and in their

livelihoods. Small-scale family farmers should be treated as core actors, at the heart of demand-driven innovation. Structured representative organizations that advocate SSFF's priorities can be critical to achieving this, as shown in Africa and other regions.

- » The RI-SSFF has shown that SSFF agrifood systems innovation should prioritize the following to contribute to achieving the SDGs: (i) precision agriculture and agro-ecological approaches to strengthen climate smart agriculture; (ii) digital, institutional and social innovation to offer youth and women employment; and (iii) agrifood systems' innovation for markets and value chains – including strengthening producer organizations and public-private partnerships.
- » Digital approaches and ICT (information communication technologies) such as precision agriculture, e-agriculture, e-commerce, blockchain technology, digital extension, drones; laboratory information systems; the Internet of Things applied to weather centres using sensors; satellite technology; cloud analytics; big data; and mobile phone technology all offer potential solutions to many of the chronic and emerging challenges and threats faced by SSFF in the NENA Region, including COVID-19. Interventions to support SSFF post COVID-19 need to focus on rebuilding and strengthening family farmer resilience. Innovation, technology and digital solutions can help achieve more sustainable agrifood by assessing the impacts of climate change and projecting future climate trends. FAO and IFAD recognize the strategic importance of digitalization and have developed suitable strategies.³ These will inform application of digitalization and digital tools in developing and implementing the UNDFP in the NENA Region and the RAP-NENA proposed here.
- » Addressing youth and gender constraints in the NENA Region is critical to unleash the potential of SSFF for improved livelihoods, increased incomes and broader sustainable development and requires special emphasis in the RAP.

³ See: <http://www.fao.org/in-action/e-agriculture-strategy-guide/en/>; <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/digital-agriculture-transformation/re-sources/fao-digital-services-portfolio/en/>; <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/latest/event/asset/41131306>; and <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/latest/event/asset/41949435>.

STRATEGIC VISION

- 1.** The UNDF GAP needs to be tailored to the realities of the NENA Region and its unique challenges, with focus on the socio-economic inclusion of youth and women, to promote transformed agrifood systems, while placing SSFF at its centre.
- 2.** Strategic Vision defined

SSFF is essential to build inclusive and resilient agricultural and rural transformation yet requires innovation to address challenges to achieve its potential contribution to sustainable development in the NENA Region.

- 3.** Such a vision entails working on the following four key priorities:
 - » Contribute to more inclusive SSFF with a focus on youth and women;
 - » Contribute empowering small-scale family farmers so they achieve their potential, through, for example, strengthened producer organizations, enhanced networking and shared knowledge and skills;
 - » Foster digital innovation for SSFF to address the challenges the NENA Region faces (see sections 7-8 above);
 - » Mobilize new resources and partnerships to deliver adequate investments and territorially based solutions, particularly for the most vulnerable, with a special focus on women and youth.
- 4.** Implementing the strategic vision to strengthen family farming in the NENA Region over 2022-28 will achieve the following objectives:
 - » boost SSFF productivity and incomes, provide decent employment opportunities, resilience, sustainability and inclusiveness; and
 - » enhance the contribution of transformed family farming food systems despite resource scarcity, climate change, conflict and other crises facing the region.
- 5.** Achieving this vision will require transformative actions to foster innovative and effective institutions, technologies and policies, as well as requisite local and national capacities and investments, possible only through new resources and partnerships.
- 6.** This will interface with the FAO Hand-in-Hand Initiative to eradicate poverty and end hunger and all forms of malnutrition through a territorial development approach to support the most vulnerable producers, including women and youth.



SEVEN PILLARS FOR A UNDIFF ACTION PLAN FOR THE NENA REGION

The UNDIFF Regional Action Plan for NENA will provide a framework for dialogue and political and technical advocacy. During 2022-28 the RAP-NENA will seek to strengthen SSFF at national and regional levels through actions and investments to address the seven UNDIFF pillars and the four priorities outlined in section 10 below.

7. In the NENA Region, FAO has already sought to strengthen SSFF through the three pillars of the FAO Regional Initiative on Small-Scale Family Farming (RI-SSFF), namely:
 - (i) sustainable and innovative practices to boost farmers' agricultural productivity and their SSFF associates;
 - (ii) develop decent rural employment opportunities and complementary social protection for small-scale family farmers; and
 - (iii) stronger rural organizations' and institutions' capacities to improve SSFF access to rural services and markets (see: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7879e.pdf>, 2017).
8. The UNDIFF **Regional Action Plan in the NENA Region builds on the experience of the RI-SSFF and direct interface with the seven pillars of the UNDIFF GAP**. According to a review, the RI-SSFF has achieved a number of successes to be built on when implementing the UNDIFF in the NENA Region including the following. Provide better understanding of small-scale country and regional agriculture and family farming and contribute to better policies using gender-disaggregated data on poverty and inequality. Explore social protection trends and value chain development for non-wood forest products and assist countries to design SSFF social protection programmes. Set up farmer field schools in at least six countries or territories for better SSFF participation in knowledge generation and sharing. Generate diverse livelihood opportunities. Enhance value chains and employment creation through innovative agricultural job profiles aimed at young people and youth organizations. Develop a regional rural development academy to facilitate youth employment. All these activities have contributed to FAO's wider global effort to reduce rural poverty and increase the productivity and sustainability of agriculture, forestry and fisheries.
9. The UNDIFF is global in reach and designed around seven mutually reinforcing pillars of action that focus on different aspects of supporting family farmers.
 - (i) Develop an **enabling policy environment** to strengthen family farming.
 - (ii) Support **youth** and ensure the generational sustainability of family farming.

- (iii) Promote **gender** equity in family farming and leadership roles for rural women.
 - (iv) Strengthen family **farmers' organizations** and their capacities to generate knowledge, represent farmers and provide inclusive urban-rural services.
 - (v) Improve the **socio-economic inclusion**, resilience and well-being of family farmers, rural households and communities.
 - (vi) Promote the **sustainability** of family farming for **climate-resilient** food systems.
 - (vii) Strengthen the multi-dimensionality of family farming to promote **social innovations**, contributing to **territorial development** and food systems that safeguard biodiversity, the environment and culture.
10. Based on recognizing the diversity of family farmers, the UNDFG GAP seeks to provide detailed guidance for the international community and recommends a series of coherent, interconnected actions to support them from local to global level. They should be context-specific, adapted to regional, national, sociocultural and socio-economic conditions. To guarantee the UNDFG's success, all actions should place family farmers at the centre and take place through bottom-up, participatory and inclusive processes.
 11. This RAP-NENA will ultimately include three types of action adapted to the region and different country contexts.
 - » Short-term actions (*immediate*) - to support small-scale family farmers in the context of disrupted supply chains and markets, including actions to respond to COVID-19;
 - » Medium-term actions (*over the next 1-4 years*) – to contribute to developing SSFF to increase the efficiency of small-scale family farmers in the face of various shocks; and
 - » Long-term actions (*over the years to the end of the Decade of Family Farming and beyond*) – to support SSFF's contribution to a world free of hunger and poverty, that manages natural resources sustainably, and where no one is left behind.
 12. Governments should be assisted to enhance institutional changes, laws, policies and strategies to support family farmers. These efforts should consider the COVID-19 pandemic and ideally be reflected in the UNDFG National Action Plans.
 13. The UNDFG GAP established the ambitious goal of governments, in negotiation with family farmers' organisations and the National Committees of Family Farming, to develop **100 National Action Plans, five Regional Action Plans and seven Sub-Regional Action Plans by 2024**. This document proposes a **Regional Action Plan**. The **National Action Plans** provide a road map for countries to progress implementing the UNDFG, building links to the broader process of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and highlighting the multidimensional contributions of family farming to achieving the SDGs. Globally, governments have approved six National Action Plans and four are in the process of being developed.⁴ While no country in the NENA Region has yet finalized a National Action Plan on Family Farming, Egypt has indicated it will develop one.
 14. Once RAP-NENA priorities and entry points for policies and actions are agreed following the regional UNDFG e-Launch event, these will shape UNDFG National Action Plans in the NENA Region.

Seven Actions Pillars to address key challenges facing SSFF in the NENA Region

⁴ Source: Family Farming Campaign - <https://www.familyfarmingcampaign.org/en/planes-nacionales/>. Accessed 16.11.2020)

Pillar 1: Develop an enabling policy environment to strengthen family farming

1.1. Reliable, timely, locally relevant data and evidence on the multidimensional performance of family farming to inform policymaking, monitoring and evaluation

- » Facilitate the establishment of sound agricultural information systems to support evidence-based interventions with better understanding of farmers' cultivation strategies.
- » Create inclusive and effective governance mechanisms accompanied by timely and geographically relevant data to contribute to well-targeted policy design and implementation.
- » Use FAO's Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA) tool to carry out needs assessments and decide on targeting strategies for interventions.

1.2. Enhanced political and financial commitment and public awareness to support the diverse and multilayered contributions of family farming to sustainable development

- » Emphasize the key role of family farmers in national strategies and recommend governments make political and financial commitments to support SSFF.
- » Promote public goods for SSFF (e.g. sanitation, formal and informal education, health services, infrastructure, energy, etc.) and infrastructure (e.g. urban retail spaces, wholesale markets) to shorten value chains and increase family farmer access to local markets.

1.3. Inclusive and effective governance for comprehensive, enhanced family farming-focused policy design, implementation and monitoring

- » Encourage dialogue on introducing territorial development and landscape approaches to policy and planning.
- » Create administrative and legal reforms to make it easier to do business (simpler registration and contracts) and to unlock access to services, finance and markets.
- » Improve the policy and regulatory environment for cooperatives and producer organizations, engage them in decision-making and policy formulation and adapt policies and interventions to local needs.
- » Design a policy framework and incentives that promote public-private-producer partnerships to sustainably improve the productivity, quality and added value of SSFF agricultural products.

1.4. Increased coherence and integration between family farming-related policies and legislation

Pillar 2: Support youth and ensure the generational sustainability of family farming

2.1 Improved, active youth engagement in family farming, the rural economy and decision-making

- » Strengthen youth engagement in rural institutions and policymaking by supporting youth organizations and regional youth networks, linking them to sources of funding, information, digital tools/ICT, markets and other opportunities.
- » Support partnerships with the private sector to enhance women and youth empowerment and their involvement in the design and implementation of policies, contracts and in negotiation.

2.2 Improved access for the next generation of family farmers to natural resources, productive assets, information, financial services and markets

- » Facilitate youth access to land and natural resources, especially for young women.
- » Implement economic inclusion programmes combining social protection, access to finance, extension and advisory services and coaching.
- » Expand the access of young farmers to inclusive finance (including crop and livestock insurance and credit) and adopt programmes to address liquidity challenges (such as postponing loan repayments, temporary grants, etc.) drawing on COVID-19 responses.

2.3 Improved quality employment in agriculture, fisheries and forestry

- » Support action to eliminate exploitative child labour in family farming and address its root causes.
- » Conduct research on adopting and implementing international labour standards in rural areas and the impact of the lack of decent work opportunities for youth engagement in agriculture.

2.4 Improved capacity of young family farmers in innovative practices that connect local, traditional knowledge with new solutions

- » Support inter- and intra-generational knowledge transfer including traditional skills and know-how on sustainable production, managing natural resources and value added activities.
- » Enhanced Technical Education and Vocational Training (TVET) and educational curricula that respond to market needs, encompassing digital literacy and new green practices among other emerging in demand skills.

2.5 Quality rural youth jobs to reduce poverty and address the drivers of youth migration

- » Establish an emergency fund for young ag-tech entrepreneurs to keep them afloat when a viable business is at risk of closure due to the economic impacts of COVID-19 and other crises.
- » Build entrepreneurship capacities of rural youth and young family farmers, especially in green economy sectors.
- » Strengthen and expand innovation and business ecosystems in NENA countries by supporting regional incubators and accelerators serving youth-led (small and medium enterprises) SMEs in agriculture and food value chains.

Pillar 3: Promote gender equality in family farming and the leadership role of rural w

3.1 Improved and active engagement of women in family farming and the rural economy

- » Increase women's participation and leadership in rural institutions and relevant decision-making to safeguard their economic, reproductive, social and political rights.
- » Support the development, implementation and monitoring of policies and legislation to guarantee women equal opportunities in family farming in line with international instruments (e.g. CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) with specific focus on access to and control over land and water resources.
- » Identify adequate measures to empower women in their work on family farms, taking account of their domestic labour tasks.

3.2 Increased access for women in family farming to natural resources, productive assets, information, infrastructure, financial services and markets

- » Address gender-specific constraints facing female family farmers, the burden of unpaid care work and their multiple roles, by enhancing childcare services, linked to education and the adoption of labour and time saving technologies and practices.
- » Develop gender-sensitive supply chains to enhance the full productive potential of women in agrifood systems and increase their access to higher value, more remunerative local markets and decent employment opportunities through targeted education and training.
- » Expand innovative social protection programmes to include female farmers, targeting not only their role as caregivers, but also as economic agents (e.g. cash for work, safety nets extended to informal sectors and home-based activities).

3.3 Increased capacity of women farmers and their organizations in technical, advocacy and leadership skills, enhancing participation in policymaking and their organizations

- » Support new or reinforce existing women's associations and cooperatives along agricultural value chains, to strengthen access to inputs, services and markets, with a safe space to learn and practice leadership skills.
- » Promote rural women's economic empowerment and resilience by enhancing access to resources and gender-responsive financial services and products.

3.4 Improved knowledge of successful women achieving affirmative political, social, economic and cultural change towards gender equality

- » Support rapid gender analyses (including gender-sensitive value chains) and vulnerability assessments to support gender-responsive recovery and response policies and programmes in the light of COVID-19.
- » Improving rural women's and girls' access to ICT to reduce the digital gender gap is an effective strategy to enhance women's and girls' access to information, agricultural support services and markets, and overcome some of the mobility, time and security constraints rural women face.
- » Document and promote inclusive and gender-responsive business models among family farms and businesses operating along value chains, to support women-led or owned enterprises or those that employ mostly women.
- » Support awareness-raising campaigns and initiatives that seek to address discriminatory social and gender norms to achieve a more equitable distribution of roles, responsibilities and opportunities within the economy and society.

Pillar 4: Strengthen family farmers' organizations and capacities to generate knowledge, represent farmers and provide inclusive urban-rural services

4.1 Strengthened governance and organizational capacities of family farmers' organizations in agriculture, forestry and fisheries to better serve their members and their communities

- » Strengthen the capacities of community-based organizations and NGOs to put pressure on decision-makers to create an enabling environment for SSFF in terms of reforming laws, regulations on contract farming, taxes and insurance access.
- » Advocate and engage well-developed and successful farmers' and producers' organizations in service provision and policy dialogue, and give them a voice while revisiting and improving cooperatives' institutional and legal frameworks.

4.2 Strengthen family farmers and their organizations' technical expertise and ability to access and provide farming and non-farming services to their members for sustainable livelihoods and landscapes

- » Foster knowledge generation, exchange and dissemination on innovative approaches, technologies and practices that promote sustainable family farming: climate smart technologies, green agriculture, finances and management, business development.
- » Establish village aggregation points with district marketing and processing units and link them together.

4.3 Collective actions by strong, transparent and inclusive organizations to find appropriate solutions

- » Support group marketing organizations for small-scale family farmers and rural women.
- » Support organizations of family farmers to establish factories for processing high quality agricultural products, possibly with private sector partners and facilitate smallholder access to these factories.
- » Enhance producers' and farmers' organization capacities by developing their skills to create social capital.

4.4. Improved communication, ICTs capacities/services and listening to family farmers

- » Support digital literacy and access to ICT tools among SSFF and their organizations to make better use of digital extension, e-finance and other online rural services.
- » Upgrade wholesale markets' technological and communication capacity and develop an app to provide marketing information to farmers, farmer organizations and processors.

Pillar 5: Improve socio-economic inclusion, resilience and well-being of family farmers, rural households and communities

5.1. Enhanced standard of living and reduced household vulnerability through access to social protection and public services for family farmers, in particular youth, women and their communities

- » Expand conflict-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection rural programmes linked to nutrition outcomes, sustainable resource management, decent work and economic inclusion in agri-food value chains.
- » Establish a policy framework with incentives to create quality rural employment with complementary SSFF social protection.

5.2. Improved access and control of natural resources and productive assets by family farmers, in particular youth, women, indigenous and landless people

- » Encourage farmers to use local resources to make products (e.g. compost and other inputs), to reduce import dependency, promote a circular bioeconomy, and create new off-farm income opportunities.
- » Establish policies and programmes for sustainable land management and land tenure.

5.3. Strengthened resilience and economic viability of family farmers through sustainable and diversified production, innovations and a diverse and nutritious diet

- » Strengthen the resilience of urban farming systems through, for example, specialized agricultural forums to share knowledge and influence policies (e.g. Gaza Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture Platform, Palestine (GUPAP)).
- » Ensure inclusive and non-discriminatory availability of extension, advisory and financial services for better access to natural resources (water, land, ocean, genetic resources, forest resources, aquatic systems, nutrients, energy) and productive assets to strengthen family farmer resilience.
- » Support family farmer capacity development to improve knowledge of feasible solutions and practices to transition to more sustainable and economically viable agriculture.
- » Improve access to non-agricultural income earning opportunities.
- » Promote capacity development programmes for family farmers and their organizations in traditional rural food preservation techniques and adding value to local products via agrifood processing.

5.4. Improved access of family farmers to markets, guaranteeing increased participation and adequate income, in particular for youth and women

- » Facilitate farmers' access to markets through buying products directly or entering contracts with relevant companies to market their products without intermediaries.
- » Encourage innovative and inclusive SSFF business models for women and youth in food production and value chain enterprises that are sustainable, respect local culture and traditions with benefits in terms of healthy food and job opportunities.
- » Promote institutional procurement programmes (i.e. school meals or contract farming) in partnership with the private sector and development partners.
- » Increase SSFF access to product distribution, marketing channels and transport.

Pillar 6: Promote sustainable family farming for climate-resilient food systems

6.1. Family farmers placed at the centre of sustainable and responsible management and use of natural resources with increased access to productive assets and services

- » Foster a systems approach and an enabling environment that ensures family farmers can access digital solutions and receive training in the use of ICTs.
- » Develop and promote awareness of SSFF knowledge, innovations and food solutions, applied in response to challenges and shocks such as climate change and COVID-19.
- » Improve water resource management with innovative, efficient irrigation technologies, rainwater harvesting, using treated wastewater and seawater desalination.

6.2. Family farmers practicing and driving transition towards sustainable agriculture to address the needs of current and future generations and mitigate climate change

- » Support the development of national strategies to reduce food losses.
- » Promote the development and dissemination of family farming-specific climate risk financial schemes based on innovative partnerships and cooperation between family farmers, their organizations, cooperatives and public and private financial institutions.
- » Develop SSFF capacities to implement climate smart agricultural practices and enhance climate-resilient food systems using available knowledge, such as that generated by the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR, 2017).
- » Promote capacity building programmes to implement good agricultural practices with small scale-farmers to improve sustainable crop production.

6.3. Inclusive market environment for family farmers developed, promoting a short food supply chain, for diversified, nutritious food, contributing to more sustainable food systems

- » Promote policy, institutional arrangements and infrastructure that support local markets for SSFF to supply nutritious and diversified foods to consumers.
- » Support short agriculture and food value chains and stronger urban-rural linkages (trade, markets, etc.).

6.4. Inclusive, functioning fair value chains with improved conditions for family farmers, in particular women, youth and their organizations, encouraging diversification and production of nutritious food

- » Increase investments in equitable access to market and build the capacity of producer organizations.

Pillar 7: Strengthen the multidimensionality of family farming to promote social innovations contributing to land development and food systems that safeguard biodiversity, the environment and culture

7.1. Improved synergies between production systems (fisheries, aquaculture, forestry, crops and livestock) and enhanced family farmer management of biodiversity and ecosystem services

- » Develop sustainable, innovative environment-friendly practices to boost agricultural productivity, using fewer chemical fertilizers and pesticides, implementing water saving techniques and raising awareness of sustainable land management principles and practices.
- » Provide policy guidance and legal regulations to help family farmers adopt agro-ecology principles and manage biodiversity.
- » Develop strategies to mainstream biodiversity in SSFF.
- » Support policies to regulate fertilizer use based on the International Code of Conduct for the Sustainable Use and Management of Fertilizers.

7.2. Strengthened diverse functions of family farming promoting social innovation, diverse job opportunities, improving rural-urban links and generating benefits for society

- » Establish coordination mechanisms between local authorities and SSFF to ensure that fresh, healthy products reach the consumer, along with growth corridors, agro-industrial parks and special economic zones.
- » Support rural-urban partnerships and foster the use of multilevel, multi-actor territorial approaches to link demand through shorter supply chains and to make food systems more resilient, sustainable and inclusive.

7.3. Innovative economic opportunities and market solutions promoting the services and goods of multifunctional family farming, embedded and built on local resources

- » Promote regulations that help family farmers develop quality products, e.g. labelling of regional origin, organic and socially responsible products and preserving traditional products and practices that strengthen connections between farmers and consumers.

7.4. Strengthen understanding and use of territorial and landscape approaches to support integrated, transformative and location-based policies and programmes in support of family farmers

- » Introduce land and landscape approaches in policy and planning with measures to build institutional capacities.
- » Identify key territories for more integrated, rural-urban multisectoral development planning.



STAKEHOLDERS' ROLES IN IMPLEMENTING THE UNDIFF IN THE NENA REGION

Establishing, building and scaling up innovative multistakeholder partnerships will be critical to success in transformative, inclusive policies, building resilience, promoting innovations and digital transformation. Governments, development agencies, farmers' organizations, civil society, private sector and UN organizations all have a role to play in implementing the UNDIFF in the NENA Region. Different groups of stakeholders should discuss and agree these roles regarding each activity, the stakeholders involved and the specific context.

Coherent regional programmes are needed to address the challenges of small-scale family farmers in the region, guided by the seven pillars of the UNDIFF, with the support of FAO-RNE, IFAD, WRF (World Rural Forum) and other development actors with the active engagement of governmental and non-governmental institutions, as well as all relevant stakeholders, including farmers organizations and women and youth associations.

ANNEX 1

INNOVATION IN FAMILY FARMING SYSTEMS TO ACHIEVE THE **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Background Paper for the Launch of the UN Decade of Family Farming in the Near East and North Africa Region

finalized on 15 December 2020

BACKGROUND

In May 2019 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2019-28 the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDF) as a framework for countries to develop public policies and investments that support family farming. UNDF also seeks to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by addressing family farming from a holistic perspective, incorporating eradication of rural poverty in all its forms and dimensions.

NENA (the Near East and North Africa) is the world's largest food importer, relying on world markets for more than 50 per cent of its food. Price rises, particularly for wheat and rice, emphasized the strategic importance of boosting local production (Bush, 2016). Many countries in the NENA Region have also endured socio-economic instability.

Family farming is the main form of food and agricultural production in both developed and developing countries, accounting for over 80 percent of the world's food in value terms. In the NENA Region, more than 80 percent of agricultural production is small-scale family farming (SSFF <https://www.fhi360.org/about-us>). Given it is multidimensional, the farm, family, food production and work, and knowledge are all intertwined. However, despite its enormous contribution to food security, SSFF faces constraints that undermine its profitability and economic growth. Agriculture will not deliver sufficient poverty reduction in the NENA Region without a significant productivity increase. Business as usual will not enable the region to achieve the SDG 2.3 target of doubling agricultural productivity and incomes for small-scale food producers, particularly women, youth, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers.

FAO established the Regional Initiative on Small-Scale Family Farming (RI-SSFF) to address these constraints and the region's underlying structural challenges of high youth unemployment and gender inequality, in the challenging context of rapid population growth, increasing urbanization and migration flows, low growth in food production, natural resource degradation – all exacerbated by conflict and climate change. For the period 2018-21, the Regional Initiative identified three expected results and 17 areas of work to reduce poverty through enhanced rural livelihoods and the competitiveness of small-scale family farmers.

To achieve this transformative vision, family farmers – including fisher folk, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, traditional communities, mountain farmers, forest users, women and youth – have unique potential to become key agents of development strategies. Direct interventions targeting family farmers can bring sustainable benefits to the whole rural economy. Supporting them can support comprehensive, long-term solutions, even in crises such as the COVID-19 outbreak that has gripped the world since the beginning of 2020.

TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE DISRUPTIVE IMPACT OF COVID-19

Since the launch of the UNDF in May 2019, the global development context has dramatically changed, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 poses a threat to the global economy, agricultural development, food production and trade at all levels. Relieving this economic and food crisis requires measures to protect vulnerable food producers and consumers, to maintain global food supply chains and alleviate the effects across agrifood systems. While COVID-19 began as a health crisis, it has become an economic, food security and income crisis as the response entailed severe disruption to production and supply chains in almost all sectors, not least food and agriculture (Torero Cullen, 2020; OECD, 2020). The severity of this crisis merits special attention when implementing the UNDF. According to the OECD the crisis will have potentially extreme economic, social and sustainable development consequences that may reverse decades of development progress and further jeopardize efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (OECD, 2020).

COVID-19 has hit the 19 countries of the NENA Region hard. Since 15 March 2020, most governments took measures to slow the spread of the disease and maintain food supplies and reserves including countries dependent on cereal imports (FAO, 2020c). As the COVID-19 crisis spreads in the region, family farmers, especially small-scale family farmers, are particularly exposed to its effects and movement restrictions that hinder access to inputs, technology and markets. Efforts to help family farming implement the UNDF must adapt to this new context.

According to UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund), by late May 2020 COVID-19 cases continued to increase in several countries of the MENA Region (a subset of 17 of the 19 countries in the FAO NENA Region), reaching 437 410 cases and 11 316 deaths. In countries facing food crises, especially Sudan, Syria and Yemen, listed among the ten countries in the world with the worst food crises in 2019 affecting around 28 million people, there has been a decline in the quantity, frequency and diversity of food that the most vulnerable children and families consume (UNICEF, 2020). Women have seen further restrictions on their mobility and access to productive resources with dramatic increases in gender-based violence. These have had direct impacts on household food and nutrition security. Meanwhile, rural youth – already facing some of the highest unemployment rates in the world – now have even less access to decent employment and education, including online education. This puts them at high risk of suffering long-term poverty.

The OECD argues that the COVID-19 crisis should lead to a new development model conducive to resilience and sustainability (OECD, 2020). Prior to the current pandemic, salinization, erosion, contamination, land degradation and poor land management were already key challenges. To address these in a region reeling from the combined impacts of conflict, climate change and COVID-19, technological, social and institutional innovations are critically important. There is much promise in the broader use of digital approaches and ICT (information and communication technologies) such as precision agriculture, e-commerce, blockchain technology and digital extension to provide solutions and respond to emerging challenges that face SSFF (Bahn *et al.*, 2020; Bravi and Sylvester, 2020; FAO 2019a; Dahlberg Advisers, CTA, 2019). Interventions to support SSFF after COVID-19 should focus on rebuilding and strengthening family farmer resilience.

Research shows that for small-scale family farmers to embrace innovations small farmers need to be included in the selection, co-development and adaptation to their particular contexts (FAO, 2019b; Hussein, 2001). They need to provide solutions to the pressing problems family farmers face in agriculture and in secure livelihoods. They need to be treated as core actors, at the heart of demand-driven innovation. Building strong, structured and representative organizations to advocate family farmer priorities can be critical to achieving this, as is shown in Africa and other regions (Bosc *et al.*, 2002 Hussein, 2001; Sourisseau *et al.*, 2014; Bélières *et al.*, 2015; Bosc *et al.*, 2019).

FOCUS OF THIS PAPER

- » Provide an overview of existing materials and assessments of SSFF;
- » Incorporate the perspectives of a wide range of regional and governmental, international and non-governmental stakeholders with an interest in developing the region's farming, gathered through an international eConsultation through the Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN Forum) and a Google survey of key stakeholders at regional level coordinated by FAO-RNE, the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa;
- » Inform the regional application of the UNDFP and develop an aligned regional action plan;
- » Facilitate a virtual meeting to launch the UNDFP in the NENA Region (the eLaunch), hosted by FAO-RNE on 24 November 2020.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE UNDIFF AND THE GLOBAL ACTION PLAN

The UNDIFF is global in reach and designed around seven mutually reinforcing pillars of action that focus on different aspects of support for family farmers.

- (i) Develop an enabling policy environment to strengthen family farming.
- (ii) Support youth and ensure family farming is sustainable across generations.
- (iii) Promote gender equity in family farming and rural women's leadership role.
- (iv) Strengthen family farmers' organizations and their capacity to generate knowledge, represent farmers and provide inclusive urban-rural services.
- (v) Improve the socio-economic inclusion, resilience and well-being of family farmers, rural households and communities.
- (vi) Promote sustainable family farming for climate-resilient food systems.
- (vii) Strengthen the various dimensions of family farming to promote social innovation and develop land and food systems that safeguard biodiversity, the environment and culture.

The UNDIFF Global Action Plan (GAP) seeks to provide detailed guidance for the international community and recommends a series of coherent, interconnected actions to support family farmers. The GAP is based on recognizing family farmer diversity. These actions should be context-specific, adapted to regional, national, local sociocultural and socio-economic conditions. To guarantee the success of the UNDIFF, all actions should place family farmers at the centre and be implemented through bottom-up, participatory and inclusive processes.

The GAP is based on the conviction that focusing on family farming and all family-based production models in projects and programmes for ten years will contribute to a world free of hunger and poverty, which manages natural resources sustainably and where no one is left behind, thereby directly contributing to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The GAP outlines a comprehensive approach to achieve the SDGs, in the context of progressive realization of the right to adequate food. The UNDIFF aims to address the need for a global food system that provides sufficient, affordable, nutritious food while taking into account climate change and population growth and redressing entrenched special and intra-household inequalities. Family farmers have unique potential to become key agents of development strategies. They contribute in many ways to achieving the SDGs, particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). Family farming also has key roles in reaching SDGs 5, 8, 10, 11 and 15, both at country and regional levels.

Figure 1 presents the ways the UNDIFF is intended to contribute to the SDGs and vice versa, how the SDGs support family farming.

PROCESS

This Background Document and the accompanying draft Regional Action Plan are informed by:

- » A literature review (see references at the end of this paper);
- » Consultations with key informants for the region, within and outside FAO, including strategic partners, e.g. FAO representatives, IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) WRF (World Rural Forum);
- » An eConsultation on the UNDRR Regional Action Plan for the Near East and North Africa held on the Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) website from late July to end August 2020 (58 responses from participants in more than 26 countries from the following sectors: research and academia; civil society; independent experts; the private and public sectors; FAO. Public sector and research professionals constituted 40 percent of respondents; private sector participation was the smallest of the key groups, 9 percent (see topic, questions and response at: http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/discussions/UNDRR_NENA);
- » A Google survey of diverse regional partners organized by FAO-RNE in the Near East and North Africa (110 responses).

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SMALL-SCALE FAMILY FARMING AND HOW DOES THIS LINK WITH REALITIES IN THE NENA REGION?

There are many attempts in the literature and by international organizations, such as FAO, to define small-scale food producers and family farming. Most observers agree their characteristics are tied to the wide diversity of socio-economic and agro-ecological contexts.

For the purposes of this Background Paper, SSFF is understood to combine the following three elements:

- » Farmers who own or work on relatively small land areas (tenure). The literature refers to those with access to between 1 and 10 hectares of land;
- » Rural producers or farmers who generate small amounts of agricultural produce, usually as part of low input, less intensive and diversified agricultural production and livelihoods;
- » A farm run by a family using mostly (or only) their own labour and deriving a large but variable share of income from it, in kind or in cash. Family farming includes all family-based agricultural activities (forestry, fisheries, pastoral, aquaculture production, etc.) managed and operated by a family relying on the family's labour (the work of both women and men who are part of the family). The family relies on agriculture for at least part of the food consumed through self-provision, non-monetary exchanges or market exchanges and engages in activities other than farming, locally or through migration. The holding relies on family labour with limited reliance on temporary hired labour, but may exchange labour with neighbours or those in the wider kinship group beyond the immediate family. The family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine various economic, environmental, social and cultural functions (Khalil et al., 2017; Bush, 2016).

According to the UNDF GAP, “family farmers, include peasants, indigenous peoples, traditional communities, pastoralists, fishers, mountain farmers, and many other groups of food producers, hold unique potential to promote transformative changes in how food is grown, produced, processed and distributed, which enhances territorial development” (FAO and IFAD, 2019).

In most countries of the NENA Region, FAO is working with small-scale family farmers providing a framework to promote sustainable SSFF as a means to reduce rural poverty and improve livelihoods for the most vulnerable communities. This is in the context of supporting the SDGs, given the high concentration of the poor among small-scale family farmers and the critical role of family farming.

Figure 1. Family farming and the SDGs



Figure 1

Source: FAO and IFAD, 2019.

REGIONAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Underlying conditions and challenges for small-scale family farming in the NENA Region

The 2017 FAO study by Marzin *et al.* (2017) noted that SSFF in the region (here referring to Egypt, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia) faces many challenges. These include: climate variability; job creation, particularly for unemployed youth; food security; competition from different forms of agricultural production; lack of financial resources; dysfunctional institutions; absence of producer organizations and poverty related to poor living conditions.

Rapid population growth, increasing urbanization, low growth in food production, and the degradation of already scarce natural resources are key characteristics of the region. Conflict and war (Bush, 2016), insecurity, climate change and water scarcity exacerbate these challenges and hinder achievement of the SDGs. The inequalities and power imbalances faced by youth and women in particular hinder inclusive agricultural transformation. The FAO Regional Initiative seeks to address the structural challenges of high levels of youth unemployment and gender inequality.

Some of these challenges also constitute opportunities, such as urbanization. As noted by Marzin *et al.*, (2017) urbanization increasingly leads to monetization of food demand due to a drop in the number of smallholders consuming part of their production, combined with people moving to towns who increasingly rely on the market for food. This can be positive for those still involved in farming, but only if it meets three conditions: (i) urban dwellers have sufficient purchasing power; (ii) supply chain organization changes do not outsource most of the added value of the sector to non-farmers; and (iii) productivity gains do not lead to lower agricultural prices. The authors point out that the ability of small-scale family farmers to take advantage of this development depends on their capacity to organize (i.e. through producer organizations) to generate economies of scale in marketing and public investments that link local production and urban markets, e.g. transport infrastructure, physical markets, and on supporting farmers to comply with health and food safety standards.

Among the most vulnerable to any of the conditions, drivers and challenges outlined above are small-scale family farmers. They face a number of constraints that hinder their productivity, profitability and livelihoods, and are among the most affected by poverty. They also face high levels of economic, financial and social risk while limited access to social protection and social safety nets further compromises their resilience and capacity to recover from shocks.

At the same time, Bosc and Viberti (forthcoming) point out that given the heterogeneity of family farms in the highly diverse NENA Region, general policy prescriptions directed at all family farmers may not be relevant (FAO, 2014). There are different challenges and opportunities between small-scale family farmers in the Arab Maghreb Union countries (Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia), the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates), and the other countries of the NENA Region. Diversity and heterogeneity in the region may constitute an opportunity. Policy responses, investments and development initiatives therefore need to take into account this diversity,

identify opportunities, be context-specific, tailor them to various groups of farmers and producers and to the various opportunities and challenges.

This requires new tailored policies and targeted investments from public and private sources, to increase capacities to respond to the challenges SSFF faces, to build resilience to shocks and their economic and social risks related and strengthen SSFF contributions to building sustainable, resilient food systems. This has become all the more important with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Innovation, including digital or ICT-based approaches, agroecology and climate smart agriculture, among others, can provide solutions to some of the most pressing challenges facing SSFF in the NENA Region and bring about the institutional, social and economic transformation needed. However, digital innovation will depend on closing the digital divide facing farmers and rural communities including, for example: unstable or inadequate internet access; poor electricity service; insufficient infrastructure; lack of learning opportunities on using apps and other ICT/digital technologies; limited digital extension support to SSFF.

Key elements from the eConsultation and regional survey by NENA to inform development of a UNDF Regional Action Plan

Participants from 26 countries (10 from the NENA Region and 16 from outside it) responded to the survey and the FSN eConsultation with contributions from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. From outside the region there were contributions from: Benin, Canada, Chad, India, Italy, Japan, Myanmar, Norway, Panama, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Uganda, and the United States of America. Many respondents also shared useful background materials and references that appear at the end of this paper in the section "Resources shared by FSN Survey participants".

The topics of the eConsultation covered all aspects of the seven UNDF pillars with particular attention to: (i) transition towards more sustainable agrifood systems; (ii) inclusive and equitable growth; (iii) impacts of COVID-19 in the NENA Region; (iv) fostering an enabling environment to implement the UNDF; and (v) partnerships.

Issues and challenges facing SSFF in the NENA Region

The eConsultation and survey raised a number of challenges facing SSFF to promote and support family farming in the NENA Region.

► *Transition towards more sustainable agrifood systems*

- » Vulnerability to droughts and complex climate change effects on agriculture in the NENA, with altered temperature ranges and precipitation, extreme weather events such as floods and heat waves and changes in flowering and fruit planting dates accompanied by greater infestation of pests and diseases, and increased salinity all significantly affect crop productivity. Heat stress also reduces livestock productivity. These problems have affected countries in the region in diverse ways (with specific examples from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco and Palestine).
- » Low productivity due to: fragility of SSFF systems including agropastoralist systems; lack of access to productive land, land degradation and desertification; lack of access to agricultural innovations; adverse impacts of climate change; water scarcity; limited access to inputs and tools (seeds, fertilizer etc.); poor financing mechanisms and marketing.
- » Poor profitability of SSFF and lack of capital to invest in farms and limited economic, technical and

organizational capacities to promote agricultural products.

- » Lack of access to new and improved irrigation techniques.
- » Lack of adequate storage facilities leading to waste and losses of crops.
- » Difficulties accessing labour – especially seasonal labourers.
- » Lack of access to knowledge and know-how compounded by weak advisory services and extension systems.

► ***Towards inclusive and equitable growth***

- » Gender inequality (e.g. access to inputs, land and financial resources);
- » Lack of opportunities for rural youth and their lack of interest in agriculture;
- » Rural exodus and rural-urban migration;
- » Weak farmers' organizations;
- » Weak management and research institutional structure;
- » Lack of strong policies for social protection.

► ***The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the NENA Region***

- » Participants agreed that in general, COVID-19 aggravated the challenges faced by the region's family farmers.
- » COVID-19 disrupted health, agriculture, access to non-agricultural employment, livelihoods, economy and services, adding another challenge to those facing family farmers.
- » There were limitations on agricultural labours working full time, e.g. half days only in Morocco during the height of the crisis.
- » Border closures disrupted trade and marketing of agricultural goods (e.g. Palestine).
- » The impact of the pandemic on women is particularly severe as many depend on the informal economy and agribusiness sector.
- » There was limited access to agricultural services and effective government support.
- » Difficulties in marketing agricultural products arose due to closure of local markets, suspension of public food procurement and lower demand from hotels and catering. Preferences shifted from fresh to preserved foods and suspended public food procurement programmes resulting in lower prices for SSFF commodities (e.g. Palestine, Tunisia).
- » Shortages of inputs and price increases left farmers unable to prepare their fields for sowing.
- » COVID-19 has however created opportunities to promote digitalization and greater use of mobile apps in the NENA Region (e.g. Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Morocco).

► ***Enabling environment for implementing the UNDF***

This requires commitment to:

- » Create and strengthen local, national and international cooperation in support of family farming.
- » Establish an enabling environment for digitalization and training family farmers in ICTs, taking care not to increase rural-urban and gender divides. This requires putting in place comprehensive and coherent policies, investments and institutional frameworks that support family farming at all levels.

- » Create inclusive, effective governance mechanisms accompanied by timely, geographically relevant data to contribute to well-targeted policy design and implementation.
- » Promote public-private partnerships.
- » Foster knowledge generation and dissemination that promotes sustainable family farming.
- » Strengthen the role of local development organizations and civil society organizations in decision-making.
- » Establish programmes that empower women (especially young women), women's access to labour markets and eliminate discrimination in accessing land, resources, and services for inclusive, sustainable food systems.
- » Promote comprehensive agricultural advisory services, and exchange knowledge of innovative technologies and practices at different levels.
- » Encourage agricultural banks to provide timely services that meet farmers' needs.
- » Promote gender equality and social inclusion to ensure the long-term sustainability of family farming.
- » Facilitate farmers' access to markets by buying products directly or negotiating contracts with relevant companies, to market production without intermediaries. The private sector has a key role in ensuring socio-economic inclusiveness in family farming, for example supporting SSFF microfinance programmes.
- » Urge businesses to provide advice and assistance to small-scale family farms at all stages of agricultural value chains: from purchase of inputs, marketing, processing and prices.
- » Establish factories to process agricultural products and facilitate smallholders' access to them.

► **Partnerships**

- » FAO and IFAD lead implementation of the UNDIFF and can facilitate dialogue between government and civil society to build innovative partnerships to help overcome the many challenges faced by family farmers.
- » Partnerships should focus on financial and technical support to them, promote the social and financial inclusion of women, youth, and people with disabilities, and establish food processing industries.
- » Public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be inclusive, participatory and demand-driven. Multistakeholder platforms are essential to engage all stakeholders successfully and provide technical support to nascent partnerships.
- » Existing partnerships worth considering include those led by the Arab Women Leaders in Agriculture (AWLA) and the Agroecology in Practice Project in Uganda. The latter aims to enhance farmers' understanding of their farm and surrounding environment through a systems perspective.
- » The Sawlog Production Grant Scheme in Uganda has been successful due to: 1) co-investment with retrospective grants, establishing quality forest plantations and eliminating the risk of funds being used for other purposes; 2) extensive training in standards and guidelines to establish commercial forest plantations; and 3) an integrated approach on related investments along the value chain.
- » The revolving loan programme implemented by the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development (AAAID) is a notable example of financial support to family farmers through partnerships with local banks and regional finance institutions.

Suggested responses and actions to address challenges to SSFF flourishing in the NENA Region

Respondents stated that applying any UNDF interventions should be context-specific and recognize the diversity of family farmers across the NENA Region. The process should be bottom-up, inclusive with multistakeholder engagement. Governments need assistance to make changes to laws, policies and strategies to support family farmers, taking on board the impact of COVID-19, to be reflected in the UNDF National Action Plans.

► *Transition towards more sustainable agrifood systems*

- » Innovation and digital solutions can contribute to a transition towards more sustainable agrifood systems by assessing the impacts of climate change and projecting future climate trends. Innovation and digital solutions can increase agricultural productivity, profitability, and business opportunities. They can also promote social inclusion and lead to a more rational use of resources and inputs. But for digitalization to have the desired impacts requires a systems approach, an enabling environment and training for family farmers in the use of ICT.
- » Improved water management can increase water productivity, particularly important for the NENA Region. Examples include efficient irrigation, adequate rainwater collection, such as rainwater recovery in elevated cisterns (e.g. Tunisia), unconventional water technologies and resources, including desalination and use of treated wastewater.
- » Establish policies and programmes for sustainable land management and land tenure.
- » Improve access to seeds, particularly native seeds and improved varieties from traditional seed systems (e.g. Tunisia), and other key agricultural inputs for SSFF, while promoting crop diversification and conservation agriculture.

► *Towards inclusive and equitable growth*

- » Strengthen farmers' organizations and their involvement in decision-making.
- » Increase investments in building SSFF product quality and sustainability to increase profitability.
- » Support SSFF livelihood and product diversification.
- » Support short supply chains and urban-rural linkages.
- » Introduce territorial development in policy and planning with measures to strengthen mutually beneficial rural-urban linkages and to harness the benefits of remittances.
- » Advocate to recognize the key sustainable development role of family farmers in national strategies, in particular, social protection programmes. FAO's Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA) tool has successfully carried out needs assessments to shape intervention strategies.
- » Social protection initiatives that reach particularly vulnerable people are key, for example: cash for work programmes; conditional cash transfer programmes for women (IFPRI, Egypt) and cash+ programmes (cash for nutrition, Yemen).
- » Promote decent employment and eliminate exploitative child labour in family farming by addressing the root causes of child labour, such as rural poverty and the lack of social protection.

► *The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the NENA Region*

The eConsultation and survey highlighted a wide variety of priority actions to enhance resilience and promote sustainable livelihoods during the pandemic. Selected responses tailored to SSFF include the following.

- » Involve small farmers in decision-making and policy formulation and adapt policies and interventions to local contexts.
- » Strengthen existing food security and agriculture monitoring, assessment and coordination mechanisms for evidence-based programming.
- » Support SSFF food production to increase food availability and income opportunities.
- » Establish food and cash social protection programmes to boost the incomes of vulnerable households and stabilize access to food. In Morocco, for example, a temporary basic income for vulnerable family farmers has enabled families in mountainous areas to buy food and medication during COVID-19 lockdown. The home-garden initiative in Palestine distributed vegetable seedlings to 16 000 beneficiaries.
- » Encourage the formation of inclusive and representative farmers' associations to support their members, particularly rural women and youth, in accessing assets, services and activities to enhance livelihoods and incomes.
- » Raise awareness of COVID-19 hygiene, protection and prevention measures among advisory services, extension services, SSFF and their organizations to support the safe functioning of food agriculture and food value chains. Adapt capacity-building activities for farmers in accordance with safety measures, while enhancing use of ICTs and digital approaches where relevant.
- » *Promote digital transformation and enhance the digital literacy of SSFF to enable use of digital applications to overcome key constraints in production, marketing, access to inputs and information, particularly in times of crisis and lockdown.
- » Farmers themselves have taken the initiative, marketing their produce via social media. Beekeepers in north Palestine also sell their produce through express-delivery companies, which can move between cities and villages during the pandemic.
- » Establish coordination mechanisms between local authorities and SSFF to ensure fresh products reach the consumer, while observing safety measures.
- » Strengthen the resilience of urban farming systems through, for example, specialized agricultural forums that facilitate knowledge sharing and influence policies, for example in Palestine, GUPAP, (Gaza Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture Platform).
- » Encourage farmers to use locally available resources for their products (e.g. compost and other inputs) to reduce import dependency and establish field schools such as the Road to Development Association in Egypt to train farmers in composting. In Yemen, FAO has implemented nutrition-sensitive interventions to reduce dependency on food aid and imports, to help households produce food and generate income. The project provided seeds, water tanks and drip irrigation networks, as well as training to increase vegetable yields and contribute to better household nutrition.
- » Ensure timely access to credit and agricultural inputs at reasonable prices. For example, in Lebanon, the government has supported poultry farmers and sheep and cow breeders, supplying feed at reduced prices.

Box 1. Digital apps for farmers regarding COVID-19

- » In the NENA Region, the following mobile apps have supported farmers regarding COVID-19 restrictions.
- » The FAO EL-Mufeed app in Egypt and the app of Morshidak Al-Zerai in Saudi Arabia provide farmers with advisory services.
- » The Bashaier app links buyers with sellers in Egypt.
- » FAMEWS is an app from FAO for Android phones for real time monitoring of the fall armyworm.
- » The IPhyto Pro app in Morocco supports agricultural professionals and extension agents to source the information they need to support farmers.
- » The Moroccan Bee Agri app is a network that allows farmers to discuss technical issues and needs and receive appropriate answers from advisers or other farmers

► **An enabling environment to implement the UNDF**

- » Build inclusive and enabling policy environments and establish sound agricultural information systems to support evidence-based policies and interventions.
- » Facilitate sound agricultural information systems to support evidence-based interventions while enhancing understanding of farmers' cultivation strategies.
- » Strengthen community-based organizations and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) to put pressure on decision-makers to create an enabling policy environment for SSFF through reform of laws and taxes, with access to insurance.
- » Establish cash for work, conditional cash transfer and cash+ programmes for SSFF.

► **Partnerships**

- » Improve food storage and processing facilities.
- » Provide timely access to agricultural inputs at reasonable prices.
- » Improve access to product distribution and marketing channels.
- » Build the climate resilience of family farming.
- » Strengthen SSFF access to knowledge, advisory and extension services, to keep up with technological developments and new practices.
- » The following digital tools have potential to improve SSFF productivity, livelihoods and incomes: laboratory information systems; the internet of things (applied to weather centres using sensors); satellite technology; cloud analytics and big data; mobile phones.
- » More investments and opportunities are needed to empower women and youth.
- » Investments will increase equitable access to affordable irrigation technologies and to improved water management.

Development opportunities and innovations to strengthen SSFF in the NENA Region

Farmers' knowledge, innovations and food solutions developed by small-scale family farmers in response to challenges and shocks such as climate, weather changes and COVID-19 have been critical to adapting livelihoods through transformation and shocks.

In addition, game-changing innovations are needed to boost productivity, improve access to services, markets and jobs, stimulate new business opportunities and increase resilience, especially for youth and women (e.g. ICTs, digital approaches, agro-ecology, and climate-smart agriculture, among others).

There is a need to increase SSFF access to such innovations, particularly digital approaches, ICT, and e-extension in agricultural value chains. These promote an efficient and inclusive agricultural and rural transformation to enable SSFF to face challenges and reap the benefits of technology and innovation to improve livelihoods and incomes. This requires investments in SSFF capacity building and organizations of family farmers to maximize the benefits of using digital tools and approaches.

STRATEGIC VISION

SSFF is and will remain integral to building inclusive, resilient and sustainable agricultural and rural transformation in the NENA Region. This initiative and this Background Paper seek to contribute to a 10-year process to support SSFF in the NENA Region. This entails work in four priority areas.

- (i) **Contributing to more inclusive SSFF** with a focus on youth and women;
- (ii) **Empowering** small-scale family farmers through, for example, stronger producer organizations, enhanced networking and sharing knowledge and innovation;
- (iii) **Fostering digital innovation** in agriculture to address challenges, to increase productivity and raise incomes;
- (iv) **Mobilizing new resources and partnerships** to ensure adequate investments and territorially based solutions.

The **Strategic Vision for strengthening family farming in the NENA Region over the next 10 years** is to achieve:

- » enhanced resilience, productivity, sustainability and inclusiveness of family farming and to maximize its contribution to an inclusive food system transformation in the context of resource scarcity, climate change, conflict and other crises facing the region; and
- » sustainable increases in agricultural productivity, food production and SSFF incomes that promote decent employment, high social standards and respect for the environment in the face of the above challenges.

Achieving this vision will require transformative actions with innovative and effective institutions, technologies and policies, as well as requisite local and national capacities and investments.

There is a need to tailor the UNDFP Global Action Plan to realities at regional level, guided by the actions presented under the seven pillars. Taking into specific consideration the NENA Region and its unique challenges, it is important to introduce a new generation of enabling policy environment and technical interventions tailored to it, with the socio-economic inclusion of youth and women to promote sustainable food production of family farming at the centre.

Coherent regional programmes need to address the challenges of SSFF, guided by the seven UNDFP pillars, with the support of FAO-RNE, IFAD and other development partners, along with the active engagement of government and NGOs and all relevant stakeholders, including farmer organizations and women and youth associations.

This approach will interface with the FAO Hand-in-Hand Initiative to eradicate poverty, end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by using a territorial approach to support the most vulnerable producers, including women and youth (FAO, 2020b).

TOWARDS A UNDIFF-ALIGNED ACTION PLAN FOR THE NENA REGION

In the NENA Region, FAO has already sought to strengthen SSFF through the three pillars of the **FAO Regional Initiative on Small-Scale Family Farming (RI-SSFF)**, namely:

- (i) introduce sustainable and innovative practices to boost the productivity of farmers and their associations in small-scale family farming;
- (ii) develop decent rural employment opportunities and complementary social protection mechanisms for small-scale family farmers; and
- (iii) strengthen rural organizations' and institutions' capacities to improve small-scale family farmers' access to rural services and markets (see: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7879e.pdf.2017>).

Strengthening family farming in the region requires new approaches that take into account the multiple roles and dimensions of family farming, beyond production. It requires innovative technologies and public-private producer partnerships along strategic commodity and value chains to increase capacities to respond to challenges and strengthen their resilience to shocks, such as pandemics.

The **Regional Action Plan for the UNDIFF in the NENA Region** should directly interface with the seven pillars of the UNDIFF GAP and include **three types of action adapted to the region and different country contexts**.

- » **Short-term actions** (*immediate*) – to support small-scale family farmers in the context of disrupted supply chains and markets with actions that take into account and respond to the changed situation created by COVID-19;
- » **Medium-term measures** (*over the next 1-4 years*) – to increase the efficiency of small-scale family farmers in the face of shocks;
- » **Long-term measures** (*over the years to the end of the Decade of Family Farming and beyond*) – to support family farming and contribute to a world free of hunger and poverty, where natural resources are managed sustainably and where no one is left behind.

Strategic partners for the implementation of the Regional Action Plan in the NENA Region will include IFAD and the World Rural Forum, among others to be identified through a consultative process in the region.

(See Annex for Outline Action Plan discussed at the eLaunch event.)

STAKEHOLDERS' ROLES IN IMPLEMENTING THE UNDIFF IN THE NENA REGION

Establishing, building and scaling-up innovative multistakeholder partnerships will be critical to success in developing transformative and inclusive policies, building resilience, promoting innovations and digital transformation, and building capacities.

Governments, development agencies, farmers' organizations, civil society, the private sector and UN organizations all have roles to play in implementing the UNDIFF in the NENA Region. These roles should be discussed and agreed among the different groups of stakeholders in relation to each action identified, the stakeholders involved and the specific context.

ANNEX 2

UNDIFF IN NENA

Regional Launch Event in the Near East and North Africa

24 November 2020

Summary Report

BACKGROUND

On 24 November 2020 the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (FAO-RNE) hosted a Launch event for the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDF) in the region. This event was the culmination of work begun in early 2020 to review evidence and gather stakeholder perspectives to feed into a Regional Action Plan for the Near East and North Africa (RAP-NENA). The Launch agenda can be found in Annex 1 to this Summary Report.

The event brought together participants from government ministries, farmers' organizations, civil society, research institutions and international organizations from the whole region to define priorities and implement a RAP for this decade. It gathered together key stakeholders working towards the sustainability and resilience of family farming in NENA, including: UMNAGRI (Union Maghrébine et de l'Afrique du Nord des Agriculteurs), PAFO (Pan-African Farmers' Organisation), GUPAP (Gaza Urban Agriculture Platform), UTAP (Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries), Omani Farmers' Association Road for Development, FAO, OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), WFP (World Food Programme), IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), European Union among others.

FAO and IFAD, with their partners, saw this event as an opportunity to foster inclusive and sustainable family farming as the central cornerstone for vibrant, productive and profitable agriculture. Coordinated efforts between IFAD and FAO are being scaled up in the context of the UNDF which runs from 2019 until 2028.

The meeting gave an opportunity for stakeholders to review the UNDF Global Action Plan (GAP) and the Regional Action Plan (RAP) to address objectives and actions that are most relevant to the NENA Region. It also provided a forum for partners, institutions and representatives of farmers and their organizations to share their priorities. These were noted for inclusion in a revised RAP-NENA. Key points discussed by participants are summarized below.

Opening remarks of FAO, IFAD and World Rural Forum for the RAP-NENA

- » The United Nations General Assembly has explicitly recognized "the role that family farms play in improving nutrition and ensuring global food security, eradicating poverty, ending hunger, conserving biodiversity, achieving environmental sustainability and helping address migration".
- » The UNDF seeks to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, addressing family farming from a holistic perspective, incorporating the eradication of rural poverty in all its forms and dimensions.
- » Family farming is relevant to all the SDGs.
- » The UNDF GAP recommends a series of interconnected actions, from local to global.
- » Family farmers in the region have enormous potential, but lack access to resources and services to support food production and marketing. Infrastructure in rural areas is poor, and environmental and climatic conditions are under threat.
- » In the NENA region, the UNDF RAP is now being regionalized, and will need to operate at national level. This draws on the extensive experience of supporting small-scale family farming (SSFF) through the FAO Regional Initiative on Small-Scale Family Farming (RI-SSFF), which has

been active since the International Year of Family farming in 2014, IFAD-financed programmes and the experience of organizations of family farmers and civil society, such as the WRF (World Rural Forum).

- » The region has been grappling with many challenges that could lead to a serious setback in progress towards the SDGs. Many countries are embroiled in conflict and suffer from fragility, water scarcity and climate change, high population growth (especially in urban centres), a significant youth bulge, and gender inequality. Low productivity, inadequate access to agriculture inputs, exclusion from policymaking and governance are also common in the region. Other issues include: unsustainable use of already scarce natural resources, especially water; rising hunger and malnutrition; protracted sociopolitical crises; and economic slowdown, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- » COVID-19 is compounding the situation, especially for small-scale family farmers. Movement restrictions block access to markets, greatly affecting the perishable goods most farmers produce. An estimated 5-8 million additional people could become hungry in the NENA Region as a result of the pandemic. COVID-19 has underlined the importance of greater self-reliance in regional and local food production, the value of local markets and hence the need for short agricultural and food value chains to ensure access to food in urban and rural areas.
- » These alarming challenges call for a new paradigm to transform food systems and rural development, one that puts environmental, social and economic sustainability at its centre, to ensure food and nutrition security for all.
- » Family farming has critical roles to play in addressing such challenges and achieving the SDGs. Family farmers work 75-85 percent of agricultural land holdings in the region. They do more than just produce food but also fulfil environmental, social and cultural functions. Family farms are the custodians of biodiversity and help preserve the landscape as well as the community and cultural heritage. Despite the huge potential of SSFF and although agriculture comprises the major income for many rural areas, providing more than 80 percent of agricultural production, family farming is neglected in the region's major economic, agriculture or food security policies.
- » Some 13.2 percent of the 411 million people in the NENA region are defined as hungry and ESCWA (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) estimated the COVID-19 pandemic could pull over 8 million Arab people into poverty, leading to an additional 5-7 million people becoming food insecure.
- » The rising share of the population living in urban areas, projected to reach 75 percent by 2050, demands a radical transformation of the agrifood system to guarantee reliable access to basic foods for an ever younger and fast growing population. Family farmers should be at the heart of this radical transformation in the region. People in urban centres consume most food and increasingly demand meat, creating greater competition for land and water. Inclusive and resilient urban food systems that minimize their environmental impact and promote sustainable growth are critically important and can be built on increased synergy between rural and urban food systems.
- » Successfully addressing the challenges faced by small-scale farmers in the NENA Region, fostering the inclusive transformation of family farming and increasing their incomes and resilience requires innovation – particularly in digital technology and in policies and institutions. The RI-SSFF and IFAD-financed projects and programmes promote these very innovations.
- » RAPs, complemented by UNDF National Action Plans (NAPs), are needed to transform family farming. These should be owned by stakeholders involved in rural development at regional and country levels, especially by family farmer and civil society organizations.

- » To implement these action plans, the following are necessary:
 - *a holistic approach;*
 - *access to funds and resources*
 - *treating gender, youth and climate change as cross-cutting development issues*
 - *inclusive value chains that promote family farmer diversification*
 - *meaningful participation of non-state actors, especially those representing women and youth*
 - *empowering family farmers, recognizing their central role in their own development.*

Introduction to the UNdff Global Action Plan and the national process

- » Their multifunctionality means family farmers have unique potential to promote transformative changes in how food is grown, processed and distributed. Family farmers can shift from subsistence to embrace income generation opportunities in rural areas (SDGs 1,10). They support diversified food systems that create job opportunities and positively affect rural-urban mobility, particularly for youth (SDGs 8, 9). They promote food systems that strengthen sustainable integration between urban and rural areas (SDG 11). Family farmers and their organizations can deliver inclusive rural services and contribute to increase land productivity (SDGs 3, 4, 6, 7).
- » They also promote food systems that are more sustainable, resilient to climate change and preserve biodiversity and culture (SDGs 2, 12, 13, 14, 15). Recognition, having a voice and an enabling environment for family farmers will support their potential as agents of change (SDGs 5, 10, 16, 17). The UNdff relies on family farmers' unique potential to promote transformative changes in food systems to achieve the SDGs. The UNdff GAP has 7 pillars of work and FAO and IFAD have been called to lead its implementation.
- » Governments, FAO, IFAD, farmers' organizations and other stakeholders are working together to implement the NAPs, with the goal of developing 100 NAPs and five RAPs by 2024. Seven NAPs have been approved to date – but none are in the NENA Region: Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Gambia, Indonesia, Nepal, Panama and Peru. Seven other countries are on track.
- » The GAP provides a framework to strengthen family farmer resilience in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It also provides key indicative actions to mitigate the immediate impacts of COVID-19 and revamp rural economies and societies in the medium term. This is to: (i) ensure family farmers are not exposed to or become agents of COVID-19 transmission; (ii) mitigate the impact of the health crisis on family farmer food security and livelihoods; and (iii) strengthen local food systems and family farmer access to markets to reboot rural economies.

Panel Discussion 1: UNdff Stakeholders

► *Panel discussion 1 highlights include the following.*

- » The **OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2018-2027** highlights that global productivity growth in agriculture will continue. This will result in downward pressure on international prices for agricultural products. Lower prices reduce buying capacity. It is important for family farmers to know the environment of global markets and international trade within which they operate, and how these shape SSFF development and opportunities. Globally, some 20 percent of all calories consumed have crossed borders reaching 50 percent in the Middle East, making MENA the most food-import dependent region. The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to further reduce

demand growth, given its impact on economic growth. Increasing production of staples such as wheat and rice in the MENA Region is often more costly than importing them. However, there are opportunities for smallholders in the region to produce fruits, vegetables and related products (e.g. tomatoes, dates, olive oil). Enhancing labour productivity is vital for family farms. Family farmer access to information, key assets (e.g. land) and digital innovations is also very important. Extension and advisory services can help guide small-scale family farmers towards opportunities in agriculture (e.g. joint marketing) and outside farming in the context of wider structural change in the economy. Given global changes, small-scale family farmers need support to scale up in order to compete in global markets, as do those who are struggling to leave farming altogether and build a livelihood outside farming.

- » The **Pan-African Farmers' Organisation (PAFO)**, which brings a farmers' organisation voice to the UNDFP and its Steering Committee, underlined the role of such bodies in arguing for regional, then national action plans, to implement the UNDFP GAP, as farmers in different regions have distinct needs and expectations. Strategies and policies that address the specific needs of different family farmers and farms are necessary to achieve the Decade's objectives. Simplified communications materials on the Decade, tailored to family farmer needs and available in local languages, can ensure their ownership of the objectives. Pillar 4 of the UNDFP (strengthening family farmer organizations) is a key priority. These organizations are reflecting on the repercussions of COVID-19 for the UNDFP and how it should influence implementation of the Decade. Its success depends on deep structural transformations and involving stakeholders in action plans, monitoring, evaluating and subsequent revision of these plans.
- » In addition to investing in increasing smallholder agriculture productivity, for example through mechanization and improved seeds, WFP highlighted the importance of **youth employment**. Around 60 percent of the population in the region is under 25 and around 40 percent of these are unemployed. There is an urgent challenge to provide decent jobs for young people joining the labour market. Smallholder agriculture could be more attractive to them and while it and family farming remain a critical source of rural jobs and income, they can also be a source of urban welfare and food provision. WFP is working in partnership with the Arab Organization for Agriculture Development (AOAD) to help scale up capacity and sustain these planning and coordination methodologies to support communities and governments. It is also creating links between agriculture value and supply chains, such as small-scale processing, trade, and service jobs related to equipment and mechanization. However this requires skills development, training and livelihood diversification.
- » WFP supports SSFF in achieving **economies of scale in marketing and better access to markets**, aiming to purchase at least 10 percent of food locally. This includes: strengthening farmer's organizations and cooperatives, as well as helping local farmers sell their produce effectively; sourcing local produce directly from farmers for school meals; supporting short and local value chains by linking local producers with shops where WFP beneficiaries can buy food. During COVID-19, WFP has also been promoting new ways for farmers and buyers to trade, including e-commerce platforms. It has invested in partnerships, technologies and innovations to deliver smart humanitarian assistance, including leveraging local procurement, using cash to support local economies and job creation. It is especially important to address peace, stability and social cohesion at local levels where conflict and tension exist in the region. Over the next 8 years WFP can support family farmers in the following ways: (i) a strategic approach to food procurement, especially for last mile food delivery; (ii) maximize the roles of family farmers to improve access to nutritious food and supply major food delivery programmes; and (iii) examine impacts on rural and urban households. Supporting SSFF to adapt to climate change and address post-harvest losses and waste are also critical.

- » **The European Commission emphasized that poverty is largely a rural phenomenon and most poor rural people in the region are small family farmers.** Around 84 percent of agricultural holdings are family farms but control only 25 percent of the cultivated land area and 12.5 percent of the population in MENA works on family farms (FAO data). At the same time, the region faces many challenges linked to increasing scarcity of land and water, with high population growth and limited government resources. Climate change and environmental degradation exacerbate the situation so adapting the GAP specifically to the region is important. According to the European Union, key elements of the proposed UNDFP-RAP in the NENA region are: (i) include all stakeholders in developing proposed solutions to challenges; (ii) support transition towards a sustainable agrifood system respecting natural resources (water, soil and landscape); (iii) reduce environmental pressures from aquifers and farming practices that lead to soil degradation; (iv) foster diversification of crops, seed varieties and water sources; and (v) foster a business environment that better supports family agriculture-based livelihoods and improves small-scale family access to markets. The UNDFP offers an important opportunity to raise awareness of the inter-linkages between agroecology and family farming and increasing sustainable agricultural production through the promotion of efficient use of water and natural resources.
- » The European Union Joint Rural Development Programme in Egypt has supported family farmers to access rehabilitated irrigation infrastructure, to implement best water harvesting techniques and promote good agricultural practices to address environmental, economic and social sustainability and improve smallholders' income. In Morocco, the European Union promotes SSFF through budget support for national development strategies. With this funding, the Government of Morocco developed various services for smallholders to facilitate their integration into markets. Supporting family farming remains a priority, to stabilise rural areas and reduce the environmental pressure on cities. The European Union continues to work with partners such as the AOAD and national governments, to increase climate and environmental resilience. The aim is to prevent environmental challenges becoming sources of food insecurity and instability. Support for family farming will continue to assign importance to a new and better balance of nature, food systems and biodiversity to protect people health and well-being. Above all, in developing the RAP-NENA, evidence-based investing is needed.

“European Union financed projects and programmes in Egypt and Morocco confirm the importance of actions in the RAP-NENA in the following areas: Egypt - Pillar 1 (youth), Pillar 2 (gender) and Pillar 5 (sustainability and promoting good environmental practices); Morocco - Pillar 1 (youth), Pillar 2 (gender) and Pillar 4 (farmer organizations).”

FAO Regional Initiative on SSFF in the NENA Region

Key elements include the following.

- » FAO-RNE has been working to support and develop SSFF for several years. Highly relevant lessons for the UNDFP can be drawn from implementing the RI-SSFF since 2014, covering the following countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The RI-SSFF seeks to reduce poverty by enhancing rural livelihoods and SSFF competitiveness, with a focus on youth and women. It has three pillars: (i) raising agricultural productivity; (ii) supporting decent rural employment and social protection; and (iii) enhancing value chains and producer organizations.

- » Country studies on SSFF provide an in-depth analysis and identify policy recommendations. The RI-SSFF in its 2nd Phase supports work in three core areas: (a) climate change impact on farming systems, i.e. develop a regional strategy to scale up climate-smart agriculture (CSA), develop social protection assessment tools, establish a regional platform on food loss and waste and value chains and a regional project to strengthen rural migration governance; (b) decent employment, social protection for youth and women (including territorial development); and (c) establish a regional platform on value chains and food loss and waste.
- » The initiative also supports work on COVID-19 impacts on smallholders such as impact assessments on food systems in 13 countries. A COVID-19 response action programme addresses rural youth employment, innovation and digital technologies, fostering gender equality and rural women's economic empowerment, enabling farmers and producers' organizations cope with COVID-19 and inclusive social protection to build resilience to shocks.



The UNDF is an opportunity to strengthen the role of the RI-SSFF in building SSFF resilience. This includes boosting the RI-SSFF focus on innovation and bridging the digital divide. Agrifood SSFF systems innovation contributes to achieving the SDGs and should prioritize: (i) precision agriculture and agro-ecological approaches to strengthen CSA; (ii) digital, institutional and social innovation to employ youth and women; and (iii) agrifood innovation for markets and value chains, strengthening producer organizations and public-private partnerships.



The UNDF RAP-NENA and its pillars should clearly reflect regional priorities and diverse local contexts (sub-regions and countries) and identify pathways for digital transformation.

Future of family farming globally (Foresight4Food)

All rural households do some farming and as SSFF increases there is a need to understand its diversity and sources of income. Opportunities exist to increase SSFF incomes, but are not open to all. Transformation is happening, but SSFF requires the right kind of transformation and better understanding of family farming.

There is a need to:

- » Invest in SSFF based on its services to the wider society;
- » Ensure SSFF has an enabling rural infrastructure environment;
- » Invest in inclusive ICT and digital technologies;
- » Reflect on SSFF roles in food systems and the kind of systems we want.

Panel discussion 2

- » In Egypt, the “Road to Development” provides assistance to small-scale family farmers and their organizations to create income-earning opportunities, so they do not rely only on agriculture as an income source. This income diversification is achieved by promoting processing and trading in dairy products (cheese, yoghurt, butter etc.), *baladi* bread, *merabrah* and other products in demand. They provide affordable fodder to farmers to promote domestic rearing and self-sufficiency. There are also farmer field schools to educate male and female farmers on modern irrigation techniques, adopting the compost model. In collaboration with the Road Development Association (El Tareeq) and the Evangelic Coptic Commission, elected committees from the villages of Abugunshu, Markaz Abshway (one person per village) assessed farmers' seed and fertilizer requirements and made group purchases to obtain lower prices. Smallholders could then buy the seeds and fertilizers at discounted rates.
- » Regarding the RAP-NENA, it is critical to include environmental policies and technical interventions tailored to the region, with a special focus on youth and women to achieve agrifood system transformation and maintain family farming as a pivotal pillar. Four key priorities to develop family farming are: (i) make SSFF more inclusive, focusing again on youth and women; (ii) empower small farmers by strengthening producer organizations, sharing knowledge and innovation; (iii) foster digital innovation in agriculture to respond to regional challenges, enhance productivity and improve income; and (iv) mobilize resources and new partnerships to ensure appropriate investments and solutions, particularly for the most vulnerable, focusing particularly on youth and women. Practical initiatives and projects are needed to launch sustainable management of agri-ecosystems in El Kharga oasis, El Wadi El Gedid governorate in Egypt, to foster digital and technological transformation for small farmers and develop a successful innovative marketing system to address the risks facing small farmers from COVID-19.
- » The **Gaza Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture Platform (GUPAP)** promotes and advocates innovative practices in family farming, particularly agro-ecological techniques for small-scale family farmers through relevant local and country networks. It also promotes integration of resilience along with agro-ecology and enhancing the voice of SSFF. GUPAP will support the RAP-NENA in the region through policies, approaches and strategies to enhance the resilience and sustainability of more agro-ecological food systems during COVID-19, considering the rights of poor family farmers, particularly women. The RAP-NENA can facilitate and enhance learning and action spaces, exchange, networking, cooperation with country and regional partnerships, linked globally.

Highlights and priorities for the RAP-NENA 2022-2028

The discussion included the following points to take into account when refining the RAP-NENA.

- » There is no single solution to address all the challenges and opportunities for family farming. The UNDF RAP-NENA and its pillars should **clearly reflect regional priorities and local diversity of sub-regions and countries**. Consider country requirements and develop **appropriate solutions**, working with country partners.
- » This should be based on a deeper understanding of issues of **household dynamics**, age and gender compositions and relationships between key stakeholders.
- » Invest in **gathering evidence that can inform appropriate actions**. Place **family farmers at the centre of policy formulation, planning implementation and monitoring** related to developing family farming.

- » Support their creation and **strengthen farmers' organizations and cooperatives, specifically land and natural resource management with product marketing (Pillar 4).**
- » **Making youth the first pillar of the RAP-NENA makes sense (Pillar 1)** with youth dialogue on family farming and innovation in the NENA Region (Pillar 1).
- » Emphasize the need to **invest in sustainable family farming and building SSFF resilience** during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- » Engage at **food systems level, support smallholder economic and livelihood diversification** and focus on the **transition to sustainable agriculture and food systems.**
- » Support **inclusive planning and coordination processes** that engage farmers and their communities, possibly with **territorial development.**
- » There is a continuing **role for SSFF in the NENA Region in national staple food production**, but policies need to do more to support this role.
- » **Integrate SSFF into remunerative global value chains and increase access to markets, particularly local markets.** For this, efforts to improve the quality of SSFF products are vital. Processing facilities for the key agricultural products of family farmers can also increase profits and incomes.
- » **Urgently address the growing SSFF problem of debt and poor access to credit.** Increasing sources of income diversification is key.
- » Support smallholder family farmer **adaptation to climate change**, for example through improved irrigation techniques and use of heat tolerant seeds.
- » Take into account urban-rural linkage opportunities created by urbanization, the importance of short food chains linking urban markets and populations to local food producers (particularly so in the context of COVID-19), including the impact of **urban expansion on the reduction in land available for agriculture.**
- » Promote **inclusive digital approaches and ICTs for SSFF** and identify pathways for digital transformation. Support the creation of farmer **e-commerce platforms.**
- » Support SSFF to **achieve economies of scale in marketing and improve market access.**
- » Encourage SSFF **processing of agricultural products** in demand to diversify income earning opportunities.
- » **Reduce post-harvest losses and waste:** 68 percent of food losses in the region occur during production, handling, processing and distribution before they reach the consumer. Invest in better handling practices, storage and packaging.

Conclusions and next steps for implementing the RAP-NENA

The Decade offers a unique opportunity to foster a deep and inclusive transformation of family farming. Speakers at the Launch event familiarized the audience with the objectives of the UNDFP and the GAP. They highlighted the need to develop more evidence, for example, on the characteristics of family farmers and their diverse needs.

- » **SSFF is of vital importance to the NENA Region**, for food production (especially staples and vegetables), livelihoods and income-earning opportunities. It has a future in the region and in the wider economy. However, investments are needed to help it become resilient and green. Family farming should be at the centre of national and regional development programmes.
- » The **participation and involvement of family farmers and their organizations at all stages** will be critical to the success of the RAP-NENA.

- » Speakers also mentioned the need to **build more resilient and sustainable food systems** in response to COVID-19. This means offering technical assistance and developing policies that help increase productivity in a green, sustainable way, placing appropriate technologies within the reach of family farmers. It also means improving their access to key assets, such as land and water, credit and markets. This requires an enabling policy and regulatory framework for further investments and innovation.
- » **The basis for the UNDFP RAP-NENA exists now and its pillars clearly reflect regional priorities.** It will be refined, taking into account the perspectives of the various stakeholders in the region expressed in the consultation, the diversity of family farmers and local contexts. This is the beginning of a process and dialogue among stakeholders to improve and implement a RAP through an inclusive, holistic approach.
- » **In addition to the RAP-NENA, it will be important to develop NAPs** in consultation with stakeholders, first family farmers and their organizations and national governments, supported by donors, technical agencies and civil society.

Three concrete next steps were highlighted.

- (i) **FAO and IFAD will continue to develop the RAP-NENA in collaboration with partners, including family farmer organizations and national committees of family farming.** They will seek ways to translate the RAP-NENA into country level strategies, taking into account the discussions at the e-Launch. They will then seek to identify ways to develop a set of priorities at country level to set in motion the Decade.
- (ii) **A strategic partnership between FAO and IFAD, with other bodies such as AOAD, the European Union, WRF and farmers' organizations will take the RAP-NENA forward to implementation.** This will lay the ground for NAPs in three pilot countries (Oman, Mauritania, a Mashreq country).
- (iii) **For FAO, the RI-SSFF will be the hub to implement the UNDFP in the NENA Region.** The UNDFP provides an opportunity to build the resilience of SSFF through the existing initiative and will benefit from a focus on innovation and bridging the digital divide.

ANNEX 3

REGIONAL LAUNCH UNDIFF IN THE NENA REGION

24 November 2020

Agenda

Moderator: Marcela Villarreal (FAO)

Opening Remarks

11:00-11:15

- » Serge Nakouzi (FAO-RNE)
- » Dina Saleh (IFAD)
- » Laura Lorenzo, Director, WRF

11:15-11:25

Guilherme Brady: The UNDFE process and Global Action Plan

11:25-11:40

Karim Hussein: Key elements of the draft UNDFE Regional Action Plan

Panel discussion 1 - UNDFE stakeholders, moderated by Eric Rwabidadi (IFAD)

11:40-12:10

- » Fatma Ben Rejeb (PAFO)
- » Kate Newton (WFP)
- » Sylvie Fontaine (EU)
- » Hubertus Gay (OECD)

Rapporteur : Eslam Elfadly & Jennifer Smolak

12:10-12:30

General discussion - Eric Rwabidadi (IFAD)

Rapporteur : Eslam Elfadly & Jennifer Smolak

12:30-13:00

Break (30 min)

13:00-13:15

Rachid Serraj: Small-Scale Family Farming in the NENA region

13:15-13:25

Jim Woodhill: Future of Family Farming – Foresight4Food

Panel Discussion 2, moderated by Ibrahim El-Dukheri (AOAD)

13:25- 13:55

- » Ines Ben Saad Nagara (UTAP)
- » Heidi Sadek, Road for Development – Egypt
- » Ahmed Sourani (GUPAP), Palestine
- » Omani Farmers Association (TBC)

Rapporteur : Dalia Aboufotouh & Mohamed Abd Elmonem

13:55-14:20

General Discussion, moderated by Jean-Marc Faurès (FAO-RNE)

Rapporteur : Dalia Aboufotouh & Mohamed AbdElmonem

14:20--14:35

Conclusion and the Way Forward

Ibrahim El-Dukheri (AOAD)

Jean-Philippe Audinet (IFAD)

Jean-Marc Faurès (FAO-RNE)

Rapporteur : Ahmed Abdallah & Eslam Elfadly

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