

The 33rd Session of FAO Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC – 33)

FAO/CIHEAM side event:

**Planting the seeds of sustainability:
from production to consumption in
the Near East and North Africa Region**

Introduction

Sustainable development is at the heart of FAO's Strategic Framework, and, in particular, of its efforts towards sustainably increasing the provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries, reducing food losses and waste, and promoting more healthy and sustainable dietary patterns. Driving FAO's work on sustainability is the recognition of the complex interactions between different objectives and interests to achieve food security and nutrition. The necessary transition towards sustainability needs actions that focus on effective changes in practices, including strengthening respective capacities, and ensuring an enabling policy environment that acknowledges these interactions and addresses the trade-offs and synergies that come from them. An approach that promotes sustainable food systems (from production to processing, distributing, marketing and consumption of food) can contribute to food security and nutrition in a sustainable manner.

Coordinated discussions among member countries in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) Region have the potential to identify pathways towards sustainability and help designing implementation mechanisms that foster a more integrated and effective approach to sustainability across the food chain.

The need to address cross-sectoral integration from production to consumption

On the production side, past emphasis on individual sectors (crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture) has led to productivity advances. Most future improvements in agriculture's products and services will continue to come from these sectors. However, their excessive separation has often created silos where these sectors compete with each other for space, political and economic support and natural resources. This often results in conflicts and in sub-optimal allocation and management of resources. A holistic vision of sustainable food systems must address trade-offs; it must also explore opportunities for creating synergies that would reduce or even eliminate them, much as natural ecosystems already do. Important synergies and complementarities can be managed.

Improved sustainable food systems can lead to greater efficiency gains in sustainable production and consumption, especially when food waste and loss can be minimized and more healthy and sustainable dietary patterns can be achieved. Improving the sustainability of food is a key factor in reducing negative externalities, and more sustainable food systems can simultaneously provide enough food to meet nutritional needs as well as conserve natural resources for present and future generations.

While in theory the idea is simple, optimizing synergies and implementation is much more complex. Shifting from trade-offs to integration requires knowledge of where these synergies are possible, multi-stakeholder engagement, innovative technologies, multidisciplinary interventions, and political processes that support an equitable distribution of costs and benefits across different groups, and over time.

The side event

This side event is a contribution to the recommendations made by the 32st Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East to provide support for the Regional Initiative on "Building resilience for improved food security and nutrition in the Near East and North Africa" as a vehicle through which, at country and regional levels, institutions, markets, production systems and consumption trends are strengthened in a sustainable manner.

Objectives

- Discuss how to more effectively integrate production and consumption in order to support countries in their efforts to build more resilience for food security and nutrition in the NENA region;
- Discuss the critical need, in the countries of the NENA Region, to adopt multi-sector and multi-stakeholder approaches – from production to consumption – to address trade-offs and encourage synergies in their efforts towards sustainable development;
- Explore further collaboration between the countries of the NENA Region and FAO in developing a conducive, policy-relevant, and cost-effective monitoring framework for measuring progresses towards sustainable development.

Organizers

This side event is jointly sponsored by FAO and the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM). FAO and CIHEAM, a regional intergovernmental organization of 13 Mediterranean Member Countries, have recently signed a Memo of Understanding (MoU) related to rural and agricultural development, food security and sustainable management of natural resources in the region, through the development of targeted actions.

Agenda

Welcome and opening remarks: Abdessalam Ould Ahmed (Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative, FAO Regional Office for Near East and North Africa) and Cosimo Lacirignola (Secretary-General, CIHEAM)

Sustainable production: applying the Sustainable food and agriculture framework on the ground: Clayton Campanhola, Strategic Programme Leader, SP2; Jean-Marc Faurés, Programme Coordinator, SP2, FAO

Piloting sustainable agriculture in Morocco: Efforts toward more productive and sustainable use of water in agriculture, M'Hamed Belghiti, Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Fisheries, Morocco

Sustainable Food Systems: the case study of the Mediterranean diet as a sustainable diet, linking consumption with production in selected countries in the region: Roberto Capone, CIHEAM; Sandro Dernini, FAO

Sustainable Food Consumption: the role of Food-Based Dietary Guidelines
Nahla Hwalla, American University of Beirut

Open discussion: The discussion will focus on regional priorities to address sustainable production and consumption in an integrated manner.

Closing remarks