Enigurand le participacion de more African youth en agriculture and boosting support for the region’s vulnerable family farmers will be pivotal to improving food security and economic wellbeing in the years to come, noted José Graziano da Silva Director-general of the UN Food and Agricultural Organization during the FAO Regional Conference for Africa. «The region’s economic growth rate is above the global average and most of the world’s fastest-growing economies are in Africa,» he told the gathering ministeres of agriculture and funding partners. «The challenge is to translate this growth into social inclusion. Agriculture, rural development and youth can make this happen.»

The region had taken an important step to strengthening agriculture with the establishment of the Africa Solidarity Fund, which is an example of an innovative funding platform. It was set up in 2013 and it represents a mechanism through which wealthier African countries can contribute to the continent’s food security by helping other countries and regional organizations to eradicate hunger, malnutrition and rural poverty while managing natural resources in a sustainable way. This initiative reflects both a sign of solidarity and evidence that in modern-day world food security can not be achieved at the level of individual countries. Within this context, the Director General has signed agreements releasing the first packages of funding to six countries – Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali, Niger and South Sudan – for the implementation of action plans supported under the Trust Fund.

• • •
(to be continued on Page 3)
A final report adopted by the Conference recognized the importance of enhancing the business opportunities that agriculture offers to African youth as a pathway to social inclusion, food security and sustainable development. The African ministers of agriculture also recommended that member states dedicate financial resources for youth employment within agricultural and rural development programs, particularly investments in the technical and entrepreneurial capacity of the region’s youth, as well as their access to key productive resources, notably land and finance.

Consultation with civil society

Pursuant to the FAO’s Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society, a consultation meeting on civil society in Africa was held in Tunis on 21-22 March 2014. Participants at the consultation, hosted by the Maghreb and North African Farmers’ Union (MNAFU), included representatives of farming organizations, livestock producers, fisherfolk, consumers and human rights movements from over 35 African countries, of whom 47% were women. They drafted a declaration and recommendations which were presented at the 28th FAO Regional Conference for Africa.

How to accelerate agricultural transformation and eradicate hunger in Africa

A ministerial roundtable reviewed follow-up to the High Level Meeting which was held in Addis Ababa in January 2014 on the theme, «Toward African Renaissance: Renewed Partnership for Unified Approach to End Hunger in Africa by 2025 within the Framework of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). The attending ministers shared knowledge on the actions taken to end hunger in Africa. Particular guidance was solicited on how to strengthen the mobilization of additional resources to support this initiative. The discussions highlighted the three key priority areas of actions needed to accelerate agricultural transformation and eradicate hunger in Africa:

- Creating a favourable environment for investment by the domestic private sector, including smallholder and family farmers;
- Investing in the enhancement of agricultural productivity and constructive engagement of youth, smallholder farmers and family farming;
- Defining how CAADP can more effectively contribute to building systemic capacity for monitoring and evaluation and results-oriented action.

FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva met with Tunisian President, Moncef Marzouki. During the meeting, Mr. da Silva referred to the final report adopted by the FAO Regional Conference for Africa which recognizes the importance of enhancing the business and entrepreneurial opportunities that agriculture offers to African youth as a pathway to social inclusion, food security and sustainable development.

“In the discussion on youth and inclusion, Tunisia has a lot to share with other countries,” said the FAO chief. At the meeting, the FAO Director-General presented a diploma of recognition to President Marzouki acknowledging Tunisia as one of the 17 countries in the developing world that have maintained the prevalence of undernourishment below 5%.

Mr. Lassad Lachal, Tunisian Minister of Agriculture, will be the President of the Regional conference for Africa for the coming two years. Côte d’Ivoire will host the next Conference in 2016.
The 32nd Regional Conference for the Middle East and North Africa (NERC) was held in Rome from 24 to 28 February 2014. The Conference was attended by over 160 delegates, including 11 ministers from 21 FAO member states, as well as representatives of civil society, the private sector, other UN organizations and observer countries. As a result of the Conference, governments pledged enhanced cooperation to tackle the critical issues of the region and adopted a final report endorsing some key proposals, one of which is the establishment of a strategic framework aiming to improve regional food security and nutrition.

Three initiatives to sustain FAO priorities in the region

The conference asked FAO to focus its efforts on helping countries of the region address three priority issues in line with the regional initiatives, namely water scarcity, building resilience for enhanced food security and nutrition, and supporting small-scale agriculture. Only six pilot countries have benefited so far from the FAO’s regional Initiative on Water Scarcity. It was agreed to expand this initiative to include the entire region. Under the initiative, countries will both concentrate on improving their water management practices at the national level as well as work closely together across borders to develop a collaborative approach to managing this vital natural resource. Per capita fresh water availability in the region has decreased by two-thirds over the past 40 years and is projected to decrease by 50 percent in the next 35 years if current trends in population growth and consumption patterns continue. Agriculture currently uses 85 percent of the region’s available freshwater supplies. The Conference has approved the initiative on building resilience for enhanced food security and nutrition in the Near East and North Africa. The main objective of this initiative is to support countries in eradicating hunger and malnutrition in the Region through improved governance and coordination mechanisms and building resilient food security and nutrition institutions, markets and production systems. Within this framework, five areas of direct relevance to the regional priorities are considered crucial for the focus of this initiative:

- Improving capacities for developing policy frameworks and investment programme for food security and nutrition at the national and regional levels;
- Developing efficient evidence-based food security information and knowledge exchange for effective decision support systems;
- Promoting the development of efficient, sustainable and resilient food systems with specific attention to reducing food losses and waste;
- Promoting sustainable access of households to safe, nutritious and diversified food;
- Building the resilience of institutions, individuals, households, communities and agro-economic systems to anticipate, absorb and recover from the negative impacts of the man-made and natural shocks.

The conference endorsed a regional initiative aimed at reducing food losses and waste, which will be decisive for improving food availability, achieving food security and reducing pressure on natural resources in a region with high population growth.

Finally, the initiative on sustainable small scale agriculture for inclusive development seeks to sustain FAO priorities in the region.

Small Farm Support Initiative can be accounted for by the specific nature of agriculture in the region, as it employs one-third of the active population, particularly small producers: farmers, breeders, herders, forest dwellers, artisanal fisherfolk and aquaculturists. In current circumstances, high priority should be given to improving the lot of these small exploiters in order to ensure economic growth and food security. Despite its enormous contribution to food security and to rural economy, small scale agriculture faces a number of intertwined constraints that are impeding its productivity, its profitability and its contribution to economic growth. These include limited access to productive assets (land, water and capital), poor linkages to markets and the absence of an enabling environment and supportive policies. This initiative covers three components: Evidence based policy and strategies; Sustainable improvement of productivity; Institutions and empowerment of small holders through a favourable environment for economically viable and sustainable development in small-scale agriculture, and by promoting, for instance, youth and women employment and supporting professional organizations.

FAO’s budget allocation for activities in the Near East and North Africa for the 2014-2015 period amounts to $45.8 million, with estimated additional requirements of voluntary contributions totaling $95.5 million. Countries participating in the regional conference acknowledged the need to mobilize additional resources in support of food and nutrition security work, including through South-South Cooperation and partnerships, as well via a new FAO Regional Solidarity Trust Fund being established with an initial $2 million contribution by the government of Iraq.
Sub-regional events

FAO- Algeria: A letter of intent to enhance collaboration between the FAO and the Algerian government

A statement of intent was signed between Algeria and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to upgrade the FAO office in Algeria into a partnership and liaison office. It aims to set up a partnership program between Algeria and the Organization for the implementation of technical cooperation projects at the national and regional level, including through South-South cooperation in the fields of agriculture, forestry, fishing and environmental protection.

Support for upgrading agricultural cooperatives

A workshop on technical support to agricultural cooperatives was organized on 21 January 2014 in Gabes. The project supports the implementation of a national strategy for the enhancement of agricultural cooperatives which aims to improve their capacity, more particularly the targeted professions (dates, gardens and fishing) and a broadening of their geographical scope. Through the implementation of this project, agricultural cooperatives will be provided with technical support to increase their membership rate, strengthen their capacity for governance and control and management of different activities. Their activities will be upgraded to meet the real needs of producers in their areas while forging relationships with different industrial and economic operators, public or private, so as to improve production efficiency, reduce costs and increase members’ income.

New FAO Representative in Mauritania

Mr. Athman Mravili has been appointed as FAO Representative in Mauritania. Mr. Mravili, a Comorian citizen, holds a PhD in Veterinary Medicine from the National School of Veterinary Medicine, Sidi Thabet, Tunisia. He is also holder of a Masters degree in Animal Production, and a post-graduate certificate in veterinary epidemiology.

Mr. Mravili joined the FAO in 2004 as consultant in pastoral systems in the Division of Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation, FAO, in Senegal, Mali and Mauritania. From 2005 to 2008, he worked for Handicap International in Lyon, France, where he was Head of the Office for Eastern Africa and the Great Lakes. In January 2009, he returned again to FAO, working with the Division of Emergency and Rehabilitation in Sudan, where he participated in a mission of assessment of community animal health systems. In April 2009, he moved to the sub-regional Office for Central Africa in Libreville, Gabon, as the livestock officer. In November 2009, Mr. Mravili was appointed as Technical Officer/ FAO Representative in Equatorial Guinea.

Tunisia

Support for upgrading agricultural cooperatives

A workshop on technical support to agricultural cooperatives was organized on 21 January 2014 in Gabes. The project supports the implementation of a national strategy for the enhancement of agricultural cooperatives which aims to improve their capacity, more particularly the targeted professions (dates, gardens and fishing) and a broadening of their geographical scope. Through the implementation of this project, agricultural cooperatives will be provided with technical support to increase their membership rate, strengthen their capacity for governance and control and management of different activities. Their activities will be upgraded to meet the real needs of producers in their areas while forging relationships with different industrial and economic operators, public or private, so as to improve production efficiency, reduce costs and increase members’ income.

Last issue

Mr. Athman Mravili
New FAO Representative in Mauritania

Mr. Mravili joined the FAO in 2004 as consultant in pastoral systems in the Division of Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation, FAO, in Senegal, Mali and Mauritania. From 2005 to 2008, he worked for Handicap International in Lyon, France, where he was Head of the Office for Eastern Africa and the Great Lakes. In January 2009, he returned again to FAO, working with the Division of Emergency and Rehabilitation in Sudan, where he participated in a mission of assessment of community animal health systems. In April 2009, he moved to the sub-regional Office for Central Africa in Libreville, Gabon, as the livestock officer. In November 2009, Mr. Mravili was appointed as Technical Officer/ FAO Representative in Equatorial Guinea.