



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Virtual Expert Meeting on Unlocking the potential of Rainfed agriculture in the Arab region
Thursday, 23 February 2023, 13:00-14:30 (Beirut Time)

Information Note and Agenda

Background

In the Arab region, the agricultural sector employs about one-third of the labor force and constitutes a direct or indirect source of livelihood for a majority of rural dwellers. As such, it plays a vital role in supporting sustainable development in many countries. However, natural resources degradation and dwindling water resources are heavily impacting its performance and since investments in the sector are limited, notably to increase irrigated agriculture and enhance water use efficiency, traditional rainfed agriculture is the only option available to produce food and support food security.

Rainfed agriculture is essential to the Arab region. While rainfed agriculture occupy 80% of the Arab agricultural area, it contributes for about 40% of the total agricultural production only as it remains plagued with low productivity. The key constraints to improved rainfed agriculture include unfavorable climatic conditions, degraded soils, and poor adoption of improved practices. To improve their performance in a water-scarce environment like it prevails in the Arab region is to ensure water availability. However, efforts and investments in this area have received the least attention compared to irrigated agriculture and to other sectors of the economy leaving rainfed systems to rely on traditional practices that are unlikely to boost productivity substantially.

Rainfed agriculture offers an untapped potential as it usually requires much less investment than irrigated agriculture to enhance yields and production levels. Supporting technologies and practices that could help in unlocking this potential are also already available. What lacks is a commensurate interest from policymakers, development planners and other actors to the sector so that the smallholders who make up the majority of rainfed systems stakeholders could face less inherent risks while adopting the already available improved technologies and practices.

Recently, ESCWA produced a report entitled “Unlocking the potential of rainfed agriculture in the Arab region,” which, among others, reviews its status as well as existing technologies and practices to propose strategies, practices and enablers to unlock the potential offered by rainfed systems. The aim of this virtual meeting is to review key aspects of the report to exchange views on existing strengths and weaknesses and identify ways to improve the performance of rainfed systems. The meeting is expected to draw participants from member countries, national and regional institutions, civil society, research and academia and other stakeholders as well as partner UN agencies working in the Arab region.

Organization

The meeting will be held virtually on Thursday, 23 February 2023 from 13:00 to 14:30 (Beirut time). Interested attendees should register [HERE](#).

The meeting will be conducted primarily in English. No interpretation will be provided.

Agenda

13:00-13:05	Opening Remarks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ms. Reem Nejdawi, Chief, Food and Environment Policies, Climate Change and Natural Resources Sustainability (CCNRS) Cluster, ESCWA
13:05-13:45	Key messages on Unlocking the potential of rainfed agriculture in the Arab region
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mr. Fidele Byiringiro, ESCWA, Lebanon- Dr. Theib Oweis, ESCWA Consultant, Jordan <p><u>Discussants</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Dr. Ajit Govind, ICARDA, Egypt- Prof. Walid Sadok, University of Minnesota, USA- Prof. Mohammad Hussein, University of Babylon, Iraq- Dr. Ihab Jnad, ACSAD, Syria
13:45-14:30	Discussion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Discussions- Closing remarks

Correspondence

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