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Food policy monitoring

in the Near East and North Africa region

Empowering youth

1st Quarter 2026 | Bulletin



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ABBREVIATIONS

ACSAD	Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands
ADAFSA	Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority
AECID	Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
AFD	French Development Agency
AFRAS	Arab Forum for Rural Advisory Services
AI	artificial intelligence
AOAD	Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, Palestine
ARASCO	Arabian Agricultural Services Company, Saudi Arabia
C&F	cost and freight
CAPT	Central Agency for Public Tenders, Kuwait
CBS	Cooperative Business Schools
CFS	Committee on Food Security
CFS-RAI	CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
COP27	27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2022
CYMG	Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP
DAP	diammonium phosphate
DEWA	Dubai Electricity and Water Authority, United Arab Emirates
DVI	Digital Village Initiative
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EGAS	Egyptian Natural Gas Holding Company, Egypt
FA Model	Food and Agriculture Model
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAO RNE	FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa
FBS	Farm Business School
FFPI	FAO Food Price Index
FMD	foot-and-mouth disease
GAP	good agricultural practice
GEOGLAM	Group on Earth Observations Global Agricultural Monitoring Initiative
GFSA	General Food Security Authority, Saudi Arabia
GIEWS	Global Information and Early Warning System

GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH [German Agency for International Cooperation]
GNU	Government of National Unity, Libya
GOSM	General Organization for Seed Multiplication, Syrian Arab Republic
GTA	gender-transformative approaches
HPAI	highly pathogenic avian influenza
ICARDA	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
IPC AMN	IPC Acute Malnutrition
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
IYWF	International Year of the Woman Farmer
JIAMIS	Jordan Integrated Agricultural Management Information System
LNG	liquefied natural gas
MAFWR	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Oman
MEWA	Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, Saudi Arabia
MSME	micro, small and medium enterprise
MVP	minimum viable product
Nama PWP	Nama Power and Water Procurement, Oman
NARC	National Agricultural Research Center, Palestine
NEFRC 27	Near East Forestry and Range Commission
NENA	Near East and North Africa
NIAD	National Initiative for Agricultural Development, Bahrain
NUCA	New Urban Communities Authority, Egypt
NWC	National Water Company, Saudi Arabia
OAIC	Office Algérien Interprofessionnel des Céréales, Algeria
ONAB	National Office for Livestock Feed, Algeria
ONH	L'Office National de L'huile [National Olive Oil Board], Tunisia
ORMVAG	Regional Office for Agricultural Development of the Gharb, Morocco
PAAF	Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources, Kuwait
PPP	private–public partnership
RAS	rural advisory services
RCP	Representative Concentration Pathway
REAOL	Renewable Energy Authority of Libya

RFID	radio frequency identification
RYAP	Rural Youth Action Plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SOFI	State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report
SONADER	National Company for Rural Development, Mauritania
SWA	Saudi Water Authority, Saudi Arabia
UIB	International Union of Banks
UN	United Nations
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDF	United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
VAT	value added tax
VHI	Vegetation Health Index
WaPOR	Water Productivity Open-Access Portal
WFF	World Food Forum
WFP	World Food Programme
WOAH	World Organisation for Animal Health
YALA FAST	Youth Action Leadership for Agrifood Awareness and Systems Transformation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Global food commodity markets showed some firming in early 2026 after several months of decline. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Food Price Index (FFPI) averaged 125.3 points in February 2026, increasing slightly from the previous month but remaining below its level a year earlier and well under the peak recorded during the global price surge of 2022. International cereal prices increased moderately, with wheat, maize and rice all showing modest gains compared with late 2025, although rice prices remained below the highs observed during the recent period of volatility in global rice markets.

The recent conflict in the Near East is increasing risks to global energy, fertilizer and agrifood systems, largely through disruptions to maritime trade in the Strait of Hormuz, a key corridor for oil, LNG and fertilizer exports. The sharp decline in tanker traffic has driven up energy prices and input costs across agricultural supply chains. At the same time, disruptions to Gulf fertilizer exports and rising natural gas prices have increased fertilizer prices and reduced availability for many importing countries. These shocks are transmitting through higher production costs, growing volatility in food commodity markets and rising food prices, while import-dependent countries face additional pressures from higher food import bills and potential declines in remittances.

Agricultural conditions across the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region remained uneven as the 2025/26 winter cereal season progressed after a delayed and generally dry start across several rainfed production zones. In North Africa, planting began in mid-October 2025 in Algeria under uneven rainfall conditions, with early precipitation deficits delaying planting in western areas, while eastern provinces benefited from above-average rainfall and more favourable early crop development. In Morocco and Tunisia, rainfall arrived later than usual, delaying planting until December 2025, although improved precipitation during December and January increased soil moisture levels and supported crop establishment. Libya experienced continued rainfall delays in parts of the west and northwest, constraining wheat development in several production zones. In Egypt, winter wheat planting began in November 2025 under favourable conditions supported by irrigated agriculture and government policies encouraging domestic wheat production. In Lebanon, planting of the 2026 winter cereal crop was delayed by about 6 weeks, where seasonal rainfall only began in mid-December 2025, while rainfall deficits also constrained early planting in Jordan and parts of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Production prospects diverge across subregions. Wheat production in North Africa is projected to increase by 7.2 percent to 17.8 million tonnes in 2025/26, reflecting improved production prospects across several countries. Imports into North Africa are projected to rise by 4.1 percent, while domestic utilization is expected to increase by 1.6 percent. In the Near East, wheat production is forecast to decline sharply by 22.1 percent, reflecting climatic pressures and structural production constraints. Imports are therefore expected to increase by 7.0 percent to compensate for lower domestic production.

During the first quarter of 2026, countries prioritized investments in grain storage and logistics infrastructure to strengthen strategic reserves and improve supply security. Algeria launched construction of a 100 000-tonne strategic grain silo in El Menia, while Libya initiated development of a large-scale grain storage complex in Benghazi covering nine hectares and including 20 high-capacity silos, unloading systems and quality control laboratories designed to support a national strategic grain reserve. Iraq rehabilitated grain-handling facilities at Berth No. 10 in Umm Qasr

Port, restoring the facility's capacity to unload imported wheat used for national reserves and strengthening the country's grain import logistics.

Countries also introduced measures aimed at stabilizing domestic agricultural markets and supporting production across key food sectors. Algeria implemented regulated pricing mechanisms for barley and livestock feed while expanding subsidized barley allocations for breeders. Authorities also announced a staggered import programme covering 1.15 million tonnes of maize to support poultry feed supply. Egypt continued to expand its agricultural export sector, with agricultural exports reaching 8.8 million tonnes, nearly 750 000 tonnes higher than the previous year, while total agricultural export revenues reached USD 11.5 billion in 2025. The country also expanded export market access, opening 25 new international markets for agricultural commodities. Iraq prioritized the expansion of domestic poultry production through the Sama Karbala poultry complex, which targets an annual output of 325 000 tonnes of poultry meat and 3 billion eggs, while introducing digital veterinary certification systems and strengthening livestock disease control programmes.

Water security and energy investments were also prominent components of regional food policy strategies because of their direct implications for agricultural production. Algeria launched a national renewable energy programme targeting 15 gigawatts of clean energy capacity, including solar installations and transmission infrastructure. Bahrain began construction of the 100-megawatt Al Dur solar power plant, which will deploy approximately 135 000 solar panels across 830 000 square metres. Jordan advanced the National Water Conveyance project, a major desalination and water transport initiative designed to deliver 300 million cubic metres of water annually through a 438-kilometre pipeline from Aqaba to Amman. Kuwait allocated KWD 222 million to upgrade rainwater drainage systems designed to filter runoff for groundwater recharge and agricultural reuse.

Across the NENA region, rural youth face persistent structural constraints including limited access to productive assets, finance, training opportunities and agricultural markets. This quarter's focus section is dedicated to FAO's regional programmes addressing these challenges through a people-centred development approach that places youth, rural women, farmers' organizations and agrifood entrepreneurs at the centre of innovation and decision-making processes. Under FAO's Rural Youth Action Plan, initiatives focus on strengthening skills development, improving access to finance and productive resources, and expanding opportunities for youth-led enterprises across agrifood value chains. These programmes also promote stronger participation of youth in policy dialogue, rural governance structures and producer organizations, ensuring that young people contribute directly to shaping agrifood system development.

Regional programmes support youth through a structured pathway that combines training, enterprise incubation and ecosystem development. Activities range from technical upskilling and leadership training to business incubation, access to finance and support for enterprise scaling. Innovation platforms encourage young entrepreneurs to develop solutions addressing key challenges such as water scarcity, climate-resilient agriculture, digital agriculture services and renewable energy applications in farming systems. These initiatives also strengthen collaboration between young entrepreneurs, research institutions, private sector actors and government agencies. Regional networks, mentorship programmes and peer-learning platforms enable young agrifood innovators to exchange knowledge, test new business models and develop partnerships across countries. Programmes also promote inclusive business models such as cooperatives, producer organizations and community-based enterprises to improve rural employment opportunities and strengthen value chains.

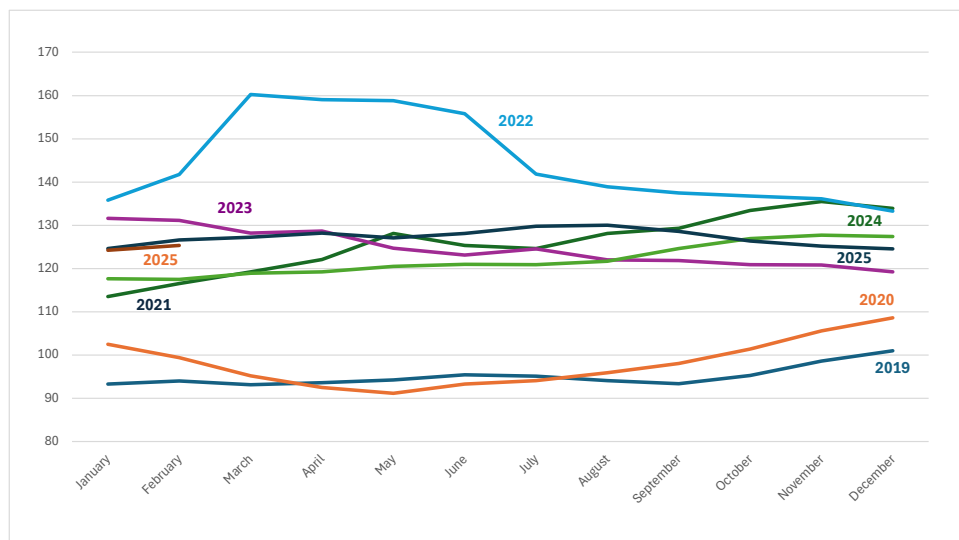


SECTION I: FOOD COMMODITY MARKETS AND FOOD SECURITY SITUATION

Global food commodity markets

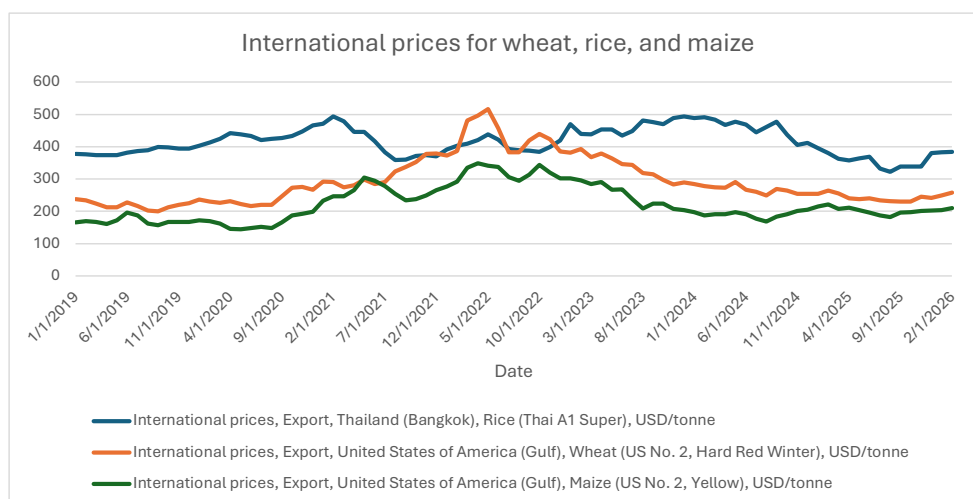
The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Food Price Index (FFPI) averaged 125.3 points in February 2026, an increase of 1.1 points (0.9 percent) from its revised January level (Figure 1). The rise was mainly driven by higher prices for cereals, meat and vegetable oils, which more than offset declines in the dairy and sugar subindices, marking the first increase in the index after five consecutive monthly decreases. Compared to February 2025, the FFPI was 1.3 points (1.0 percent) lower, and it remained 34.9 points (21.8 percent) below the peak recorded in March 2022.

Figure 1. FAO Food Price Index



Source: FAO. 2026. FAO Food Price Index. In: Food and Agriculture Organization. Rome. [Cited 6 March 2026]. <https://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en/>

Figure 2. International prices of wheat, maize and rice (USD/tonne)



Source: FAO. 2026. Food Price Monitoring and Analysis (FPMA) tool: International price series. [Accessed on 6 March 2026]. <https://fpma.fao.org/gIEWS/fpmat4/#/dashboard/tool/international>. Licence: CC-BY-4.0.

International wheat prices have shown a moderate increase compared with the levels reported in last quarter's bulletin in November 2025 (Figure 2). As of February 2026, wheat (US No. 2, Hard Red Winter) averaged USD 257.55 per tonne, rising from USD 245.65 per tonne in November 2025 and USD 249.35 in January 2026. Despite this recent firming, wheat prices remain far below the peak observed in May 2022, when quotations reached USD 516.16 per tonne. Weather risks affecting winter wheat conditions in parts of Europe and the United States of America, together with logistical disruptions and export uncertainties in the Black Sea region, have helped support international wheat prices in early 2026. At the same time, relatively comfortable global supply conditions and solid harvests in several major exporting countries have limited stronger price increases.¹

Maize (US No. 2, Yellow) prices also recorded a moderate increase compared with the levels reported last quarter. As of February 2026, maize averaged USD 210.50 per tonne, up from USD 201.47 per tonne in November 2025 and USD 203.91 in January 2026. Nevertheless, prices remain well below the highs observed during the global commodity surge in 2022, when maize reached USD 349.23 per tonne in April of that year. The recent firming reflects steady international demand and some weather-related uncertainty affecting crop prospects in South America, particularly in Argentina and Brazil. However, expectations of strong global cereal production and relatively ample stocks have continued to moderate upward pressure on maize prices.²

Rice markets have also increased in price relative to the levels observed in the previous quarter's bulletin, although prices remain below the peaks recorded in late 2023 and early 2024. Thai A1 Super rice averaged USD 384.33 per tonne in February 2026, compared with USD 339.33 in November 2025 and USD 322.00 in August 2025, which marked the lowest level during the year. Even with this rebound, prices remain significantly lower than the highs of USD 493.75 per tonne recorded in December 2023 and USD 491.25 in February 2024. International rice markets have stabilized as global production remains strong and export supplies from major Asian producers remain adequate. At the same time, relatively subdued import demand in several regions and strong competition among exporters such as India, Thailand and Viet Nam have helped keep price increases contained.²

As of 16 March 2026, the Brent crude oil price stood at around USD 103 per barrel,³ rising from USD 64 per barrel in November 2025 and USD 71 in January 2026, indicating a sharp rise in global oil prices after the gradual easing observed through the second half of 2025, when prices declined from around USD 71 per barrel in June and July. European Union gas prices have also risen dramatically in March 2026, rising to EUR 50 per megawatt-hour, up from around EUR 32 in November 2025 and around 37 in January 2026, reflecting the growing instability in LNG (liquefied natural gas) markets following disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz.

Concerning the fertilizer market, the urea prices in the Middle East (Urea Granular FOB Middle East Futures) have seen the sharpest increases in recent years, rising to USD 655 per metric tonne,⁴ up from around USD 400 in November 2025 and around USD 450 at the end of January 2026.

Food prices

Based on FAO's Nowcasting Tool,⁵ the food consumer price variation was 8.2 percent in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region on average as of 28 February 2026 (compared with the same month of the previous year). This is slightly higher than in the fourth quarter of 2025 (7.9 percent on 30 November 2025). Within the region (Figure 3), the expected year-on-year food prices variation as of 28 February 2026 was relatively even: Algeria (-0.41 percent), Bahrain (-1.04 percent), Egypt (2.92 percent), Iraq (-1.57 percent), Jordan (0.27 percent), Kuwait (6 percent), Lebanon (14.83 percent), Libya (4.43 percent), Mauritania (3.06 percent), Morocco (-2.29 percent), Oman (3.75 percent), Qatar (2.36 percent), Saudi Arabia (0.77 percent), Tunisia (6.05 percent) and the United Arab Emirates (5.35 percent).

Figure 3. Expected year-on-year food price variation map (FAO's Data Lab)



Note: Refer to the disclaimer on page ii for the names and boundaries used in this map. The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

Source: FAO. 2026. Data Lab: Nowcasting Food Prices Rome. [Accessed on 6 March 2026]. https://foodandagricultureorganization.shinyapps.io/dl_foodprices/. Licence: CC-BY-4.0.

Based on the FAO Daily Food Prices Acceleration Monitor,⁶ which aims to detect abnormal acceleration in daily food prices, short-term food price increases in most countries in the NENA region have remained within normal ranges (less than 0.5 standard deviation) as of 6 March 2026 (Figure 4). In Saudi Arabia, food price growth showed a "high" change (greater than 2.5 standard-

deviation), while Iraq showed a “moderate” increase (between 1 and 2.5 standard-deviation). Libya, Tunisia and Yemen, however, have experienced slightly above normal recent food price growth (between 0.5 and 1.0 standard-deviation).

Based on the findings from the Nowcasting Tool and the Daily Food Prices Acceleration Monitor, food prices seemed to be less volatile in the region as of 6 March 2026 (as captured by the variation of the FAO Food Price Index), and the most recent daily data suggested that price growth was not accelerating further in most countries, with just a few outliers.

Figure 4. FAO Daily Food Prices Acceleration Monitor



Note: The Daily Food Prices Acceleration Monitor developed by FAO’s Data Lab aims to detect abnormal growth and acceleration in daily food prices on a basket composed of 14 commodities derived from a crowdsourcing platform (Numbeo).

Refer to the disclaimer on page ii for the names and boundaries used in this map. The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

Source: FAO. 2026. Data Lab: Daily Food Prices Acceleration Monitor. [Accessed on 6 March 2026]. https://foodandagricultureorganization.shinyapps.io/dl_foodprices/. Licence: CC-BY-4.0.

Crop prospects: Crop monitor early warning

The 2025/26 winter cereal season is progressing across the NENA region after a delayed and generally dry start in several rainfed areas, although rainfall improved in parts of the subregion during December and January, supporting crop establishment in some key producing zones.⁷ Across North Africa, conditions remain mixed. In Algeria, planting of the 2025/26 winter cereals began in mid-October 2025 under uneven rainfall conditions, with early deficits delaying planting and constraining establishment in western areas, while eastern producing provinces benefited from above-average precipitation and more favourable early development.⁸ In Morocco, planting started late in late December following the delayed onset of rains, but abundant rainfall in December improved soil moisture and reservoir levels, supporting crop establishment and early development, with vegetation indicators pointing to favourable conditions as of mid-January 2026.⁹ Tunisia followed a similar pattern: delayed rainfall constrained early establishment, especially in some northern areas, but abundant January rainfall improved conditions, although eastern zones continue to show weaker vegetation performance.¹⁰ Libya remains one of the more affected

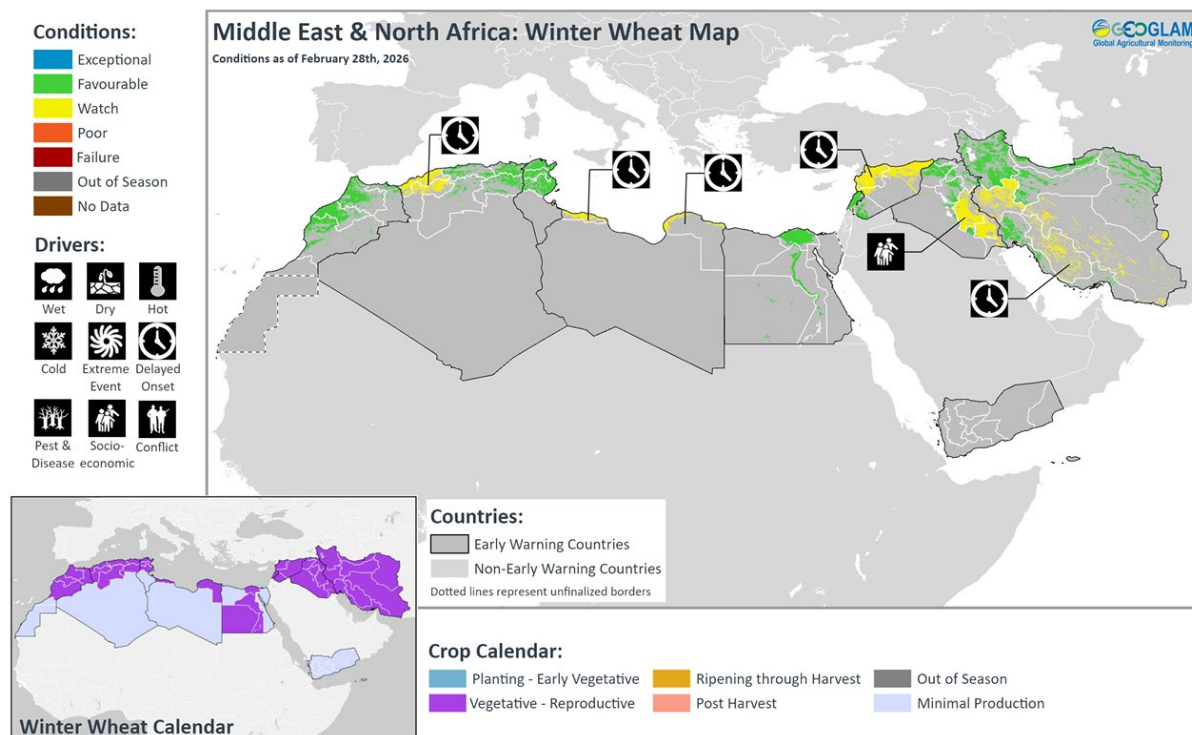
cases in North Africa, with delayed rains at the start of the season continuing to weigh on wheat development in parts of the country, particularly the west and northwest. Egypt stands out as comparatively stable, as planting of the 2026 winter wheat crop began in November 2025 under favourable weather conditions, supported by irrigated agriculture and policy incentives aimed at encouraging domestic wheat production.¹¹

Across the eastern Mediterranean, conditions also remain uneven, but recent rainfall has improved prospects in several areas.⁵ In Lebanon, planting of the 2026 winter cereal crop was delayed by about 6 weeks as seasonal rains only began in mid-December 2025.¹² Although rainfall improved in January and supported crop establishment, vegetation conditions remained below average and above-average temperatures forecast for February to April may still constrain yields. In the Syrian Arab Republic, cereal planting also started late in rainfed areas because of the delayed onset of rainfall, and the planted area is likely to remain limited due to both early season dryness and high input costs. However, above-average rainfall in December helped replenish soil moisture and supported establishment, which aligns with the broader monitoring evidence showing that recent precipitation improved conditions after a dry beginning to the season.¹³ In Jordan, planting of the 2026 winter cereal crop was underway under dry weather conditions following minimal rainfall since early October 2025, suggesting a constrained start for rainfed production. In Palestine, where production systems are similarly rainfall-dependent, continued precipitation variability and constrained moisture availability remain important risks for cereal development.⁶

Farther east, Iraq entered the season with a dry start, but subsequent rainfall improved planting conditions and soil moisture in some areas, even as the remainder of the season will still depend heavily on rainfall distribution and water availability. Across the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf countries including Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, cereal production remains limited and largely dependent on irrigation or localized rainfall, but above-average temperatures and the possibility of rainfall deficits are still expected to increase pressure on water resources and constrain agricultural conditions in exposed areas.⁵

Mauritania presents a more mixed picture, with the previous main season harvest largely completed and attention shifting to irrigated production, especially in the Senegal River Valley. In the Sudan, winter wheat is continuing to develop, but prospects remain constrained by conflict, high input costs, damaged infrastructure and reduced irrigation capacity, while the main-season sorghum and millet harvest finished with below-average outcomes. In Yemen, the latest FAO GIEWS (Global Information and Early Warning System) report indicates that the 2025 cereal production was expected to fall below average because prolonged dry weather and high temperatures since March reduced planted area and yields, while later rainfall only partly improved soil moisture and caused some localized flood damage. This remains consistent with the broader picture of Yemeni agriculture as highly exposed to climatic shocks, limited inputs and weak infrastructure.⁹

Figure 5. Crop conditions in the NENA region



Note: Refer to the disclaimer on page ii for the names and boundaries used in this map. The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

Source: GEOGLAM Crop Monitor. 2026. Crop Monitor for Early Warning No. 113. Geneva, Group on Earth Observations Secretariat. <https://www.cropmonitor.org/crop-monitor-for-early-warning>.

Global and regional wheat supply and demand estimates

Wheat production in North Africa is projected to increase by 7.2 percent in 2025/26, rising from 16.6 million tonnes in 2024/25 to 17.8 million tonnes, reflecting improved production prospects across the subregion. However, 2025/26 the season opens with significantly lower beginning stocks, falling from 9.6 million tonnes to 8.1 million tonnes, indicating tighter carry-in supplies following strong utilization in the 2024/25 season. Imports are forecast to expand from 34.2 million tonnes to 35.6 million tonnes, underscoring the continued structural reliance on external markets. Food use remains broadly stable at around 45.5 million tonnes, while total domestic use increases slightly to 51.4 million tonnes. Exports are expected to decline modestly from 1.8 million tonnes to 1.6 million tonnes. As a result, ending stocks are projected to recover somewhat to 8.5 million tonnes, suggesting a slight rebuilding of reserves despite sustained high utilization.

In the Near East, wheat production is forecast to decline sharply by 22.1 percent in 2025/26, from 8.6 million tonnes to 6.7 million tonnes. The season begins with marginally higher opening stocks, increasing from 12.4 million tonnes to 12.7 million tonnes, providing a limited buffer against the anticipated production shortfall. Imports are projected to rise from 17.1 million tonnes to 18.3 million tonnes, compensating for lower domestic output. Food use is expected to grow slightly to 22.9 million tonnes, while overall domestic utilization remains unchanged at 24.6 million tonnes. Exports edge up from 0.8 million tonnes to 0.9 million tonnes. Consequently, ending stocks are forecast to decline to 12.1 million tonnes, reflecting drawdowns to stabilize supply amid weaker production.

Table 1. Wheat supply and demand (million tonnes)

2024/25 estimate	Beginning stocks	Production ⁱ	Imports	Food use	Domestic use ⁱⁱ	Exports	Ending stocks
North Africa ⁱⁱⁱ	9.6	16.6	34.2	45.4	50.6	1.8	8.1
Near East ^{iv}	12.4	8.6	17.1	22.5	24.6	0.8	12.7
2025/26 projection	Beginning stocks	Production	Imports	Food use	Domestic use	Exports	Ending stocks
North Africa	8.1	17.8	35.6	45.6	51.4	1.6	8.5
Near East	12.7	6.7	18.3	22.9	24.6	0.9	12.1

Note: ⁱProduction refers to the crop harvested in the first calendar year of the marketing season; for example, in the 2024/25 season, production refers to wheat harvested in 2024. ⁱⁱDomestic use includes food and feed use. ⁱⁱⁱNorth African countries: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, the Sudan and Tunisia. ^{iv}Near East countries: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Source: FAO calculations.

Food insecurity hotspots

The Gaza Strip continues to face extremely severe levels of acute food insecurity despite some improvements in access and a reduction in hostilities. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), between 16 October and 30 November 2025 around 1.6 million people, or 77 percent of the analysed population, were experiencing Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above).¹⁴ This included more than 500 000 people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and over 100 000 people in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5). During the projection period from 1 December 2025 to 15 April 2026, the situation is expected to remain severe, with about 1.6 million people continuing to face IPC Phase 3 or above, including 571 000 people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and around 1 900 people in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5), reflecting some reduction in the most extreme conditions. Acute malnutrition levels remain extremely high.¹⁵ The Governorate of Gaza is classified in IPC Acute Malnutrition (IPC AMN) Phase 4 (Critical), while Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis governorates are classified in IPC AMN Phase 3 (Serious). Across the Gaza Strip, nearly 101 000 children aged 6–59 months are expected to suffer from acute malnutrition through mid-October 2026, including more than 31 000 severe cases, and around 37 000 pregnant and breastfeeding women are also projected to require treatment for acute malnutrition.

In Lebanon, acute food insecurity has eased compared with the first half of 2025, but a significant number of people continue to experience high levels of food insecurity.¹⁶ Between November 2025 and March 2026, about 874 000 Lebanese residents, Syrian refugees, Palestinian refugees and post-December 2024 arrivals from the Syrian Arab Republic are classified in IPC Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse). This includes 851 000 people in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) and 22 000 people in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency). The improvement compared with earlier assessments reflects the effects of the November 2024 ceasefire, which enabled large-scale returns and improved market access, as well as exchange rate stability, moderated inflation, seasonal income opportunities, remittances and ongoing humanitarian assistance. Food insecurity remains concentrated in several districts, including Baalbek, El Hermel, Akkar, Bent Jbeil, Marjaayoun, El Nabatieh and Sour, and among refugee populations. Conditions are projected to deteriorate during the April to July 2026 period, when about 961 000 people, equivalent to 18 percent of the analysed population, are expected to face IPC Phase 3 or above.

In Mauritania, acute malnutrition remains a major concern.¹⁷ Between November 2025 and October 2026 nearly 179 000 children aged 6–59 months are suffering or expected to suffer from acute malnutrition, including more than 42 000 cases of severe acute malnutrition. In addition, about 71 000 pregnant and breastfeeding women are expected to experience acute malnutrition during the same period. During the current period (November 2025 to February 2026), which precedes the seasonal peak in malnutrition, 15 areas are classified in IPC AMN Phase 4 (Critical) and 31 areas in IPC AMN Phase 3 (Serious). Conditions are expected to improve slightly during the March to May 2026 period but deteriorate again during the June to October 2026 peak season, when eight areas are projected to shift from Phase 3 to Phase 4.

The food security implications of the recent conflict in the Near East

The recent conflict that erupted in the Near East is sharply increasing risks to global and regional energy and fertilizer markets, and agrifood systems. The disruption of maritime trade through the Strait of Hormuz, which is a critical corridor that normally carries about one quarter of global seaborne oil and a substantial share of LNG and fertilizer exports, has triggered sharp increases in global energy prices and severe volatility in input markets. Within days of the conflict, tanker traffic through the strait fell by more than 90 percent, pushing oil and natural gas prices sharply higher and increasing production and transport costs across global and regional agrifood supply chains. The Gulf region is also a major exporter of nitrogen fertilizers such as urea and ammonia, supplying roughly one-third of global urea exports. Disruptions to fertilizer production and shipping, combined with rising natural gas prices, have led to significant increases in fertilizer prices and reduced availability for many importing countries.

The crisis is transmitting shocks through multiple channels: higher energy and fertilizer costs, rising agricultural production expenses, and increased volatility in international food commodity markets. Early signs of price increases are visible for major crops such as wheat, rice and vegetable oils. At the same time, high energy prices may stimulate biofuel demand, further linking energy markets with agricultural commodity prices. Import-dependent countries are particularly vulnerable, as higher input costs, increased food import bills and potential declines in remittances from migrant workers in Gulf economies could compound food security risks.

To mitigate these risks, the recent FAO information note¹⁸ calls for coordinated international responses. Short-term measures include strengthening market monitoring, supporting farmers facing rising input costs and maintaining open trade routes. Medium and long-term strategies should focus on diversifying fertilizer and energy supply chains, investing in domestic agricultural production, expanding renewable energy and developing more resilient agrifood systems to better withstand future geopolitical shocks. Diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions and ensure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz remain the single most effective way to stabilize global energy and food markets, complementing these multi-layered interventions.



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SECTION II: REGIONAL FOOD POLICY-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

Algeria

In December, the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries introduced regulated prices for barley and animal feed to curb speculation. The National Office for Livestock Feed (ONAB) expanded subsidized barley allocations for breeders; the measures reduced red meat production costs and supported national food security.¹⁹ Additionally, the Ministry of Commerce announced a staggered import plan covering 1.15 million tonnes of maize to address a feed supply gap. Import shipments were scheduled through multiple major national ports to ensure continuous arrivals. The maize was allocated for use in the poultry feed sector as part of regulated distribution arrangements.²⁰

In January, the General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture implemented Finance Law 2026 incentives, which exempted key aquafeed inputs from customs duties and reduced value added tax (VAT), while extending reduced VAT to locally made feed. Operators obtained ministry certification to access the benefits, lowering costs and boosting domestic fish production.²¹ Furthermore, the Ministry of Energy and Renewable Energies unveiled a national programme referred to as the "Project of the Century" to deploy 15 gigawatts of clean energy capacity. The programme outlined a phased rollout, with 1.1 gigawatts scheduled for delivery by June as part of a wider 3.2 gigawatts regional buildout. Project documentation included grid-connected solar installations and associated transmission infrastructure. The programme also incorporated green hydrogen feasibility studies and rural electrification components within the announced framework.²²

In February, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development launched construction of a 100 000-tonne strategic grain silo in El Menia to expand national storage capacity. During the same period, the Algerian Interprofessional Office for Cereals (OAIC) adjusted wheat import planning following improved domestic collection. Public agricultural agencies expanded logistics support for cereal producers in southern regions, strengthening post-harvest handling nation wide.²³

In March, the Ministry of Knowledge Economy, Start-ups, and Micro-Enterprises launched an incubation and acceleration programme for agritech start-ups. The programme formed part of the InnovAgro component under the Development of Digital and Green Entrepreneurship project. Implementation was carried out with support from the Government of Germany and the European Union; programme delivery was led by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [German Agency for International Cooperation] (GIZ).²⁴

Bahrain

In December, the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture announced the Mara'ee 2025 Agriculture and Animal Production Show as one of the region's largest sector platforms. The event supported national food security efforts and showcased farming, livestock and local producers. It reinforced the government's commitment to advancing domestic agriculture.²⁵ Bahrain's Electricity and Water Authority has broken ground on the 100-MW Al Dur solar power plant in the Southern Governorate, which will include around 135 000 solar panels across 830 000 square metres and will connect to the grid via the Al Dur 66/11-kilovolt substation, with completion expected in Q3 2026.²⁶

In January, the Bahraini Farmers' Market continued to be held at the Budaiya Botanical Garden every Saturday, featuring 33 local farmers along with agricultural companies, nurseries, apiaries, artisans and food vendors. It was organized in partnership with the National Initiative for Agricultural Development, stc Bahrain, and the Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company, and recorded strong attendance and high demand for locally produced goods, particularly vegetables, over the preceding 6 weeks.²⁷

In February, the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture launched a digital service for issuing agricultural import permits. The system enabled electronic submission and processing of import requests through official channels; inspection and approval procedures were centralized under the ministry's supervision.²⁸

Egypt

In December, the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation reported that agricultural exports reached about 8.8 million tonnes, nearly 750 000 tonnes more than a year earlier. Citrus led the basket, followed by potatoes and sweet potatoes, underscoring strong international demand. The government emphasized adherence to global standards to sustain growth.²⁹ The Egyptian Cabinet approved Egypt's accession to the Green Middle East Initiative to enhance environmental protection and climate mitigation. It also approved joining the European Union's Horizon Europe programme, which unlocked funding and collaboration for local researchers.³⁰ Additionally, the New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA) adopted a national incentive package promoting green and sustainable construction in new urban developments; five designated "Green Cities" required mandatory environmental certifications for all projects.³¹

In January, the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation announced access to 25 new international markets for Egyptian agricultural products. The expansion boosted export competitiveness and foreign-currency earnings, while a national digital farm coding system enhanced traceability and compliance.³² At the same time, the ministry confirmed that agricultural exports reached USD 11.5 billion in 2025, totalling 9.5 million tonnes. Egypt retained its position as the world's leading orange exporter for the sixth consecutive year.³³ A 100 megawatt green hydrogen project in Egypt's Suez Canal Economic Zone began partial production and started exports to markets in Europe and the United States of America, operating through a partnership between Scatec, the Sovereign Fund of Egypt, Orascom Construction and Fertiglobe at the Ain Sokhna industrial zone. The project received government support for land and power provision, while Scatec also advanced additional solar investments, including the Obelisk project in Naga Hammadi and the USD 1.8 billion Energy Valley solar station in Minya.³⁴

In February, the Ministry of Supply, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Future of Egypt Authority coordinated large-scale imports of frozen poultry. Shipments included whole birds and processed cuts sourced from international suppliers. Distribution took place through state-owned retail outlets and Ramadan fairs with fixed pricing applied across sales points.³⁵ The European Commission approved EUR 124.3 million in funding for Egypt's electricity grid expansion and green fuel projects, including support for grid reinforcement and green ammonia infrastructure. The funding, allocated under the Trans-Mediterranean Renewable Energy and Clean-Tech Cooperation initiative, was announced at a high-level event in Cairo.³⁶ At the same time, the Suez Canal Economic Zone Authority finalized industrial contracts worth USD 13 million in the Ain Sokhna Zone for a packaged grain production facility and a fertilizer manufacturing plant spanning more than 30 000 square metres combined. Implementation oversight was assigned to the zone's development authority.³⁷

In March, the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation issued 916 operating licences for livestock and poultry projects. The licensing process was managed by the Livestock and Poultry Development Sector; feed registrations and inspection campaigns were conducted by the Regional Center for Food and Feed. Approved projects included cattle rearing units and milk collection centres. Funding approvals reached nearly EGP 297 million under the National Veal Project.³⁸

Iraq

In December, Iraq faced a severe water crisis that threatened to cut wheat output by up to half as Tigris–Euphrates water levels plunged. The government halved river-irrigated planting, banned rice and mandated a shift to modern irrigation. Authorities pushed desert farming using groundwater to mitigate supply gaps.³⁹ The Ministry of Agriculture confirmed that it obtained an official decision prohibiting the entry of imported table eggs into local markets with the goal of supporting and protecting national production and to provide backing to domestic poultry egg producers.⁴⁰ Additionally, the Ministry of Agriculture expanded its national livestock health measures by distributing veterinary medicines and vaccines after laboratory validation. Supplies were released to provincial warehouses to support disease prevention programmes.⁴¹

In January, the Ministry of Agriculture registered the full genomes of Barhi and Zahdi at a European genetics centre with Wahaj Al-Dana, creating international proof of Iraqi origin and protecting national germplasm.⁴² The National Investment Commission prioritized the Sama Karbala poultry complex as a key food security asset. The project targeted an annual output of 325 000 tonnes of poultry meat and 3 billion eggs, and relied on modern climate-controlled production systems.⁴³ Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture, through its Veterinary Department, officially launched the Electronic Platform for Veterinary Health Certificates on the national Ur Portal. The digital system automated the regulation of animal transport and animal products across Iraqi governorates and border crossings, and replaced paper-based procedures with a secure electronic process, integrating health assessments and vaccination records.⁴⁴

In February, the Ministry of Electricity confirmed trial operations of the first 250 megawatt unit at the Basra Sun solar park. The 132-kilovolt transmission network was energized by the Southern Electricity Transmission Company; the plant formed part of a 1-gigawatt integrated energy project.⁴⁵ The Ministry of Trade reopened Berth No. 10 at the Umm Qasr grain silo following rehabilitation works; the facility resumed full unloading and handling operations. The State Company for Grain Trading managed operations at the site and the berth supported imported wheat for national reserves.⁴⁶ In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture suspended imports of 15 fruits and vegetables. The list included apples, bananas, potatoes and tomatoes; the decision applied at all border crossings. Enforcement measures were tightened during the implementation period.⁴⁷

In March, the Ministry of Agriculture, through its Department of Horticulture, recorded results from hybrid eggplant trials in Basra. The trials were conducted at the Al-Burjasiya Research Station where cultivation took place in sandy desert conditions using well water. Productivity and crop performance were documented during the trial phase; the tested varieties included *Nasr* and *Wissam*.⁴⁸ In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture, through its Department of Animal Resources, began technical preparation works at the Al-Suwaira fish hatchery laboratories. The preparations were carried out ahead of the 2026 production season. Maintenance included the overhaul of incubators and hatchery equipment, while production halls were sterilized and drainage and ventilation systems were serviced.⁴⁹

Jordan

In December, Jordan advanced its largest-ever desalination project, the National Water Conveyance, to secure 300 million cubic metres desalinated seawater annually through a 438 kilometre pipeline from Aqaba to Amman and a dedicated solar plant underpinned the plan. Gradual water delivery was scheduled between 2027 and 2028 under a public-private partnership (PPP) model.⁵⁰ The Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Supply fixed the selling price of barley at JOD 245 per tonne for most livestock breeders, while maintaining a subsidized rate of JOD 175 per tonne for sheep farmers. The ministry also set bran prices and applied a fixed export fee on live sheep shipments to stabilize feedcosts⁵¹

In January, the cabinet renewed support, covering 50 percent of air freight and 25 percent of sea freight for fruits and vegetables and approved major handling centres with FAO and UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) to add traceability and sorting capacity.⁵² The Ministry of Agriculture cited the 2025 Global Hunger Index and the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report (SOFI) showing better hunger and undernourishment metrics, supported by price stabilization and resilient national food systems.⁵³ It reported improved rankings in global food security indicators. Progress was linked to price stabilization measures and strengthened supply chains. The results reflected steady policy implementation.⁵⁶ Additionally, the Higher Council for Food Security, in cooperation with the World Food Programme (WFP), released findings on food waste levels in Jordan. The assessment showed average waste of around 81 kg per person per year, with households identified as the main source.⁵⁴

In February, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation signed a USD 116 million financing package with the World Bank, the agreements covered agricultural resilience and value chain activities. Implementation responsibility was assigned to the Ministry of Agriculture, the agreements were finalized in Amman.⁵⁵ The Ministry of Agriculture suspended live sheep exports nationwide at all border crossings; adjustments were made to livestock import channels and veterinary inspection procedures remained in force.⁵⁶ In addition, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources finalized an agreement with Masdar to develop a 25-MW wind farm in Ma'an Governorate, a project that included five wind turbines. Financing was provided by the Government of the United Arab Emirates and site preparations were initiated.⁵⁷

Kuwait

In December, the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAF) supported expansion of climate-controlled farming to produce fruits like bananas, citrus and mangoes at scale. Output increased by 10 percent in the first 9 months of 2025 as technology adoption grew. Authorities began digitizing subsidies to support energy-intensive operations.⁵⁸ Additionally, the Ministry of Public Works, under amendments approved by the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT), allocated KWD 222 million to upgrade rainwater drainage systems in new residential developments. The infrastructure filtered runoff to allow groundwater recharge and agricultural reuse. The project sought to reduce flood risks and improve national water security.⁵⁹

Lebanon

In December, the Ministry of Agriculture approved the draft Forestry and Rangeland Law to modernize the protection of forests, rangelands and green spaces. The law strengthened penalties, created a dedicated maintenance fund and enhanced oversight⁶⁰ At the same time, the ministry confirmed an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease and launched emergency containment measures. Teams conducted epidemiological checks, vaccinated surrounding herds and restricted animal movement, and samples were sent to FAO and WOAHA (World Organisation for Animal Health) reference labs to identify the strain and adapt vaccines.⁶¹ In addition, the ministry achieved full Category 1 classification for CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) implementation after completing required national legislation. The newly adopted decrees strengthened controls on wildlife trade and protected biodiversity, and the recognition positioned Lebanon among compliant states in the global conservation system.⁶²

In January, the Ministry of Agriculture announced that preliminary laboratory results from the British Pirbright Institute confirmed the presence of the SAT1 (Topotype III) foot-and-mouth disease strain in Lebanese livestock. Authorities indicated that the virus was likely introduced through illegal animal movements rather than official import channels.⁶³ At the same time, the Ministry of Agriculture, through its Green Project, reached a major milestone in North Lebanon by signing support contracts with 47 farmers. The initiative covered Akkar, Minieh-Dinnieh, Batroun, Bcharreh, Koura and Zgharta, focusing on reclaiming uncultivated land. Funded by the Government of Denmark and implemented by FAO, the project included building irrigation reservoirs and retaining walls to prevent soil erosion.⁶⁴

In February, veterinary authorities confirmed the SAT-1 virus strain. The Ministry of Agriculture and FAO signed an emergency agreement addressing the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak. The agreement covered vaccination and surveillance activities; national coordination mechanisms were activated.⁶⁵ In addition, the Green Project of the Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon signed infrastructure support contracts with 66 farmers. Beneficiaries were located in Nabatieh, North Bekaa and West Bekaa. Works included water reservoirs and stone retaining walls, and implementation progressed across designated sites.⁶⁶

Libya

In December, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Libya approved a USD 5.8 million project funded by the Global Environment Facility and implemented with the Ministry of Environment to address land degradation and biodiversity loss in the Ubari Lakes Basin over 5 years. The initiative included plans for a 100 000-hectare national park, rehabilitation of 225 hectares of wetlands and the creation of nearly 700 jobs in ecotourism and sustainable agriculture.⁶⁷ At the same time, the Renewable Energy Authority of Libya (REAOL), in cooperation with GIZ, held a high-level national workshop in Tunis on 18–19 December to review Libya's draft Renewable Energy Law, with participation from government officials, legal experts and international specialists. The workshop concluded with approval of the draft law and its referral to the relevant authorities for final ratification procedures.⁶⁸

In January, the Julyana Free Zone Authority launched construction of a strategic grain storage complex covering 9 hectares in Benghazi. The project included 20 high-capacity silos, ship-unloading systems, quality-control laboratories and automated bagging lines. Once completed within 1 year, the facility was expected to form a national strategic grain reserve.⁶⁹ The Government of National Unity (GNU) launched a nationwide inspection campaign ahead of Ramadan to control prices of essential food commodities. The operation targeted hoarding, speculation and unjustified price increases amid seasonal demand and currency pressures. The Municipal Guard and Law Enforcement agencies were mobilized across markets.⁷⁰ At the same time, the Great Man-Made River Authority, in cooperation with Andalus Agro-Technic, began preparations to plant one million olive trees in the Tarhuna region. The project adopted advanced linear pivot irrigation systems with water application efficiency reaching up to 98 percent.⁷¹

In February, the Ministry of Environment inaugurated an 8.8-kilowatt peak rooftop solar system at its headquarters in Tripoli. The installation was supported by European Union and GIZ funding. The system supplies electricity to ministry offices. Commissioning was completed during the month.⁷² REAOL also installed and rehabilitated solar power systems in 25 public health facilities. The installations provided on-site electricity generation. Works were implemented across multiple regions. Systems became operational following technical commissioning.⁷³

Mauritania

In December, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty distributed chemically treated potato seeds nationwide for the 2025–2026 campaign. It warned that treated seeds were for planting only and not fit for human or animal consumption. Citizens were urged to report any illegal selling outside official channels.⁷⁴ Additionally, through National Company for Rural Development (SONADER) and in partnership with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the ministry launched consultations to strengthen horticultural value chains in Tarza. Stakeholders examined productivity, water conservation and post-harvest technologies.⁷⁵

In January, Mauritania participated in the 18th session of the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture held in Berlin, where discussions focused on irrigation water management, the adoption of smart and modern agricultural technologies, strengthening climate resilience, and applying a blue economy approach in agriculture. The session also included bilateral meetings and an international agricultural exhibition held during Green Week.⁷⁶ At the same time, the Food Security Commission, alongside the Japanese Embassy in Nouakchott, oversaw the receipt of 4 331 tonnes of rice under Japan's 2024 food aid programme. The shipment was to be sold through public auction in

accordance with legal procedures, with the proceeds allocated to finance social and development projects targeting vulnerable populations.⁷⁷

In February, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty announced regulated prices for essential vegetables ahead of Ramadan 2026. The ministry published an official list of fixed prices applicable at designated Ramadan exhibitions. The measure applied to selected vegetable products sold through authorized outlets and implementation was carried out under ministerial supervision across participating markets.⁷⁸

Morocco

In December, it was reported that during the 2024/2025 marketing season running from September to August, Morocco exported 112 000 tonnes of avocados, more than double the previous season's record, with revenues exceeding USD 300 million for the first time. France, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Spain remained the main destinations, while exports to secondary markets quadrupled to 7 600 tonnes, expanding Morocco's avocado presence to 27 markets worldwide.⁷⁹ In Rabat, Morocco and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) signed a EUR 150 million financing agreement, including EUR 11.5 million in grants, for the implementation of SAISS III, the final phase of the Saïss Plain Water Conservation programme. The project covers the supply of 90 to 120 million cubic metres of water annually from the M'dez dam to nearly 20 000 hectares, directly affecting around 7 300 farms.⁸⁰ In addition, the Atlantic Gulf Company, a Moroccan exporter specializing in the Gulf market, reported that Moroccan strawberries continued to secure a premium position despite strong competition from Egypt and other suppliers. During the season, volumes remained close to the previous year despite weather-related delays, with Morocco exporting 172 000 tonnes of red fruits in 2024, around 5 percent of which was destined for the Middle East, while the company focused on 1 kg packaging and air freight shipments to meet Gulf market preferences.⁸¹

In January, the Ministry of Equipment and Water reported that since the start of the hydrological season on 1 September 2025, Moroccan dam reservoirs reached 1.77 billion cubic metres, with 1.348 billion cubic metres, about 76 percent of the total, recorded after 12 December. During the same period, 80.2 million cubic metres were discharged into the sea, mainly from the Sebou and Oum Er Rbia basins.⁸² At the same time, Morocco Foodex highlighted that national tomato production reached nearly 1.7 million tonnes, supported by high yields and advanced greenhouse technologies. The sector demonstrated the capacity to compensate for European winter supply shortages. Projections indicated Morocco could cover part of the European Union deficit through 2035.⁸³

In February, the Regional Office for Agricultural Development of the Gharb (ORMVAG) deployed emergency interventions following flooding. Technical teams secured irrigation infrastructure, livestock feed was distributed to affected farmers, and drainage networks were cleared in multiple locations.⁸⁴ The State Secretariat for Maritime Fisheries imposed a 1-year restriction on sardine exports. The measure covered fresh, frozen and chilled sardines; other pelagic fish species remained unrestricted. Export controls were applied nationwide.⁸⁵

In March, the Ministry of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development and Water and Forests mobilized MAD 300 million to support flood-affected farms. Floods impacted approximately 105 000 hectares of agricultural land in the Gharb and Loukkos regions. The affected areas included cereal, sugar and forage crop zones. Support measures included the distribution of agricultural inputs and livestock feed.⁸⁶

Oman

In December, the Omani Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) inaugurated an OMR 36 million feed plant in Khazaen to strengthen livestock and aquaculture self-sufficiency. The facility used recycled agricultural residues and date waste to produce specialized feed. Initial capacity reached 48 000 tonnes for animals and 15 000 tonnes for fish.⁸⁷ MAFWR also launched an OMR 7.7 million floating factory project in partnership with Ocean Fish Company in Al Duqm. The high-tech vessel was designed to catch, process and freeze fish at sea, operating from Duqm Port to supply frozen products directly to international markets.⁸⁸ In addition, the ministry inaugurated an OMR 36 million livestock and aquaculture feed factory in the Khazaen Economic Zone operated by Oman Bio-Products, a subsidiary of Oman Flour Mills. The first phase was set to produce 48 000 tonnes of animal feed and 15 000 tonnes of aquatic feed annually using recycled green agricultural waste sourced from local landfills.⁸⁹

In January, the Government of Oman launched the 11th 5-year Development Plan covering the period 2026–2030 targeting average economic growth of 4 percent at constant prices and outlining 190 strategic programmes aligned with Oman Vision 2040. The plan projected OMR 15.6 billion in additional investments, average annual revenues of OMR 11.556 billion against expenditures of OMR 12.222 billion, and the creation of around 300 000 jobs for Omanis during the period.⁹⁰ At the same time, Nama Power and Water Procurement (Nama PWP) advanced procurement processes for 1 600 MW of solar and wind energy projects across the sultanate. The move followed the commissioning of a record 1 000 MW at the Manah solar projects in 2025. Three large wind projects and new solar capacity were prepared for tendering.⁹¹ Furthermore, MAFWR imposed a temporary ban on imports of live birds and untreated poultry products from India's Kerala state. The decision followed reports of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreaks in the region. Thermally treated poultry products were exempted, in line with WOAHA standards.⁹²

In February, MAFWR issued updated ministerial decisions regulating poultry imports. Import bans were lifted on live birds and derivatives from Buenos Aires in Argentina, Odisha in India and selected regions in Ireland. Temporary restrictions were imposed on imports from Catalonia in Spain, the Philippines, Poland and some regions in the United Kingdom.⁹³ The Oman Investment Authority, through its subsidiary Oman Food Capital, finalized a USD 150 million partnership with JBS S.A. of Brazil. The agreement covered the completion of an integrated poultry facility in Ibri and the rehabilitation of a beef and mutton processing plant in Thumrait. Planned production capacity reached 300 000 tonnes per year. The investment represented the largest regional project for the Brazilian company.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, MAFWR signed a Country Programme Framework agreement with FAO covering the period from 2026 to 2030. The framework was finalized following consultations with government entities, the private sector and civil society.⁹⁵

In March, MAFWR announced six agricultural investment opportunities in the Buraimi Governorate. The projects covered a total area of 114.5 acres; they were published through the Tatweer digital platform. The opportunities included tissue culture laboratories, seedling production facilities and crop cultivation projects. Designated locations were identified in Mahdah, including Al Zaroub, Al Wadiyeen and Safwan areas. Project specifications incorporated modern agricultural technologies and private sector participation.⁹⁶ Meanwhile through its Food Safety and Quality Center, MAFWR signed a memorandum of cooperation with Nama Water Services Company formalizing cooperation on drinking water quality monitoring. Institutional coordination covered data collection, analysis and reporting activities. Scientific research activities related to water quality were included under the cooperation framework.⁹⁷

Palestine

In December, the Palestinian government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, signed two financing agreements with the French Development Agency (AFD) to support sanitation and water reuse infrastructure. Under the Wadis project, a national technical framework was established to reuse treated wastewater for fodder crop irrigation. The project included system design, regulatory guidelines and operational arrangements for water reuse. A second financing agreement supported agricultural activities linked to sanitation infrastructure and reduced reliance on groundwater resources.⁹⁸ In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture, in cooperation with FAO, signed a new batch of investment support agreements in December. The agreements covered 16 projects with a total value of approximately NIS 4.04 million. Financial support was allocated to production, processing and value-addition components linked to local agricultural enterprises.⁹⁹

In January, the Ministry of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), implemented a water harvesting project in the Governorate of Jerusalem. An investment of NIS 317 000 was allocated to drill rainwater wells, install water storage tanks, and deploy efficient irrigation systems. Infrastructure works were carried out at multiple agricultural sites to improve water collection and distribution.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, the National Agricultural Research Center (NARC), with technical support from FAO, rolled out automated hydroponic farming systems under the MAP II programme. The systems operated using soilless cultivation technology combined with automated nutrient and water delivery. Field implementation showed that the systems reduced water use by up to 80 percent compared with conventional soil-based agriculture.¹⁰¹

In February, the Ministry of Agriculture signed the 10th batch of investment support agreements with FAO. The package included 17 projects across Jenin, Nablus, Qalqilya, Hebron, Tulkarm, Jerusalem and Ramallah; total investment reached NIS 5 158 761.74. Funding was provided by Denmark, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and the European Union. The grants covered 48 percent of the total project costs.¹⁰² Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture signed a new batch of 13 investment support agreements with FAO with a total investment value of nearly NIS 3.9 million. The projects were distributed across Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarm, Tubas and Qalqilya, and grants covered 45 percent of total project costs. The agreements covered plant production, animal production and food processing activities.¹⁰³

In March, the Jordanian–Palestinian Agricultural Marketing Company exported 120 tonnes of Palestinian lemons to the United Arab Emirates. The exports were carried out under the supervision of the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture. The shipment formed part of a 500-tonne commercial contract with retail chains in the market in the United Arab Emirates. Sorting, grading and packaging operations were conducted at approved facilities. Export procedures complied with applicable agricultural and trade regulations.¹⁰⁴

Qatar

In December, Al Meera Consumer Goods Company launched the Local Farmers Market Festival in Doha to promote national products. The initiative highlighted Qatari farmers' role in food security and economic diversification, and provided a retail platform for fresh vegetables, fruits and herbs.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, Qatar and Uruguay signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen cooperation in agriculture and food security, covering the exchange of expertise and technology, collaboration in livestock and feed production, intensive horticulture and fisheries, and data sharing.

The agreement also provided for the establishment of a joint working group to coordinate and monitor implementation.¹⁰⁶

In January, QatarEnergy signed a landmark agreement with the Egyptian Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources to deepen bilateral energy cooperation; the arrangement provided for the supply of up to 24 LNG cargoes to the Egyptian Natural Gas Holding Company (EGAS).¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, the Ministry of Municipality represented Qatar at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture held in Berlin. Discussions were conducted under the theme "Water. Harvests. Our Future" and focused on modern and sustainable water conservation methods in agriculture as part of the International Green Week trade fair.¹⁰⁸

In February, the Qatar Free Zones Authority signed a cooperation agreement with Qatar Foundation, which established a joint framework for climate-related activities and sustainability initiatives. The cooperation covered education, applied research and community engagement projects; activities were linked to existing sustainability platforms operated by Qatar Foundation.¹⁰⁹ The European School of Management and Technology Berlin, through its Institute for Deep Tech Innovation, launched DEEP Qatar in Doha. The initiative was implemented in partnership with the Qatar Investment Authority and the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation Council. The innovation hub operated as a university-affiliated platform based in Qatar. Programmes covered artificial intelligence, agriculture, food technology and health sectors.¹¹⁰

Saudi Arabia

In December, Mawani signed a SAR 200 million contract with ARASCO (Arabian Agricultural Services Company) to build a 40 000 square metres logistics centre at Dammam Port. The project expanded grain unloading and 100 000-tonne storage capacity to bolster food security; it aligned with the National Transport and Logistics Strategy.¹¹¹ Official statistics showed sharp gains in self-sufficiency ratios across key foods in 2024; shrimp reached 149 percent, dairy 131 percent and dates 121 percent, with notable increases in onions and tomatoes. The figures reflected coordinated efforts by the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MEWA) and other agencies.¹¹² Additionally, the Saudi Water Authority (SWA) partnered with Ebb Carbon to deploy an innovative desalination-linked CO₂-removal system. The technology transformed brine into industrial chemicals while enhancing seawater alkalinity for permanent carbon capture. The project advanced national decarbonization goals under Vision 2030.¹¹³

In January, the General Food Security Authority (GFSA) issued an international tender to purchase 595 000 tonnes of hard milling wheat; deliveries were scheduled for April and May across multiple Saudi Arabian ports.¹¹⁴ MEWA reported that the Saudi Arabian adoption of good agricultural practices (GAP) in poultry production reached around 90 percent. Broiler output reached 1.2 million tonnes in 2024.¹¹⁵ Additionally, the National Water Company (NWC) expanded the use of tertiary-treated wastewater for irrigating agricultural and green areas in Medina. A total of 2.1 million trees were planted using treated water supplied through dedicated networks. The project relied on advanced treatment systems to reuse wastewater for non-potable purposes.¹¹⁶

In February, the National Water Efficiency and Conservation Center in Saudi Arabia implemented new licensing regulations for water efficiency and conservation service providers. The regulations establish oversight and define responsibilities for activities such as water-use auditing, verification of water savings, leak detection and repair, and the management of efficiency-focused renovation projects. The framework also introduces a water auditor licence for individuals, institutions and companies operating within defined scopes of work.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, GFSA launched an international tender to purchase 655 000 metric tonnes of wheat. The procurement was distributed across 11 shipments. Deliveries were scheduled to Jeddah Islamic Port, King Abdulaziz Port in Dammam,

Yanbu Commercial Port and Jazan Port. The tender followed a centralized digital bidding process; the tender documentation was published by the authority.¹¹⁸

In March, GFSA concluded an international tender for 794 000 metric tonnes of wheat with deliveries scheduled between May and July; the purchase exceeded the original procurement volume. Shipments were distributed across 13 consignments; ports included Jeddah, Yanbu, Jazan, and Duba.¹¹⁹ In addition, the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center distributed urea fertilizer and agricultural supplies in the Governorate of Aleppo in the Syrian Arab Republic. Assistance reached 500 farming households; inputs included seeds, tools and energy support. Training sessions were conducted for agricultural and veterinary activities. Distribution operations were completed under the Sab' Sanabel Project framework.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, MEWA announced that national poultry meat production exceeded 1.31 million tonnes. Production figures were recorded across licensed poultry facilities in the kingdom, and output volumes increased ahead of the Ramadan season. Poultry production relied on approved breeding systems and regulated nutrition standards.¹²¹ In addition, the Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen (SDRPY) signed a cooperation agreement with the Estijabah Foundation for Humanitarian Aid and Relief to launch an agricultural value chain project targeting smallholder farmers in the Governorates of Abyan, Hadhramaut and Marib. The project coverage included approximately 2 300 families, benefiting more than 16 000 individuals.¹²²

Sudan

In December, the Ministry of Animal Resources unveiled a package of 40 investment projects covering the livestock and fisheries sectors. The announced portfolio included plans for establishing animal production cities, setting up a veterinary vaccine manufacturing facility, and expanding fish farming operations along the Red Sea coast. Project outlines detailed infrastructure components, production capacity and sectoral coverage.¹²³ At the same time, Egypt and the Sudan formed a strategic partnership to rehabilitate war-damaged drinking water systems. The cooperation covered technical assessments and joint implementation arrangements between relevant national authorities in both countries. Priority interventions included restoring Nile water treatment plants and rehabilitating damaged facilities. Work also focused on re-establishing chemical production and supply facilities used for water disinfection.¹²⁴ Additionally, the Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), reviewed progress on the Sustainable Natural Resources and Livelihoods Project. The review covered the implementation status of project components across targeted areas. Activities carried out included the distribution of agricultural seeds, the provision of extension and technical support, and the implementation of women-focused income generating programmes.¹²⁵

In January, the El Gezira and Managil Agricultural Scheme recorded a 47 percent decline in wheat cultivated area during the 2025/26 season. The contraction was attributed to soaring input costs, a collapse in agricultural credit, widespread looting and severe siltation of irrigation canals. These factors disrupted planting schedules and reduced farmer participation.¹²⁶ Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation began urgent rehabilitation works at the Jebel Aulia Dam to secure irrigation and domestic water supplies. Repairs targeted damaged gates, mechanical systems and operational facilities affected by prolonged neglect. Specialized teams were also formed to control invasive Nile weeds obstructing water flow.¹²⁷

In February, the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation signed a cotton seed production partnership agreement; the agreement was concluded with the Agricultural Research Corporation of Sudan and DAL Group. The partnership covered the production of foundation cotton seeds.¹²⁸

Syrian Arab Republic

In December, the Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with WFP, launched a campaign to remove invasive water hyacinth in the AL-Ghab Plain. Clearing canals improved irrigation flows, reduced water loss and protected biodiversity. The project prepared fields for the winter planting season.¹²⁹ At the same time, the General Organization for Seed Multiplication (GOSM) set a plan to produce 60 000 tonnes of wheat seed and 6 000 tonnes of barley seed. It expanded disease-free potato seed production and maintained a gene bank.¹³⁰ Additionally, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development launched a project, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and the General Farmers Union and supported by the Arab Gulf Programme for Development, to enhance trade integration of strategic commodities across five Arab countries including the Syrian Arab Republic. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the project covered value chain development for lentils and chickpeas, distribution of 5 tonnes of seeds along with fertilizers and pesticides, training on GAPs and cooperatives, and the establishment of electronic platforms to support crop marketing.¹³¹

In January, GOSM expanded the national potato seed programme by planting 39 000 tissue culture seedlings in greenhouses in Tartous. The seedlings were used to produce disease-free mother tubers for certified seed multiplication.¹³² At the same time, the Ministry of Agriculture, through GOSM, set the official per-tonne prices for certified potato seed at SYP 95 200 for net house production and SYP 95 058 for open field production under the 2026 spring national project¹³³.

In February, the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform completed first-dose vaccinations against foot-and-mouth disease. More than 43 000 cattle were vaccinated nationwide; sheep and goat vaccinations exceeded 118 000 doses. Veterinary teams operated across all governorates.¹³⁴ GOSM distributed subsidized potato seeds across several governorates; approved varieties were sold at fixed prices. Spring planting preparations progressed.¹³⁵

In March, the General Authority for the Management and Development of AL-Ghab launched rehabilitation works on the J1 main irrigation canal. The project was implemented in cooperation with FAO to rehabilitate a 5.5 kilometre section of the canal. Works included approximately 24 000 square metres of concrete and metal structures. Construction activities were carried out within the AL-Ghab Plain irrigation system.¹³⁶ In addition, the General Authority for Fish Resources and Aquatic Life signed a cooperation agreement with the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands. The agreement was concluded under the patronage of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. Cooperation focused on the rehabilitation of the Ain Zarqa fish hatchery in Darkoush, Idlib Governorate, which recorded an annual output of 5 million tilapia and carp fingerlings.¹³⁷

Tunisia

In December, the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Fisheries launched a national olive oil storage programme to stabilize prices during a record harvest. Bonuses of TND 300–330 per tonne incentivized temporary storage by farmers, millers and exporters. ONH (L'Office National de L'huile or the National Olive Oil Board) coordinated volumes of 100 000–150 000 tonnes over 3 months.¹³⁸ At the same time, the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy confirmed major progress towards 35 percent renewables in electricity by 2030. A 100-megawatt plant in Kairouan neared completion, with an additional 100 megawatts projects awarded to international developers, and permitting for small-scale renewable projects accelerated with 288 megawatts awarded between the end of 2024 and mid-2025.¹³⁹ Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture reported that northern

dams in northern Tunisia accumulated 51 million cubic metres of water within 8 days, bringing total inflows since autumn to 200 million cubic metres. Reservoir levels rose significantly, with Sidi El Barrak increasing from 74 to 148 million cubic metres, Sidi Salem from 92 to 122 million cubic metres, and Kasseb from 19 to 24.6 million cubic metres.¹⁴⁰

In January, Tunisia's Office des Céréales purchased 200 000 metric tonnes of wheat in an international tender comprising 100 000 tonnes of soft milling wheat at USD 256.16 to USD 256.60 per tonne C&F (cost and freight) and 100 000 tonnes of durum wheat at USD 323.89 per tonne C&F. Shipments were scheduled between late February and mid-April 2026 amid projected total wheat import needs of about 2 million tonnes for the 2025/26 marketing year.¹⁴¹ Through the PACE-AMIT programme, Tunisian date exporters met enhanced European Union quality and traceability requirements. Firms expanded exports of Deglet Nour dates and organic derivatives to core European markets. In August 2025, Tunisia's date exports had reached 132 100 tonnes valued at TND 841 million with Italy, Germany and Spain as the main destinations, while organic date exports totalled 8 322.8 tonnes worth TND 73.2 million.¹⁴²

In February, the International Union of Banks (UIB) joined a syndicate of Tunisian banks financing the 100-megawatt PURO solar project. The plant was located in Kairouan Governorate and reached a total investment of TND 280 million; financing arrangements progressed during the month.¹⁴³ In addition, EBRD reviewed a EUR 40 million loan request for a solar-plus-storage project led by the Tunisian Company of Electricity and Gas. The project included a 50-megawatt photovoltaic plant. Battery storage capacity was assessed and grid-integration components were evaluated.¹⁴⁴ The Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries clarified debt-relief measures under Article 58 of the 2026 Finance Law. The provisions applied to tenants of state agricultural land affected by drought. Verification procedures were outlined.¹⁴⁵

In March, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries authorized the import of beef and lamb from Serbia. The decision followed the harmonization of veterinary certification requirements between Tunisian authorities and the Serbian Ministry of Agriculture. Serbian veterinary control systems were recognized as compliant with international food safety, animal health and traceability standards. Export authorization applied to certified Serbian beef and lamb producers.¹⁴⁶ Meanwhile, Office des Céréales announced the status of grain storage in the Siliana Governorate. More than 99 percent of the cereal harvest, exceeding 1.5 million quintals of durum wheat, soft wheat and barley, had been transported in good condition; the remaining 1 percent, equivalent to 12 000 quintals, was held at collection centres. The governorate operated 28 collection centres with a combined storage capacity exceeding one million quintals.¹⁴⁷ In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries reported the detection of yellow rust (*Puccinia striiformis*) in durum wheat fields in several northern cereal-producing areas. The disease was also noted as affecting soft wheat and triticale crops; field observations confirmed active fungal spread in affected plots.¹⁴⁸

United Arab Emirates

In December, the Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA) issued a resolution regulating veterinary medical practices in Abu Dhabi, and requiring veterinary establishments to obtain licences and prior authorization before appointing veterinarians or conducting activities. The resolution introduced administrative fines for violations, with penalties doubled for repeat offences within 1 year, and provided for oversight measures and an awareness campaign to ensure compliance.¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park reached a total installed capacity of 3 860 megawatts in 2025 after adding 800 megawatts through photovoltaic and concentrated solar-powered technologies, representing about 21.5 percent of the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority's (DEWA) total generation capacity. Also in December, a tender was launched

for a 2 000 megawatt seventh phase linked to 1 400 megawatt hours of storage, while the 2030 capacity target was raised to over 7 260 megawatts.¹⁵⁰ Additionally, the Abu Dhabi Department of Energy, in collaboration with ADAFSA, launched the artificial intelligence (AI)-powered Smart Metre Project in Al Wathba to digitally monitor farm water consumption. Following a pilot phase, the rollout covered 80 farms in Al Wathba, with planned expansion to 130 farms in Al Nahda and 2 500 farms in Al Rahba, integrating smart metres into the AD.WE digital platform for real-time data monitoring.¹⁵¹ At the same time, the United Arab Emirates launched Ai.(d), a USD 1 billion AI-driven development initiative, led by the Abu Dhabi Exports Office under the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, to support digital infrastructure and AI-enabled projects across Africa. The initiative includes the creation of Smart Resilient Future Zones and is backed by a multilateral innovation fund with initial United Arab Emirates anchor capital of USD 1 billion, with project implementation set to begin in 2026.¹⁵²

In January, the United Arab Emirates issued updated federal laws on veterinary and agricultural quarantine, protection of new plant varieties, and regulation of international trade in endangered species. The reforms strengthened border controls and enforcement powers, increased fines up to AED 2 million for endangered species violations and AED 500 000 for agricultural quarantine breaches, and set plant variety protection at 20 years, or 25 years for vines and trees.¹⁵³ The Al Dhafra Solar Photovoltaic Plant was recognized as the world's largest single site solar power facility, producing 2 gigawatts of clean energy. The plant supplied electricity to around 200 000 homes through millions of solar panels installed on one site. Its operations reduced carbon emissions by several million tonnes annually. The project demonstrated largescale renewable energy efficiency supported by advanced monitoring and technical systems.¹⁵⁴ In addition, Masdar and Elite Agro Holding announced the launch of the first agricultural photovoltaic project in the NENA region at Al Foah Farm in Al Ain, Abu Dhabi, combining solar panels with greenhouse farming. The pilot project, unveiled during Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, was designed to generate renewable power while cultivating crops and serve as a scalable model for integrated energy and agriculture systems in arid conditions.¹⁵⁵ Meanwhile, DEWA announced that Phase I construction of its solar-powered Green Data Centre in Warsan, developed by subsidiary Moro Hub, will begin in the second quarter of 2026. The facility, spanning 66 000 square metres with a planned capacity of over 100 megawatts, is the company's fourth green data centre and has progressed to the awarding of Phase II.¹⁵⁶

In February, the Codex Alimentarius Commission approved a proposal submitted by the United Arab Emirates National Codex Committee, which covered the development of an international standard for pasteurized camel milk. The decision was taken during the 48th Codex session in Rome.¹⁵⁷ The Abu Dhabi Department of Energy launched a solar self-supply regulatory policy. The framework allowed eligible consumers to install photovoltaic systems and battery storage; initial coverage included farms and ranches.¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile, the Government of Ras Al Khaimah awarded its largest wastewater treatment project under a public-private partnership model. The plant capacity was set at 60 000 cubic metres per day. The project followed a build-own-operate-transfer structure; treated water reuse was incorporated.¹⁵⁹

In March, Al Rawdah Poultry Company, a subsidiary of the Emirates Rawabi Food Group, operated a fully integrated poultry production system in the United Arab Emirates. Operations covered breeder genetics, hatchery production, broiler farming, feed manufacturing and processing. The company managed 78 broiler houses and an inhouse hatchery producing 16 million eggs annually. Poultry production relied on Cobb 500 and Ross 308 breeds adapted to high-temperature conditions.¹⁶⁰

Yemen

In December, as part of Yemen's national model directorates programme, the Bajil directorate in Hodeida implemented wide ranging agricultural and economic measures, including the formation of more than 750 productive groups across 22 crop and livestock activities and the distribution of 800 bags of soybean seeds to over 300 farmers. The directorate also reclaimed disputed farmland, expanded maize and sesame production, launched a dairy unit producing up to 1 500 litres per day, organized mango processing and poultry marketing, and established the Kilo 18 Central Market to support agricultural trade and local supply.¹⁶¹ Officials reaffirmed their commitment to developing the fisheries sector and overcoming the blockade's impacts. Visits to Hodeida facilities highlighted quality upgrades and export opportunities for national companies. Public-private partnerships were positioned as key to expanding market access.¹⁶² The Western Sector Agricultural Cooperative Society, supported by the Executive Unit for Agricultural Projects, distributed 20 tonnes of wheat seeds and 5 tonnes of legumes, expanding winter cultivation and reducing reliance on imported staples. The seed bank had previously supplied over 80 tonnes across earlier seasons.¹⁶³

In January, the Executive Unit for Agricultural Projects approved a development plan in Sa'ada Governorate, which advanced dam construction activities, including the completion of Al-Lujam Dam and continued works on the Awaira Dam. Infrastructure implementation covered irrigation and water-storage components.¹⁶⁴ At the same time, local authorities in Dhamar co-financed 66 water harvesting projects valued at over YER 1.7 billion. The initiatives included dams, barriers and reservoirs; more than 8 200 farmers benefited across 345 hectares.¹⁶⁵ Additionally, the Al-Taiziyah Agricultural Cooperative Association inaugurated a new water reservoir project in the Al-Zawaqir area of Taiz Governorate. The reservoir was constructed to collect and store seasonal rainwater for agricultural irrigation. The project was funded by the local Zakat Authority and implemented with community participation.¹⁶⁶

In February, the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation distributed 20 tonnes of improved potato seeds in Al-Bayda, distribution was implemented through the Mukayras Agricultural Cooperative Society; a total of 120 farmers received inputs.¹⁶⁷ Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation launched the cotton marketing season at the Hodeidah ginning factory. Cotton crops were received from cooperatives in the Tihama plain; quality control measures were applied at reception points.¹⁶⁸ In addition, the Agriculture Sector Office in Hajja Governorate, in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, issued interest-free loans to establish veterinary clinics. The programme was supervised by animal health authorities. Clinics were planned within cooperative associations.¹⁶⁹

In March, the General Corporation for the Propagation of Improved Seeds inaugurated the maize harvest for the 2025/26 season in Al-Hodeidah Governorate in partnership with the Al-Hujaylah District Multi-Purpose Agricultural Cooperative Association and in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.¹⁷⁰



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SECTION III: YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, DECENT EMPLOYMENT AND INNOVATION IN THE NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA REGION

Young people are among the greatest assets of global agrifood systems. The NENA region is one of the most youthful in the world,¹⁷¹ endowed with a rich diversity of skills, creativity and entrepreneurial potential. Yet, despite this demographic advantage, many young people engaged in agrifood systems face persistent structural constraints, including limited access to productive assets, finance, innovation, quality education and decent employment opportunities. This turns youth populations into at-risk groups requiring social protection.

Addressing high youth unemployment and the shortage of decent jobs is therefore a critical policy priority across the region. Nearly 65 percent of the population in NENA countries is under the age of 35.^{172,173} However, this demographic dividend remains underutilized. According to data from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the youth unemployment rate in Arab countries was the highest in the world in 2023, reaching 28.0 percent. In North Africa, it stood at 22.3 percent in 2023, both figures were significantly higher than the global youth unemployment rate of 13.4 percent in 2023. In addition, millions of young people remain underemployed or trapped in informal and low-quality jobs.¹⁷⁴

With the intersection of gender and age, young women face even greater challenges, with significantly higher unemployment rates and lower labour force participation due to persistent gender-based barriers. Women's labour force participation in the NENA region remains the lowest globally. While women contribute significantly to small-scale family farming, being responsible for over 80 percent of agricultural production, they are more likely to work in vulnerable, informal and unpaid family labour.¹⁷⁵ They face limited access to productive assets, markets, technologies and social protection. The gendered division of labour increases women's unpaid care burden, averaging 5 hours per day compared to less than 1 hour for men.

Despite progress, significant digital divides persist in the NENA region, particularly affecting women and rural youth. Limited access to mobile technologies, digital services and affordable connectivity, compounded by mobility constraints, unpaid care burdens and restrictive social norms, continues

to hinder women's full participation in agrifood systems. The digital gender gap restricts women smallholders' access to timely market information, productive technologies and formal financial services, limiting their productivity, profitability and meaningful economic participation.

These challenges are particularly acute in rural areas, where uneven agrifood systems transformation has contributed to widening spatial inequalities and rising rural poverty. According to the World Bank, by 2021, an estimated 39 percent of the NENA population was living below the poverty line, with rural poverty rates nearly twice as high as those in urban areas.¹⁷⁶

Climate change, conflict and displacement further deepen gender and age inequalities. These intersecting challenges contribute to persistent food insecurity, rural poverty and limited agrifood system transformation. Addressing these gaps requires coordinated policy action, strengthened data, gender and youth-responsive programmes and scaled-up models of empowerment.

By fostering youth and women's empowerment, promoting decent employment and accelerating innovation in agrifood systems, countries in the NENA region can generate the green and productive jobs needed to support a more sustainable and equitable transformation. Innovation, together with the effective use of science and technology-based solutions, serves as a critical cross-cutting enabler to address persistent structural challenges. At the centre of this transformation are young women and men whose skills, scientific knowledge and creativity can turn constraints into opportunities and drive inclusive, resilient and sustainable change across agrifood systems.

Regional Priority 1 (RP1): Rural Transformation and Inclusive Value Chains – together with the other regional priorities of the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (FAO RNE) as well as FAO Country Offices and Headquarters – is uniquely positioned to advance integrated rural transformation through innovation. Across the region, FAO applies a people-centred approach, where family farmers, rural women and youth, entrepreneurs, cooperatives, producer organizations and service providers are co-designers and co-implementers of solutions, rather than passive recipients of support. Their knowledge, priorities and lived experiences shape how challenges are defined; solutions are framed and success is measured.

Guided by its Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP),¹⁷⁷ FAO promotes youth engagement across agrifood systems as entrepreneurs, cooperative members, service providers and leaders, while addressing structural constraints related to skills development, access to productive resources, finance, markets, social protection and decent employment. This approach follows a structured pathway that supports youth and women from capacity development to enterprise creation and scaling, fostering stronger policy dialogue and governance, while simultaneously reinforcing the enabling ecosystem at every stage. Activities span from upskilling and ideation, through incubation and enterprise acceleration, to enhance access to finance and markets. At the same time, FAO strengthens the enabling ecosystem by engaging policymakers, investors and the private sector, supporting rural and collective organizations, and promoting family farming and inclusive business and cooperative models. This comprehensive approach expands opportunities for youth and women while ensuring that rural transformation is both inclusive and sustainable.

From empowerment to decent employment: Transforming opportunities for youth in the NENA region

Upskilling youth in agrifood systems

In collaboration with regional partners, FAO launched the Youth Action Leadership for Agrifood Awareness and Systems Transformation (YALA FAST) programme.¹⁷⁸ The YALA FAST programme translated leadership theory into hands-on practice, equipping participants with actionable skills, personal accountability and collaborative networks. Through exercises such as value-prioritization, 90-day action plans, systems-thinking drills and peer coaching, young leaders developed practical tools to navigate complex agrifood ecosystems while respecting diverse perspectives. Teams produced a five-item innovation pipeline, including digital crop sales platforms, optimized dairy models, renewable energy-linked water programmes, agrivoltaics trials and low-cost irrigation solutions, all supported by investor checklists and follow-up guidance. Foresight exercises further generated country-level roadmaps in Jordan, Oman and Tunisia, linking technological innovation with sustainable governance and Zero Hunger objectives. Beyond technical skills, YALA FAST established a dynamic alumni network, supported by online platforms, regular mentorship calls and cross-sector collaboration, ensuring that participants continue to learn, share and implement solutions regionally. By institutionalizing a bi-annual cycle and fostering cross-country partnerships, YALA FAST has created a cohort of empowered youth leaders with personal leadership playbooks, investable prototypes and actionable strategies to drive inclusive transformation in agrifood systems.¹⁷⁹

Under the framework of the Arab Forum for Rural Advisory Services (AFRAS),¹⁸⁰ a collaborative network dedicated to advancing extension and rural advisory services across Arab countries, FAO and its partners aim to develop a new generation of youth extensionists.¹⁸¹ With a clear vision of contributing to rural transformation and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), AFRAS actively fosters networking, knowledge sharing and learning among RAS (rural advisory services) stakeholders from diverse sectors. The initiative includes the development of an e-learning platform on RAS and partnerships with universities across the NENA region, including institutions in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, to establish structured academic and professional pathways in rural advisory services. Through internship placements within research centres and universities, approximately 30 young professionals will gain hands-on experience to enhance their technical competencies, employability and smooth transition into the agrifood labour market.

Empowering women in agrifood systems for inclusive rural transformation

Addressing gender and youth disparities in agrifood systems is critical to advancing inclusive rural transformation, strengthening resilience and enhancing food security across the NENA region. Over the past 2 years, FAO has strengthened the integration of gender-transformative and youth-responsive approaches across its programmes, translating strategic commitments into tangible country-level results.

Gender-transformative approaches (GTAs) implemented across the region have generated measurable gains in women's participation, leadership, skills development and economic empowerment. In Algeria, women's participation in forest cooperatives increased to 40 percent

following targeted upskilling and training programmes, supported by gender councils that promoted women's leadership and contributed to shifting social norms. In Egypt, more than 1 100 women who trained through Farm Business Schools (FBS) reported productivity increase of 35 percent and income gains of 10 percent. In Palestine, participatory planning processes enabled women to influence climate-resilient agriculture policies while strengthening women-led agribusinesses. In Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, Dimitra Clubs and similar community platforms enhanced women's decision-making power and addressed structural barriers, including gender-based violence.

Regionally, collaboration with over 20 partners – including FAO Country Offices, United Nations agencies, regional organizations, financial institutions and private sector actors – resulted in more than 10 joint technical activities. These included regional policy dialogues, technical trainings, knowledge-sharing webinars and awareness campaigns on gender equality, youth employment, climate resilience, entrepreneurship and inclusive finance. The activities reached over 1 200 stakeholders, including government counterparts, producer organizations, financial institutions, civil society actors and young rural entrepreneurs, enhancing institutional capacities to support women's economic empowerment and fostering cross-country collaboration across the NENA region.

Innovation was leveraged as an enabler of the empowerment of both women and youth. In 2025, FAO initiated a regional technical brief on women's digital financial inclusion and launched the preparatory phase of an AI-based digital advisory solution for women farmers, with strong relevance for digitally connected rural youth and young rural entrepreneurs.

Scaling up and institutionalizing gender-transformative approaches, by embedding women's leadership, economic empowerment and protection into agrifood, forestry and climate policies, and by expanding proven community platforms and skills investments, remains essential to advancing women's empowerment across the region. The International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF) 2026¹⁸² provides a crucial opportunity to elevate women's leadership, invest in gender-responsive policies and recognize the critical role they play in agrifood systems. IYWF aims to raise awareness of the important roles women farmers play in sustaining agrifood systems and the challenges they face, and to direct policymaking efforts and investments towards the empowerment of women farmers in 2026 and beyond.

Ideation: Fostering innovation in agrifood systems

Working closely with universities, youth organizations and government partners across the region, FAO strives to foster innovative ideas and build a culture of entrepreneurship. In Egypt, FAO supported the launch and scaling of the Food and Agriculture Model (FA Model) in universities, aimed at equipping students with agri-entrepreneurship skills through experiential and peer-to-peer learning approaches. The initiative started in 2017 at Cairo University and is now a fully independent student-led movement operating in 34 universities with more than 3 000 youth volunteers. Training is underway to expand the initiative to universities in 8 other countries in the region. This model creates an early-stage innovation pipeline by identifying, nurturing and connecting young talent to structured incubation and acceleration programmes. By embedding agrifood innovation within universities and youth centres, FAO contributes to a cultural shift that repositions agriculture as a modern, technology-driven and opportunity-rich sector.

FAO is now developing a manual for youth centres on how to establish and operate food and agriculture clubs for adolescents and youth. These clubs target a broader age group and aim to reshape perceptions of economic opportunities within the agrifood sector. Through structured

engagement, adolescents and youth are introduced to sustainable agrifood technologies, climate-smart practices and agribusiness fundamentals, and are encouraged to develop innovative, market-oriented solutions to key agrifood system challenges.

FAO supports the World Food Forum (WFF) National Youth Chapters¹⁸³ in the NENA region. These dynamic, self-organized national youth platforms are aligned with the principles and mission of the WFF and convened by local networks of partners and organizations. They implement activities and projects that mobilize youth-led action and contribute to more sustainable and inclusive agrifood systems. The chapters advance innovation, leadership and engagement by enabling young people to participate in policy dialogue, education and transformative initiatives addressing key agrifood system challenges. WFF Chapters have been established in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Qatar with the aim of building youth-led movements that drive meaningful change and support the transformation of national agrifood systems by 2030.¹⁸⁴

Agribusiness incubation: From idea to enterprise

Led by FAO, the Agrination Startup Cup is the first regional business competition for youth-led, idea-stage agrifood startups in the NENA region.¹⁸⁵ The initiative strives to foster innovation, decent employment and youth inclusion in agrifood systems by helping promising green agrifood enterprises to achieve market readiness.

The programme focuses on young entrepreneurs, and in particular young female entrepreneurs, that have a minimum viable product (MVP) or clear business plan but need support to enter the market. This phase is characterized by high uncertainty and risk, making it a critical juncture in the entrepreneurship process. By strengthening entrepreneurial capabilities at this critical early stage and supporting business model validation, Agrination increases the number of agrifood MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) successfully reaching the market, while improving their survival and growth prospects.

Over two competition rounds, more than 60 shortlisted startups from 9 NENA countries benefited from week-long virtual bootcamps. The training covered agribusiness fundamentals, such as problem identification, value proposition and product validation. A total of 15 finalists also benefited from a 6-month tailored incubation programme, half of which were women-led startups. The incubation was customized to the specific needs of each startup and included one-on-one coaching with subject experts, networking and visibility opportunities, matchmaking with companies and a USD 2 000 grant.

An additional 40 startups will be incubated in 2026 with funding from AECID. In its second phase, the Agrination initiative is expanding its focus on the agrifood sector in Algeria, Mauritania, Palestine and Tunisia. The initiative has established a regional partnership with Berytech to implement the capacity-building programme and oversee local incubation efforts. In parallel, FAO is working closely with country offices to identify and select local incubators that will participate in a dedicated capacity-building programme and subsequently run national incubation cycles. Through this process, 40 agritech startups will be supported, each receiving a USD 5 000 grant to develop and test their MVP.

Agribusiness acceleration: Scaling successful enterprises

Under the Agri-Accelerator 2.0 initiative, FAO launched an inclusive and innovative programme to transform food systems through responsible agricultural investment by young agri-entrepreneurs. Agribusiness acceleration hubs were established in Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, with implementation planned in Lebanon. The initiative promotes holistic and sustainable change by enhancing access to responsible investment opportunities in alignment with the Committee on Food Security Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS-RAI), strengthening the enabling ecosystem through improved programmes, policies, and capacities of business advisers, and directly empowering young entrepreneurs via hubs offering technical guidance, coaching and financial incentives.¹⁸⁶

Through a structured 6-month acceleration process, participants refined entrepreneurial skills, developed responsible and bankable business models, and received grants to acquire equipment or technologies that expand or make their businesses more sustainable. The programme also trained entrepreneurship coaches who guided young agri-entrepreneurs in generating a triple performance: increased profitability for investors, positive socioeconomic impact for communities and sustainable use of natural resources.

The programme is organized in three integrated phases: an analytical phase to identify high-potential value chains, regions and investment needs; an awareness phase focused on advocacy and stakeholder engagement; and an acceleration phase providing coaching, incentives and capacity development to selected agri-entrepreneurs, while simultaneously strengthening the broader ecosystem. Detailed coaching toolkits were developed to provide a step-by-step methodology supporting youth-led agribusinesses throughout the process.

Building agrifood entrepreneurship ecosystems

The long-term success of agrifood startups depends not just on initial support, but also on the presence of an enabling environment or entrepreneurship ecosystem. For this reason, FAO supports NENA countries in adopting responsible agriculture investment policies in line with the CFS-RAI by working with national counterparts to identify, review, reform and develop relevant regulatory frameworks, incentives and laws through a process of inclusive policy dialogue.¹⁵⁶

Also, as a part of the Agrination initiative, a meeting for perspective countries' policy makers in the agri-innovation sector is set to take place as part of Agrination II activities, where startups and different stakeholders are set to meet and discuss the obstacles hindering the advancement of innovation in the agrifood sector and lay out mechanisms and recommendations to accelerate and establish an innovative culture in the agrifood and agritech ecosystems, complementary to the imitative focus on the policy side. A publication will be issued highlighting the recommendations and lessons learned for the first phase of the project, detailing the exact issues and obstacles that entrepreneurs face during the crucial phase of building an agrifood solution and introducing it to the market.

Agrifood cooperatives and inclusive business models

FAO has placed increasing emphasis on supporting cooperative organizations as a distinct and strategic form of MSMEs. Cooperatives play a critical role in helping farmers deal with persistent constraints such as scarce natural resources, limited services, high input costs and unequal access to markets. By joining forces, producers can pool resources, reduce risks, strengthen their

bargaining power, adopt climate-smart practices and create new opportunities for youth and women. In a region exposed to multiple shocks, this collective capacity is key to resilience and long-term transformation.

FAO works with cooperatives and other collective action organizations as strategic partners in transforming agrifood systems across the region. This support brings together national and regional action and focuses on strengthening governance, leadership and accountability so that these organizations remain truly member-driven. It helps cooperatives develop stronger services and business models that improve members' income and resilience, while also promoting inclusion by supporting youth and women-led cooperatives.

For instance, in Lebanon, FAO supported the establishment or strengthening of more than 250 women-led rural cooperatives. Through the Cooperative Business Schools (CBS) approach, women enhanced their business and managerial capacities in areas such as entrepreneurship, marketing, communication and financial management, grounded in the principles of collective action and democratic governance. This initiative not only increased women's economic participation and income, but also strengthened their leadership, management and negotiation skills, reinforcing their voice within households, communities and markets.

Initiatives like this in the country have now been scaled up to nurture a programmatic approach that considers collective action an integral component of any effort to develop sustainable agrifood value chains for stronger food and nutrition security, particularly in addressing the barriers that limit the economic participation of women and youth in these value chains.

At the regional level, FAO has advanced a broad agenda to strengthen cooperative development with a particular focus on women and youth. A comprehensive regional study on cooperatives and other forms of collective action, developed through an extensive consultative process, identified the need for a shared vision and strategy for the NENA region.¹⁸⁷

The analysis underscored the central role of women-led groups, which in many countries emerge as some of the most dynamic and promising forms of organization, valued for their inclusiveness, innovation and local impact despite persistent constraints such as limited technical skills, organizational capacities and access to finance. Building on this evidence, FAO reinforced collaboration with the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and national cooperative movements, culminating in the Strategic Dialogue on Cooperative Development held in January 2025 in Casablanca, where around 60 policymakers and cooperators co-developed a regional vision and a roadmap to 2030.¹⁸⁸

Ensuring the inclusion of women and youth became a core priority of this roadmap, with actions focused on promoting cooperative-friendly legislation, strengthening representative organizations, establishing mechanisms to expand opportunities for women and youth, and embedding cooperative education in school curricula as a long-term strategy to cultivate a culture of cooperation. Follow-up initiatives have already begun to take shape: young cooperators from across the region mobilized to develop the Youth Declaration on Cooperatives in Agrifood Systems, launched at the World Food Forum, with support from FAO and ICA. At the same time, the forthcoming publication *Voices of the cooperators: A collective journey through the agrifood systems in the Near East and North Africa* brings together more than seventy stories that illustrate how – through cooperative action – women have been leading change, building income and confidence, and valorizing cultural heritage, while showcasing how youth have been driving innovation through smart technologies, climate-resilient crops and new collective business models.

Placing youth at the core of family farming transformation

Youth are recognized as a central driver for the sustainability and innovation of family farming and rural transformation in the NENA region. Within this context, FAO with key stakeholder in the region developed the *Innovation in family farming to achieve the sustainable development goals in the Near East and North Africa region: Regional action plan 2022–2028*, which underscores its ongoing commitment to youth engagement and innovation.¹⁸⁹ The implementation of the action plan was discussed with key policymakers during the NENA Family Farming Interregional Dialogue, held in Cairo on 7 to 8 July 2025. This 2-day event brought together participants from the NENA region, and Latin America and the Caribbean to exchange experiences, build partnerships and promote policy solutions that strengthen family farming systems.¹⁹⁰ It highlighted the shared challenges and opportunities facing smallholder and family farmers including youth in both regions, with a strong focus on inclusive innovation, climate resilience and sustainable rural transformation. Over the course of the dialogue, government officials, farmer organizations, researchers, youth leaders and development partners engaged in discussions across five thematic areas: digital technologies and inclusive business models; market access; agroecological and climate-resilient practices; access to credit and financial services; and secure access to land and natural resources. The dialogue concluded with a forward-looking session on regional contributions to the upcoming Global Solutions Forum on Family Farming and Rural Transformation, with stakeholders underscoring the importance of interregional cooperation, knowledge exchange and locally-led solutions. The outcomes of this dialogue will directly inform global discussions and the implementation of the UNFFF (United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028) by identifying priorities to empower family farmers, including youth, as key actors in building resilient agrifood systems and eradicating rural poverty.

Promoting youth participation, leadership and decision-making in rural institutions and governance

FAO strengthens youth engagement in ecosystem restoration policy and practice through global and regional mechanisms. Under the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the Youth Task Force serves as a formal platform for youth engagement and is co-chaired by FAO and the Children and Youth Major Group (CYMG) to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), alongside an elected third co-chair. Its work is organized through subcommittees on events and capacity building, finance, communication, projects and policy, including dedicated functions for coordinating youth policy inputs and supporting #GenerationRestoration outreach. A concrete example is the Youth Position Paper prepared as a youth contribution to be presented at the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference, more commonly referred to as COP27, held from 6 to 20 November 2022 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. Another example is the United Nations Decade Youth Task Force 2026 Microgrant Call, designed by the Youth Task Force and supported by FAO and UNEP to resource youth-led restoration action on the ground.

Building on this global momentum, FAO RNE has advanced youth engagement in dryland ecosystems, forestry and rangeland management through targeted regional initiatives. In December 2024, FAO convened the NENA Youth Breakfast in Riyadh during the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP16, creating a high-level dialogue space on sustainable land management, community resilience, youth inclusion in decision-making, youth-led science and innovation, and resource mobilization for youth-driven solution. FAO then supported the establishment of the NENA Youth Network for Sustainable Forestry and Rangeland Management and convened a dedicated Youth Day in the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC 27). The Youth Day event framework emphasized three priority tracks: closing data and research

gaps, advancing governance and inclusiveness, and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, with outcomes designed to include youth-driven recommendations, a strategic action plan and a platform for regional collaboration. Over 150 young leaders from more than 20 countries participated virtually, and for the first time in the Commission's history, youth recommendations were presented directly to the NEFRC plenary, creating a formal channel for youth perspectives to inform regional priorities.

This work has already generated concrete policy contributions and is under continued planning as part of FAO RNE efforts on youth empowerment, employment and innovation. The next phase can further consolidate the Network's regional workplan, strengthen institutional pathways for youth participation in forestry and rangeland governance, and expand collaboration, innovation and green livelihood opportunities linked to sustainable dryland ecosystem management.

Cross-cutting innovation and science-based technology

FAO's Science and Innovation Strategy is the reference for youth-focused innovation in the NENA region.¹⁹¹ Regional initiatives align with it by combining science, technology and data with governance and institutional reforms. In parallel, FAO supports institutional innovation by assisting governments in creating and combining national strategies for innovation and digital agriculture. This ensures that policies, funding and responsibilities align with advancements in technology.

Science and data platforms are translated into services and jobs for youth. The Water Productivity Open-access Portal (WaPOR) provides open, near real-time water and land productivity data that youth, universities, start-ups and public agencies use for irrigation diagnostics, cropping choices and drought risk analysis.¹⁹² This creates demand for early career analysts and service providers. In Jordan, the Land Degradation Neutrality Decision Support System links geospatial analytics with participatory planning and is building technical roles in restoration, climate adaptation and digital extension.

Country-level digital backbones expand opportunities in data stewardship, service delivery and trade compliance. Examples from the regional portfolio include the Jordan Integrated Agricultural Management Information System (JIAMIS),¹⁹³ Lebanon's Farmers' Registry and the Food Contamination Management System,¹⁹⁴ and Palestine's phytosanitary and pesticide systems.¹⁹⁵ These platforms enable targeted services, safer trade and private support functions that youth-led firms can offer. Evidence on electronic phytosanitary certification shows that ePhyto reduces exporter costs and speeds clearance, which can open space for youth-led logistics and traceability once rules such as electronic signatures and inter-agency data exchange are in place.¹⁹⁶

At the community-level, the Digital Village Initiative (DVI) establishes place-based ecosystems where youth learn, test and apply digital tools. In Mauritania, the Rosso and Kaédi DVIs embedded drones and geospatial training in higher education and extension. The Dieuck DVI created a solar-powered hub managed by youth for digital literacy, e-commerce, administration and agronomic troubleshooting. These centres function as ramps for digital literacy development.

Frontier pilots build pipelines of practical roles. In Saudi Arabia, Smart Flock Saudi integrates RFID (radio frequency identification), sensors and mobile analytics for precision small ruminant management, generating demand for youth technicians, paraveterinary workers and data operators.¹⁹⁷ In Egypt, FAO is developing the SheGrows AI advisory chatbot, initiated in 2025 to provide localized and gender-responsive guidance that young facilitators can mediate at the last mile. FAO's regional engagement on responsible AI for agriculture supports this stream of work.

To steer investment towards affordable technologies that young entrepreneurs can adopt and service, FAO with IFAD and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) produced a ten-country mapping exercise and developed the Green and Climate Smart Technology Assessment Tool.¹⁹⁸ The tool allows authorities, accelerators and innovation hubs to compare options across post-harvest management, water saving, crop protection, e commerce, fintech and green energy and to build shared pipelines for public and private financing.

This approach connects open data platforms and decision tools with national registries, community hubs and frontier pilots, and couples each element with policy support and capacity development so innovations become services, budgets and jobs for young people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, youth in the NENA region represent a critical force for the sustainable transformation of agrifood systems. Despite facing structural constraints, limited access to resources, and persistent gender inequalities, you, including young women, have the creativity, skills and entrepreneurial potential to drive inclusive, resilient and innovation-led rural development.

FAO's comprehensive approach, spanning capacity development, entrepreneurship incubation and acceleration, digital innovation, policy engagement and enabling environment, demonstrates that empowering youth requires interventions across multiple dimensions: from skills and knowledge transfer to market access, cooperative development and inclusive governance. Initiatives such as YALA FAST, the Agrination Startup Cup, the Agri-Accelerator 2.0, the World Food Forum (WFF) National Youth Chapters in the NENA region digital villages, and youth networks for forestry and rangeland management illustrate how hands-on training, mentorship and ecosystem building can translate opportunities into viable enterprises, decent employment and sustainable innovations. By fostering youth engagement at the local, national and regional levels, and by embedding their voices in policy and decision-making processes, countries in the NENA region can unlock the demographic dividend, strengthen food security, reduce rural poverty and accelerate the transition towards sustainable agrifood systems. Ultimately, the success of rural transformation hinges on placing youth at the centre of innovation, entrepreneurship and governance, ensuring that their potential is fully harnessed to build equitable, resilient and forward-looking agrifood economies across the region.

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#جينوم
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[Her Excellency the Commissioner for Food Security, Ms. Fatma Bint Mahfoudh Ould Khatri, along with His Excellency the Japanese Ambassador, Mr. Uchida Hiroyuki, oversaw the receipt of 4,331 tons of rice today, Monday, in Nouakchott, as part of the Japanese Food Aid Program for 2024]. In: *Facebook*, 26 January 2026. [Text & photo]. [Cited 17 February 2026]. <https://www.facebook.com/agenceami.mr/posts/pfbid02r3kodEMiiFUHPBWEhcjGhseAmTGVBw8gDepzVsL7Bqg4dXK3gMZ8VX952LzDvnFl?r-did=16BnpSmn48Yd4xyL#>

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"زراعة 39 ألف شتلة نسيجية لإنتاج بذار البطاطا في طرطوس... باشر فرع المؤسسة العامة لإكثار البذار في طرطوس زراعة 39 ألف شتلة بطاطا نسيجية داخل البيوت الزجاجية..."

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[The Ministry of Agriculture has issued a formal decision setting the selling prices for potato seeds produced by the National Potato Seed Production Project for the current agricultural season].

In: *Facebook*, 19 January 2026. [Text & photo]. [Cited 19 February 2026]. <https://www.facebook.com/agriculturalSyria/posts/pfbid02ozGxVAHGgHbcRo8Cghg7ViX86tUCZGqFME3dACKnRAG-nZngkSZF82rV7cdfUmb5yl?rdid=3SIArDlvcjPMeTiJ#>

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بيان صادر عن وزارة الزراعة. وزارة الزراعة تعلن عن تقدم الحملة الوطنية للتحصين ضد داء الحمى القلاعية

تعلن وزارة الزراعة عن استمرار تنفيذ الحملة الوطنية للتحصين ضد داء الحمى القلاعية، التي انطلقت بتاريخ 20 كانون الأول 2025."

[Statement issued by the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture announces the progress of the national vaccination campaign against foot-and-mouth disease]. In: *Facebook*, 13 February 2026. [Text & photos]. [Cited 1 March 2026]. <https://www.facebook.com/MOALebanonOfficial/posts/pfbid02MF51vT-mtfP9y69uhLYtjL3betBY2PB7Pu6xgaaT85DS6926wtbe3AAC1NjBSTtal?rdid=NqB8SNIRSpjSSB0#>

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"المؤسسة العامة لإكثار البذار تبدأ توزيع بذار البطاطا بأسعار مدعومة"

أطلقت المؤسسة العامة لإكثار البذار عملية توزيع بذار البطاطا على المزارعين بأسعار مدعومة، في خطوة تهدف إلى دعم القطاع الزراعي وتشجيع الفلاحين على الاستمرار في العمل والإنتاج..."

[The General Establishment for Seed Multiplication has launched a process of distributing potato seeds to farmers at subsidized prices, in a step aimed at supporting the agricultural sector and encouraging farmers to continue working and producing]. In: *Facebook*, 3 February 2026. [Text & photos]. [Cited 1 March 2026]. <https://www.facebook.com/agriculturalSyria/posts/pfbid036z1qpNxAmj9XJzuPAjiB-FRFzQbcHYu2FnkmTYJJgyUCTeVgRmSaqDeVxZvAdVh3tl?rdid=gcrRKG4po48Xxgfy#>

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"تأهيل قناة «ج1» في الغاب لتعزيز كفاءة الري واستدامة الموارد المائية..."

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"برعاية وزير الزراعة الدكتور «أمجد بدر»، وقعت الهيئة العامة للثروة السمكية والأحياء المائية مع المركز العربي لدراسات المناطق الجافة والأراضي القاحلة «أكساد»، اليوم، مذكرة تفاهم بشأن البرنامج التنفيذي لزيادة الطاقة الإنتاجية للأنواع السمكية المحلية؛ حيث وقع من جانب الهيئة مديرها العام «إياد خضرو»، ومن جانب أكساد مدير عام المنظمة الدكتور «نصر الدين العبيد»..."

[Under the patronage of the Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Amjad Badr, the General Authority for Fish Resources and Aquatic Life signed a memorandum of understanding with the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) today regarding the executive program to increase the productivity of local fish species. The memorandum was signed on behalf of the Authority by its Director General, Iyad Khadro, and on behalf of ACSAD by the Director General of the organization, Dr. Nasr al-Din al-Ubaid...]. In: *Facebook*, 3 March 2026. [Text & photos]. [Cited 4 March 2026]. <https://www.facebook.com/agriculturalSyria/posts/pfbid02mCzmtDztLFo6HwB4gTGuioXoPJ3mtFiv2hGUZes6Ti3usKdr5C-JaP2P5TFwJx9Xl?rdid=zLvSUHxy1p4enyYP#>

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