

THE PRAIA COMMITMENT

1st WASAG International Forum, 19–22 March 2019 in Praia, Cabo Verde.

Preamble

Addressing water scarcity in agriculture calls for a strong and active commitment by all, considering that agriculture accounts for 69% of all freshwater withdrawals. With the world population projected to reach 9 billion by 2050 and the added impact of climate change, producing more food will exert even greater pressure on already vulnerable water resources.

Since 2016, the **Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG)** seeks to embody this active commitment as manifested in the adoption on 20 April 2017 of the ***“Rome Statement on Water Scarcity in Agriculture.”***

In an effort to draw greater attention to the issue of water scarcity in agriculture in the context of climate change and to generate greater political will for overcoming the related challenges throughout the world, the members of WASAG, with the support of the Government of Cabo Verde, the Governments of Italy and Switzerland, the International Fund for Agriculture Development and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, convened the 1st WASAG International Forum on Water Scarcity in Agriculture from 19-22 March 2019 in Praia, Cabo Verde. This Forum has enabled exchange between stakeholders who would not have otherwise had the opportunity to work together.

POINT OF DEPARTURE

Discussions during the 1st WASAG International Forum on Water Scarcity in Agriculture emanated from work produced by WASAG’s six working groups (Water and Migration; Drought preparedness; Water and nutrition; Financial mechanisms; Sustainable agricultural water use; and Saline agriculture). A certain number of observations formed the basis for further exchange:

1. Water scarcity, exacerbated by climate change, represents a serious threat to sustainable development, with impacts on the environment, human health, food security and nutrition, and economic activity.
2. Sustainable, equitable and effective management of water for agriculture, as well as the importance of healthy ecosystems and their services for sustainable agricultural systems, are key drivers for the achievement of Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement.
3. Agriculture is the economic sector most prone to impacts from drought. It demands preparedness, political will, strategic holistic planning, and good management practices to mitigate its effects.
4. While agricultural-related activities currently use the most water, it is also the sector with the greatest potential for optimizing consumption. Adapted technical solutions can help not only to conserve water but to reduce costs and increase benefits directly to farmers. Water-scarce countries, especially, may turn to supplemental irrigation to ensure crop survival and increase productivity.

5. Overcoming these challenges will require espousing a holistic and multi-dimensional approach, as set forth in the WASAG Rome Statement. There is a need for innovation platforms bridging the gap between researchers, innovators and users, so as to identify and address bottlenecks. Youth, as future stewards for land and water, are at the forefront of implementing innovative solutions.
6. In line with the theme of the 2019 World Water Day on “Leaving no one behind”, specific attention must be garnered for the most vulnerable who suffer disproportionately in the face of water scarcity.

COMMITMENTS

The participants of the 1st WASAG International Forum on Water Scarcity in Agriculture, therefore, commit to:

1. Continue to **cooperate** within the framework of WASAG as a repository of knowledge and shared learning, and a catalyzer of multidisciplinary and multisectoral cooperation and research to tackle the many challenges of water scarcity in agriculture;
2. **Develop** understanding and insights on the linkages across technologies, institutions and policies to achieve transitions in sustainable agricultural water use, to enhance water-use efficiencies, and to close gaps in line with specific and varying local contexts;
3. **Advocate** for integrated planning processes, involving the different stakeholders and institutions bringing together their needs, expectations and perspectives, resulting in better decision making.
4. **Promote** water as a driver of development for all, addressing cross-sectoral trade-offs and maximizing synergies throughout Agenda 2030, while supporting national governments to reach their SDG targets;
5. **Support** farmers and farmers’ associations with improved access to financing, sound water management practices, and pertinent information, while recognizing the value of their local and intergenerational knowledge in increasing their resilience;
6. **Promote** good governance through sound policies and strategies, appropriate legislation, institutional frameworks and financial mechanisms, for all dimensions of water scarcity in agriculture, including for nutritional productivity of water across the food chain;
7. **Support** the institutionalization of a pro-active and risk-based approach to drought preparedness;
8. Through a “one-stop shop”, **provide** policy makers with guidelines and tools to appreciate the impacts of technology choices and investment decisions through knowledge products, technical assistance and information campaigns;
9. **Encourage** the mutualisation of resources and **promote** innovative financial mechanisms, including defiscalization and rotational funds, PPPs, and a circular economic approach to stimulate concrete actions on the ground and to promote private sector involvement and investment in capacity development;

10. **Encourage** innovative technologies adapted to local conditions, including those that limit losses and enable re-use of treated wastewater for agricultural production;
11. **Bring focus** on sustainable and efficient management of water resources in agriculture contributing to rural livelihoods, helping address root causes of water-related migration;
12. “More nutrition per drop!”: **Build** a community of practice to strengthen the multi-level knowledge base on the links between nutrition and water management, and develop a framework to link water and food security with nutrition approaches, accompanied by pilot examples;
13. **Propose** ways to live with salinity, particularly in the most vulnerable areas including Small Island Developing States, since it is possible to produce more food from salinized areas. This includes supporting national strategies and policies for tailor-made adaptive farming solutions for salt-affected areas and the implementation of sustainable saline farming systems, including agrobiodiversity, to enhance food and nutrition security and cash crops;
14. **Integrate** climate-smart agriculture and innovative farming systems adopting sustainable management practices and proper drought/salt tolerant crops, including in marginal areas, to enhance food and nutrition security;
15. **Promote** a culture of sustainable water use in agriculture through better data on water resource availability and water use, awareness creation and capacity development;
16. **Identify** criteria and indicators for sustainable agricultural water use measurement and monitoring that address water scarcity risks in agriculture;
17. **Encourage** the development of community-based approaches and people-centered policies, recognizing the essential role of women in small-holder farming and household water use and connecting youth in a meaningful way to the implementation of solutions for greater impact. **Develop** a better understanding of challenges and opportunities to reach women, youth, poor farmers to ensure that the invisible become visible and that we “leave no one behind.”

Countries and partners are invited to report back progress at the next edition of the Forum.

Further, the participants of the 1st WASAG International Forum on Water Scarcity in Agriculture call on countries and their stakeholders worldwide to urgently adapt their agricultural and food systems and to mitigate the impacts of water scarcity and climate change so as to improve global food and water security.