

Rome Declaration on Water Scarcity in Agriculture

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To be adopted during the High-level Rome Water Dialogue on
WASAG | the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture, 17 October 2024

We, the Ministers, Heads of Delegation and partners of the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) assembled in Rome on the occasion of the High-Level Rome Water Dialogue on WASAG on 17 October 2024,

Acknowledging that water scarcity and water stress, exacerbated by climate change, are one of the great challenges of the twenty-first century, especially for the agriculture and food systems, and that droughts are already a major cause of crop failures in parts of the world and of acute food insecurity crisis in vulnerable countries, the changing rainfall patterns and warming climate put at risk the food security and the livelihoods of farmers and people worldwide,

Further acknowledging that, to satisfy the demands of the world population reaching around 10 billion in 2050, much more water will be required for food production, and it's urgently needed to build efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems,

Stressing the vital importance of maintaining healthy ecosystems and nature resources for the multiple goods and services that they provide to support livelihoods, and that more sectors – in addition to agriculture – are equally affected by water scarcity and climate change and competing for more water in the future,

Recognizing that, in response to the above challenges, the [Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture \(WASAG\)](#), a partnership hosted by FAO, was officially launched at the twenty-second Conference of the Parties (COP22) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in November 2016 in Marrakech, Morocco, and subsequently endorsed by 83 ministers in charge of agriculture in January 2017 during the ninth Berlin Agriculture Ministers' Conference at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA),

Recognizing that the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP13) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in September 2017 in Ordos, China, endorsed WASAG as a knowledge-sharing partnership to help countries develop their drought preparedness plans,

Appreciating that (i) in 2018, FAO's Committee on Agriculture (COAG) expressed its support for WASAG as being a key coordination mechanism to adapt to the effects of water scarcity in agriculture, and was requested a periodical report on the progress of the partnership, (ii) in 2020, COAG further requested that WASAG continue to support countries facing water scarcity challenges in agriculture, (iii) in 2021, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) acknowledged WASAG as one of the examples of initiatives disseminating its policy recommendations, (iv) in 2022, COAG endorsed FAO to initiate a "Global Dialogue on Water Tenure", and (v) in 2023, CFS requested FAO to establish guiding principles for the responsible governance of water tenure,

Stressing that WASAG (i) has been recognized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) as a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Accelerator, (ii) is one of the 18 programmatic initiatives in [document C 2023/30](#) of the 43rd Session of FAO Conference – water resources management for the four betters being the biennium theme for 2024–2025 –, (iii) has been included in the Rome Water Dialogues, and (4) has been included as one of FAO's eight commitments to the Global Water Action Agenda at the UN Water Conference in New York in March 2023,

Appreciating the overwhelming support of WASAG by many countries, partners, the increasing membership and the valuable contributions as illustrated by the achievements of WASAG,

Recognizing the importance of a balance between technical expertise and policy wills, the opportunity offered by WASAG as an interface between the two for a greater impact at all levels,

Recognizing that FAO set up an Inter-regional Technical Platform on Water Scarcity, mobilized resources and implemented regional water scarcity initiatives such as the Water Scarcity Programme for Asia and the Pacific region and the Water Scarcity Initiative for the Near East and North Africa region,

Welcoming FAO's Value-Added Impact Area (VAIA) initiative on Addressing Water Scarcity in Agriculture and the environment (AWSAME) – in support of the FAO Strategic Framework for 2022–31 – promoting indigenous, drought-resilient and nutritious crops¹, as well as saline agriculture, to cope with water scarcity,

Considering youth, gender, Indigenous Peoples, capacity building and financing mechanisms in addressing water scarcity issues worldwide,

Recalling that, during [the Second International Forum of WASAG](#) held in February 2023 in Praia, Cabo Verde, [the Praia Call for Action](#) recommended that: “i) all Member Countries are invited to become partners of WASAG; ii) a Member Country will be designated to Chair WASAG, starting with Cabo Verde; iii) FAO convenes, every two years in its headquarters in Rome, a Dialogue on WASAG with all Member Countries; and iv) the WASAG Forum is convened in Praia every other second year to provide space to partners and stakeholders for sharing solutions and progress towards tackling water scarcity in agriculture”²,

Noting that these recommendations need to be effectuated in concrete modalities of work and decision-making of WASAG,

Recognizing the recommendations of the event “Towards a High-level Dialogue on the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) – Technical Preparatory Meeting” organized on 29–30 April 2024 at FAO headquarters in Rome, and the inputs received from FAO Member Nations,

We declare our will to translate our commitments into policy approaches, plans and actions by:

1. **Confirming** that WASAG is a partnership for all FAO Member Nations to collaborate towards agreed priorities and required solutions to address water scarcity in agriculture,
2. **Committing** to mobilize greater political support for an enabling environment (policies, legal and institutional frameworks, financing) to address the effects of water scarcity and climate change on global food security, to create sustainable, resilient and inclusive food systems, and to position agriculture at the core of international climate change discussions,
3. **Transforming** the current Steering Committee into a FAO Member-led Steering Committee to provide strategic guidance on the work of WASAG,

¹ Some of these crops also have soil-health benefits, support carbon sequestration, nitrogen fixation and soil moisture retention.

² In the Praia Call for Action, “all Member Countries” refers to “all FAO Member Nations”, the proposed “Dialogue on WASAG with all Member Countries” refers to “Plenary Assembly on WASAG with all FAO Member Nations and WASAG partners”.

4. **Establishing** a Technical Advisory Committee, representing the different groups of WASAG partners to provide technical advice to the Steering Committee, the WASAG Secretariat and the WASAG partners, and promote collaboration among partners,
5. **Requesting** FAO to convene a WASAG Plenary Assembly every second year in its headquarters in Rome, starting from 2026,
6. **Inviting** a FAO Member Nation to host every second year a WASAG International Forum – preferably on a rotating basis among regions – for WASAG partners to share experiences and advance knowledge base,
7. **Strengthening** collaboration on water scarcity in agriculture among FAO Member Nations and partners, including on policy approaches, legal and institutional frameworks, investments, data, information and knowledge-sharing,
8. **Supporting** greater collaboration at global, regional and national levels, including through ongoing mechanisms, such as the Regional Water Scarcity Programmes/Initiatives, the Inter-Regional Technical Platform on Water Scarcity (iRTP-WS), and other initiatives by partners, to better support countries,
9. **Calling** resource partners to provide voluntary contributions and the required resources to support the work of WASAG for greater impact at all levels,
10. **Welcoming** FAO's key role in continuing to lead and host WASAG and providing day-to-day support for its effective functioning and operational management, including periodical reporting to FAO governing bodies.