



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

WASAG

The Global Framework on
Water Scarcity in Agriculture

STRATEGY

for **2021–2024**

Turning water scarcity into opportunities for
sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition



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Summary

The Global Framework for Action to Cope with Water Scarcity in Agriculture in the Context of Climate Change (in short the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture, WASAG) has gained increasing recognition since its launch and the establishment of its partnership in April 2017. The progress made to date confirms the relevance and pertinence of the Framework and the commitment of its founding Partners whose work continues to attract new partners.

WASAG has been designed to bring together key players across the globe and from different sectors to tackle the collective challenge of using water better in agriculture to ensure food security for all, particularly in a changing climate. It is an initiative for partners from all fields and backgrounds to collaborate in supporting countries and stakeholders in their commitments and plans related to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the Paris Climate Agreement (including implementing nationally determined contributions) and other plans and programmes related to agriculture and water.

The rationale for WASAG is, indeed, the need to foster collaboration between organizations, as no single entity has all the answers on how to address water scarcity in agriculture. By joining hands, WASAG partners, each with their own outputs, are collaborating under the umbrella of WASAG to foster overarching strategic learning, create high policy impacts and joint outputs, making the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

A strategy to guide the work of WASAG for the next four years (2021-2024) has become imperative to build on the achievements of the three years of its existence in order to better respond to the expectations raised, considering the numerous endorsements received and the mandate given to WASAG by countries, including during the 26th and 27th sessions of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)'s Committee on Agriculture (COAG) in 2018 and 2020, respectively. Therefore, this represents an ideal motivated by the commitment demonstrated by the Partners and Stakeholders of WASAG in its foundational years, as illustrated by the WASAG webinar series, of which 10 webinars were held in 2020, attracting hundreds of participants in a competitive environment and which started as an adaptation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategy takes stock of WASAG achievements and proposes a theory of change through which key action areas are identified from projects on the ground, innovation and data, research and training to advocacy and awareness raising. This is all focused on collaborative solutions, building on the comparative advantages of its partners.

The WASAG working groups, as its key delivery mechanisms are revisited, with proposals for cross cutting working groups (financing mechanisms and awareness raising) and cross cutting themes (climate change, gender, youth and governance) relevant to all working groups. WASAG will in particular pursue opportunities for delivery in Sustainable Dryland Agriculture as recommended by the 27th session of COAG.

The geographical reach spans global, regional and country levels considering that WASAG aims to respond to needs at all these levels, including river basin, local and community levels, each calling for a set of appropriate actions with the ultimate objective of assisting countries in coping with water scarcity in agriculture.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) monitoring framework and its indicators will guide the monitoring and evaluation of WASAG's work, as relevant to each project or initiative in relation to the specific SDGs.

The Strategy is supported by a communication, outreach and policy development component as well as a Resource Mobilization action plan.

The Strategy is the result of a consultative process that built from a zero draft prepared by the former Chair of WASAG and revised at the end of 2019 by the management of Land and Water Division of the FAO, the host of the Partnership. It was further expanded by the WASAG Support Team and submitted to the Steering Committee and Partners who, in two iterations, made several pertinent contributions. Some of these could not be accommodated. However, as far as possible, most contributions received were included, while attempting to keep the strategy coherent and succinct.



BACKGROUND

THE ISSUE

Water scarcity is one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century. Agriculture is both a cause and a victim of water scarcity, accounting for an estimated 70 percent of global freshwater withdrawals. Even more frequent and severe water extremes are expected due to climate change, including droughts and floods impacting agricultural production, while rising temperatures translate into increased water demand in agriculture. Water withdrawals grew at almost twice the rate of population increase in the twentieth century, and a 50 percent surge in food demand is expected by 2050. It is clear that there is an urgent need to address water scarcity, now and in upcoming decades.

VISION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVES OF WASAG

The Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) is a partnership launched in 2016, established in April 2017 with the [Rome Statement](#) and hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). It consists of partners committed to collaborate in identifying priority actions for the adaptation and scaling up of successful responses to increasing water scarcity and climate change threats to agricultural production.



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VISION

A world whose food systems are secure and resilient to increasing water scarcity in a changing climate.

MISSION

To support measurable, significant and sustainable progress on improving and adapting to sustainable agricultural systems in conditions of increasing water scarcity and a changing climate, using the combined expertise and resources of the partners.



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OBJECTIVES

To urgently address the following important and relevant work areas at international and country levels:

- advocating for political prioritization;
- cooperating on work programmes;
- sharing and disseminating knowledge and experience;
- developing new or improved solutions;
- promoting sustainable and integrated water resources management;
- building capacity of Partners and countries and other stakeholders;
- contributing to consistent monitoring systems.

DEFINITION OF WATER SCARCITY

There are many definitions of water scarcity from different perspectives. From inception, WASAG adopted the definition of water scarcity as provided in FAO Water Report – [Coping with water scarcity](#).

“*Water scarcity is defined as a gap between available supply and expressed demand of freshwater in a specified domain, under prevailing institutional arrangements (including both resource ‘pricing’ and retail charging arrangements) and infrastructural conditions.*

Water scarcity = an excess of water demand over available supply

Scarcity is signalled by unsatisfied demand, tensions between users, competition for water, over-extraction of groundwater and insufficient flows to the natural environment

CONTRIBUTION OF WASAG TO THE SDGS

WASAG works towards supporting countries in achieving the water-related goals of the 2030 Agenda, in particular Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) SDG 6 ‘Clean Water and Sanitation’ and SDG 2 ‘Zero Hunger’. WASAG also contributes to the attainment of SDG 1 ‘No Poverty’, SDG 3 ‘Good Health and Well-being’, SDG 5 ‘Gender Equality’, SDG 13 ‘Climate Action’, SDG 15 ‘Life on Land’, and SDG 17 ‘Partnerships for the Goals’.



Therefore, the SDGs will also guide the monitoring and evaluation of WASAG’s work.

RATIONALE

The rationale for WASAG is the need to foster collaboration between organizations, as no single entity has all the answers on how to address water scarcity in agriculture. By joining hands, WASAG partners, each with their own outputs, are collaborating under the umbrella of WASAG to foster overarching strategic learning, create high policy impacts and joint outputs, making the whole greater than the sum of its parts (Figure 1).

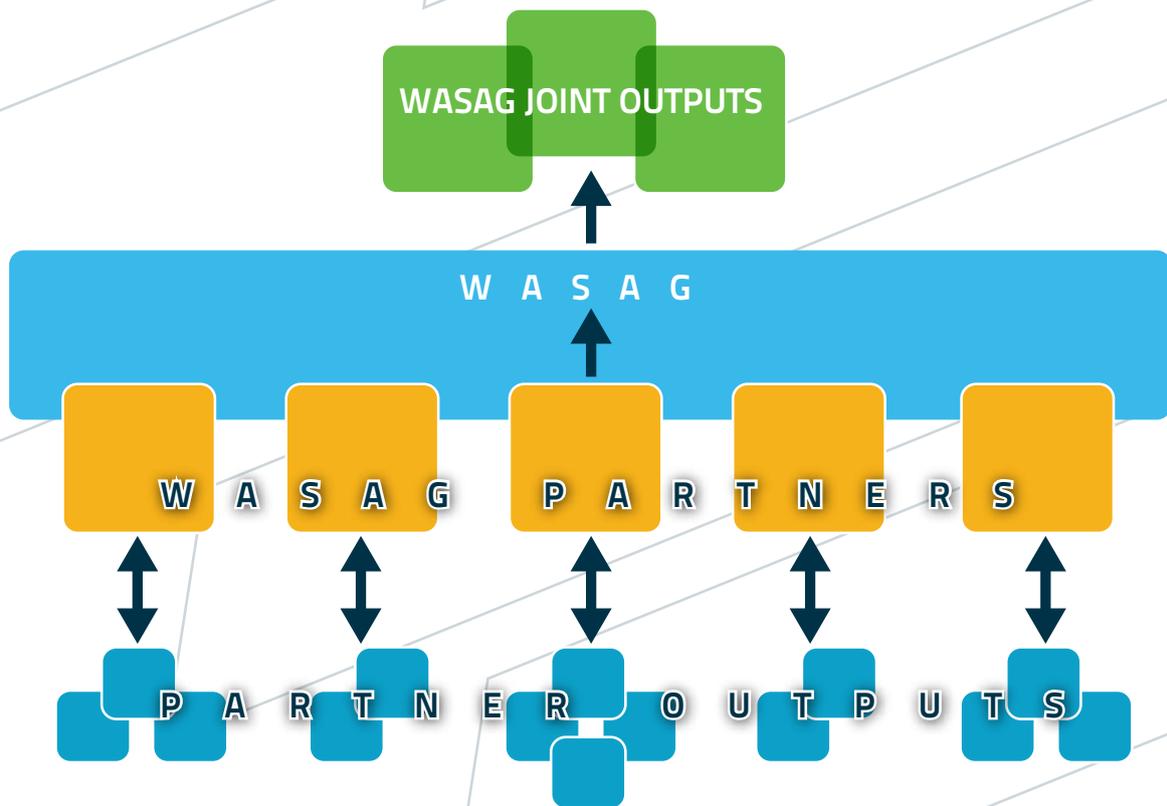
By bringing multiple partners together from a range of different groups and by actively closing the gap between research and policy-making, and implementation guidance, WASAG is also

raising, through advocacy, much needed visibility and political attention to the topic of water scarcity in agriculture, in its different facts, at the global and regional scales.

Ultimately, the relevance of WASAG is in response to the needs of its targeted beneficiaries: countries, regional organizations, river basins, and local communities, as appropriate.

Figure 1

WASAG rationale



STRUCTURE

WASAG is structured around a Steering Committee (SC) composed of Members, representing Partners from the five Groups of Partner organizations, as defined in its [Terms of Reference](#). The SC coordinates the activities of the Global Framework and works with the WASAG Partners, making recommendations and liaising as necessary.

The Chair of WASAG and the SC serve at all times in an independent capacity, representing the interest of all the Partners, and are accountable to the Partners. In undertaking its activities, the SC works closely with the FAO-based Support Team providing support to the Global Framework.

FAO, as the host institution, provides operational, legal and administrative support to WASAG. FAO also provides technical support and facilitates advocacy with its Member Countries. FAO is therefore a permanent Partner of the Global Framework and a permanent Member of the Steering Committee.



WASAG PROGRESS 2017-2020

Annex 1 describes in detail the progress achieved by WASAG since its establishment, including:

- a timeline of key milestones including events between 2016 and 2020;
- the establishment of the Working Groups;
- the endorsements by the Committee on Agriculture;
- the First WASAG International Forum and the Praia Commitments;
- outreach and events;
- the webinars by a partnership at work;
- the support by countries.



WASAG STRATEGY 2021-2024

The WASAG Strategy for 2021 to 2024 aims to set out goals and objectives for WASAG in different areas, with appropriate actions, in response to identified needs at different levels. It seeks to provide a blueprint that will guide the actions of WASAG partners in furthering collaboration to turn water scarcity in agriculture into an opportunity for agriculture production, food and nutrition security, and environmental, social and economic sustainability.

INNOVATIVE MATCHMAKING APPROACH

WASAG is a global framework that strengthens collaboration between countries and key stakeholders to accelerate progress towards achievement of regional and national sustainable development priorities to address water scarcity in agriculture in a changing climate.

Figure 2

Matchmaking approach



The role of WASAG is to match countries needs with WASAG partners' resources (Figure 2). WASAG seeks first to facilitate knowledge co-production, sharing and exchange. In this way, Member Countries have access to the technical knowledge and expertise offered by its working groups and its other Partners and stakeholders and which support the development of policies and the promotion of good practices through projects which support the SDGs. Accordingly, WASAG also seeks to advocate for financial resources (from the Partners and identified support partners) to support its work at country, regional and global levels. Accordingly, WASAG also responds to request for proposals.

THE THEORY OF CHANGE FOR THE WASAG STRATEGY FOR 2021-2024

THE PROBLEM: Water scarcity is one of the greatest challenges of agricultural production, it is aggravated by a changing climate and requires urgent actions to ensure food security and nutrition, in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.

VISION: A world whose food systems are secure and resilient to increasing water scarcity in a changing climate.

MISSION: To support measurable, significant and sustainable progress on improving and adapting to sustainable agricultural systems in conditions of increasing water scarcity and a changing climate, using the combined expertise and resources of the Partners.

OPPORTUNITIES	Matching Partner's resources with country's needs to address water scarcity in agriculture and to cope with COVID-19	Optimize the use of resources and capacity to deliver	Establish proximity with regions and countries	Increase the commitment of partners, especially countries	Develop flagship initiatives such as on quinoa, COVID-19, etc.
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To leverage on these opportunities and more, WASAG, through its Partners, will focus its work on the following key action areas:

Development of initiatives to address water scarcity	Innovation and data	Research and training	Awareness raising
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support countries and partners in initiatives and project development Mobilize resources and increase capacity to implement projects and institutional changes Pilot and implement projects to draw lessons that can be replicated or upscaled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support technology development Develop new methodologies and innovative tools Support data collection and knowledge management, including with GIS Establish a 'one-stop shop' related to water management in agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide guidelines for projects and facilitate trainings Support the publication of capacity building materials Support the publication and dissemination of technical publications Support the organisation of relevant workshops/seminars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach to governments, agencies and potential partners Participate, organize and/or collaborate with key conferences, High Level Panels and international events Strategic use of the WASAG webinars Use existing mechanisms such as COAG, CFS, SUN to support the shaping of relevant policies

In addition, WASAG will focus on the following:

Partnerships

- Build on the existing progress, including the Rome Statement, the Praia Commitments and the formal endorsement and support at key international instances
 - Strengthen existing Working Groups to fulfill their mandates
 - Invite and empower FAO Member Countries to become partners
 - Support and promote new and existing partners
 - Create new Working Groups as the needs arise
 - Match countries needs with WASAG Partners' resources
-
- Work towards accelerating Agenda 2030 for the SDGs
 - Organise the 2nd International WASAG Forum
 - Organise World Water Day celebrations to create awareness about water scarcity
 - Continue participation at the Stockholm World Water Weeks as well as in the World Water Forum
 - Advocacy through COAG, UNFCCC COP, UNCCD COP, ICID, etc.
 - Maximise the use of digital platforms such as webinars
 - Strengthen the Support Team
 - Increase efficient communication through publications and website

KEY ACTION AREAS

The partnership will focus its work on the following **key action areas**, on a need, demand and opportunity basis:

1. Development of initiatives to address water scarcity

- project development;
- project implementation;
- pilot projects;
- resource mobilization;
- review and revisit the projects for generating more outputs from the available resources.

2. Innovation and data

- technology development;
- new methodologies;
- tools;
- data collection (including gender-disaggregated data);
- GIS and integration of remote sensing inputs in decision process;
- one-stop shop;
- new methodologies- integration into design and operational standards.

3. Research and training

- guidelines and best practices;
- trainings;
- capacity building materials and methodologies;
- technical publications including for educational purposes;
- workshops and webinars.

4. Awareness raising

- outreach – stakeholder mapping and participation strategies;
- conferences/seminars;
- HL-Panels;
- international events;
- webinars and online consultations;
- use existing channels such as COAG to support the shaping of relevant policies;
- building a nexus with policy makers and financiers for adoption of better practices;
- youth engagement.

WORKING GROUPS

The WASAG working groups have gradually emerged as the key delivery mechanism in implementing the WASAG key action areas. The following steps are proposed for 2021 to 2024 with regard to the structure of the working groups. (Figure 3):

- *Stand-alone working groups*: it is proposed to review the existing working groups, to assess their dynamics and perspectives, decide on their future with the partners, in order to reflect the key action areas identified in the theory of change. The final decision on the continued existence of the existing working groups will be taken by the Steering Committee in consultation with members of the relevant working groups to confirm its redundancy or to adopt an alternative delivery mechanism.¹
- *Cross-cutting working groups*: it is proposed that the WASAG working group on Financing Mechanisms becomes a cross-cutting working group together with a working group on Awareness Raising. These working groups are seen as relevant and supporting all the other working groups in scaling up successful initiatives.
- *New working groups*: any new *working group* will only be initiated by consensus within the Steering Committee, on a need basis. As a rule, the number of working groups should be strictly limited to the strict minimum and with high-visibility and effectiveness.

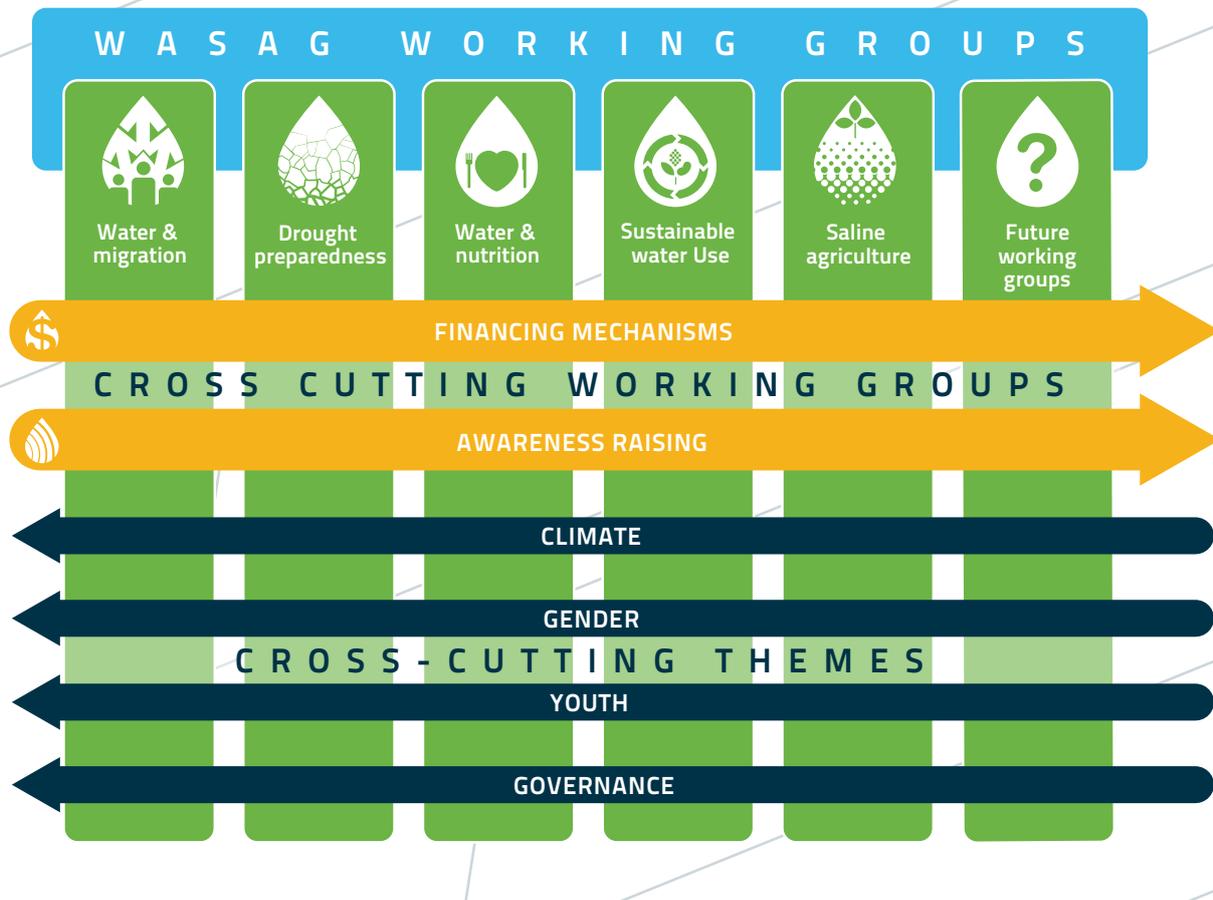
¹ In the past, a working group on Communication was discontinued for lack of activity. Instead, a communication strategy has been developed. In addition, a cross-cutting working group on awareness raising is being proposed.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Cross cutting themes are relevant to all working groups without justifying a ‘working group’ as such. They are rather of significance to each working group and it is proposed that all have to mainstream them in their activities. Four cross cutting themes are proposed; they include climate, gender, youth and governance.

Figure 3

WASAG working groups and cross-cutting themes



RESPONSE TO EMERGING ISSUES

In responding to emerging issues, several perspectives arise, and which might warrant a working group, a task force or any other response from WASAG:

- (1) Relevant topics associated with water scarcity in agriculture such as dryland agriculture or livestock which could lead to collaborative work with potential to develop into major collaborative programmes. WASAG will specifically consolidate the collaboration with the Global Programme on Sustainable Dryland Agriculture, a proposed global framework which was recently submitted to and adopted by the 27th session

of COAG, to reach countries affected by drylands. Dryland agriculture includes marginal rainfed production systems and rangelands. With a changing and variable climate, drylands need urgent and serious sustained attention. Approaches that can be implemented in drylands are, but not limited to, supplemental irrigation, rainwater harvesting, diversified (inter)cropping systems, maximizing economic water productivity, solar irrigation using desalinated water, agroforestry, and integrated crop-livestock-forage systems. As for livestock, a deeper understanding of their relationship to depleting water sources, both in quantity and quality, will contribute to a clearer and more realistic narrative of the impacts of climate change on water scarcity.

- (2) The on-going COVID-19 pandemic which has already led to the postponement of the 9th World Water Forum from 2021 to 2022 and to the reformatting of the Stockholm World Water Week from physical to virtual meetings in both 2020 and 2021. WASAG has proposed a position paper on COVID-19.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS AREAS

In order to have a significant reach, WASAG aims to act at three levels, building on identified needs and opportunities and considering that the WASAG Terms of Reference provide for the setting up of national, regional and thematic groups and networks, aimed at advancing the objectives of the Global Framework.

- *Global level*
 - Invite FAO Member Countries at COAG to become partners of WASAG, ensuring that the partnership will serve the multiplicity of country needs related to water scarcity in agriculture:
 - The Global Framework will be able to respond to the different facets of water scarcity in all parts of the world, taking into account the needs of all countries. This is particularly relevant as the effects of climate change manifest themselves differently, amplifying the severity of natural disasters such as extreme floods or prolonged droughts and disrupting seasonal patterns, which all affect agriculture.
 - Make available global products (guidelines, tools, best practices) that provide a body of knowledge that will assist countries in developing relevant policies and strategies assorted to their challenges.
 - Promote the integration of these products and their findings into policy-making through policy briefs and white papers in close collaboration with countries.

- Encourage relevant agencies (national, regional and international) to include these products in their interventions, including in capacity development and project design and implementation.
- Conduct a stakeholder mapping to identify key stakeholders relating to the projects and activities of WASAG and categorize them according to different levels of engagement.
- *Regional level*
 - On a need basis, support a stepwise establishment and development of 'Regional WASAG Hubs', with support from FAO's decentralized offices, such as in West Africa (with Cabo Verde and Senegal as lead), Near East and North Africa, Latin America, Europe, Southern Africa, the Aral Sea Basin, etc.
 - Through such hubs, facilitate the establishment of communities of practice that seek to address the challenges relevant to these regions and make available to the countries in each region access to regional expertise to facilitate quick and appropriate responses, in collaboration with global partners.
- *National level*
 - Build on the experience of the Cabo Verde and Italy Chapters of WASAG to encourage additional 'National WASAG Chapters', at first with countries already offering external support to WASAG.
 - In response to country needs, and driven by the National WASAG chapter, address the issue of water scarcity in agriculture and initiate actions (advocacy, capacity building, policies, strategies and projects) that draw on the knowledge base and expertise of WASAG at all levels.
 - Develop training modules with Partners through working groups to share experience and build capacity in addressing water scarcity issues.

All these geographic focus areas should allow the exchange of experiences between the different chapters and hubs (co-learning), and facilitate synergies between them and existing platforms and coordination.

The objectives of these regional hubs and national chapters will be defined by the Steering Committee, in consultation with the partners who are active in these regions and countries, and in collaboration with the working groups. This is to clearly establish who makes the initial investments to create them and how to move beyond a small hub or chapter grouping a few organizations to successful initiatives, developed with mandated institutions and mobilizing key regional and national actors from the five groups of WASAG (UN agencies, government organizations, research and academic institutions, civil society/ nongovernmental organizations

and private sector and membership organizations). They will seek to work on initiatives in support of countries, regional/transboundary organizations, river basins, and local communities, as relevant. These hubs and chapters will also foster and collaboration exchanges among themselves, such as through the current scholarship offered by the Italian Chapter to the Cabo Verde Chapter.²

ACTIONS TO SUPPORT COUNTRIES TO ADDRESS WATER SCARCITY

- Jointly develop or make available training material and capacity development tools, such as accessible repository of Partners' tools and training materials. These tools and materials should be developed jointly with relevant WASAG partners to ensure the tools are relevant, appropriate, successful and can easily be disseminated.
- Respond to countries requests for help to address water scarcity, as e.g. through a 'one stop shop' and/or a Help Desk ("Help Yourself" and/or "Get Help").
- Join hands in supporting countries, from preparatory missions to implementation including adequate policy-making and networking country support initiatives.
- Further develop the governance structure to ensure this support is done jointly through a partnership approach. Look into the governance of existing initiatives such as the Associated Programme on Flood Management and the Integrated Drought Management Programme.
- Develop mentoring programs to involve young professionals and researchers in developing solutions and products through a co-creation approach.
- Generate a database and a map with relevant SDG indicators (such as indicators 2.4.1, 6.4.1, 6.4.2 and others) to track WASAG contribution to progress towards addressing water scarcity in agriculture in Member Countries.

FRAMEWORK AND GOVERNANCE

Further develop the WASAG framework and governance, taking into consideration:

- Growing network of partners based on clear criteria and incentives for membership.
- Engage the co-founders in straightening advocacy and policy implementations.

² Following the First WASAG International Forum in Praia, Cabo Verde in March 2019, the Italian Chapter offered a scholarship to Cabo Verde for a post graduate training in irrigation technology in an Italian institution with funding from Italian Partners. After a selection process, and despite COVID-19, the successful candidate started the training online and now progressed to on-campus classes at CIHEAM-Bari.

- Continued leadership and commitment by FAO as a critical success factor (including defining linkages between FAO HQ and regional offices).
- Strengthened capacity of Support Team, including the possibility of delegation of responsibilities and defined tasks to interested Partners and Working Groups.
- Develop consultation mechanisms for partners to provide inputs or review strategic documents (for example, the WASAG work plan and strategic plan review).
 - Develop an internal advisory mechanism for Working Groups and groups of partners to engage and discuss approaches in developing joint activities together and receive feedback.
- Use the World Water Forum, the Stockholm World Water Week, Africa Water Week, annual Partners Meeting and other non-water meetings as opportunities for WASAG outreach and meeting other stakeholders.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

As far as possible, the monitoring and evaluation of the work of WASAG will be inspired by the Monitoring Framework on the Sustainable Development Goals, and tailored to the scale (from community, local, national to regional and global levels) and scope of the WASAG project activity. It will use metrics that are aligned to relevant SDG targets and indicators and supported with evidence derived from data collected through sources including satellite or remotesensing data and processed through GIS or other tools.

The SDGs (and their targets and indicators) relevant to WASAG include primarily:

- SDG 2: Zero Hunger (with target 2.4 and indicator 2.4.1);
- SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation (with target 6.4 and indicators 6.4.1 and 6.4.2).

The other SDGs supported by WASAG include:

- SDG 1: No Poverty;
- SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being;
- SDG 5: Gender Equality;
- SDG 13: Climate Action;
- SDG 15: Life on Land;
- SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals.

Monitoring allows results, processes and experiences to be documented and used as a basis to steer decision-making and learning processes, using SMART performance indicators, that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound.

The monitoring and evaluation framework of WASAG will also facilitate comparison between countries and in this way facilitate the sharing of experiences and drawing lessons across countries to fast track the common attainment of the relevant SDGs.

Evaluations would help to draw conclusions on five main aspects: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

In practice, the following is proposed:

1. a mid term review of the Strategy to be undertaken at the end of 2022 to take stock of its achievements and need for its adjustment for 2023-2024;
2. implementation of the work plan (Annex 4) using SDG aligned key performance SMART indicators which will be selected from the SDGs' indicators that are relevant to each project or initiative;
3. monitoring of targets within the SDGs that refer specifically to water scarcity and sustainable agriculture, and which will be linked directly to WASAG's activities;
4. identification of key performance indicators for all working groups.

In addition, the work plan shows the priority areas and activities that WASAG will undertake during this strategy period. The work plan will continuously be reviewed as the need arises.

COMMUNICATION, OUTREACH AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Maintain a functional and up-to-date website;

- produce relevant materials, including online resources;
- plan and hold the Second International WASAG Forum (possibly in Praia, Cabo Verde in April 2022);
- advocate and interact with different policy makers such as COAG, the Climate COP's, Biodiversity CoPs, UNCCD and GFFA;
- ensure WASAG presence and initiatives at key water events such as the 9th World Water Forum in Senegal, Stockholm WWVs, World Water Days, World Irrigation Forums, etc.;
- also ensure WASAG presence at non-water but water relevant events, especially agricultural fora, such as CFS, Global Landscapes Forum, HLPF such as where the relevant SDG 2 and SDG 6 and others are discussed;

- work on mobilizing high-level political champions who will advocate for WASAG in relevant strategic foras;
- collate and provide a view of available information on Water scarcity and amelioration efforts in various countries.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

- finalize and implement the Resource Mobilization Action Plan as basis for increased funding and project development for WASAG activities;
- structure resources mobilized and efforts to help the partnership and the Working Groups grow and their leading partners feel energized;
- have the document thoroughly reviewed by partnership and resource mobilization expert(s) for input;
- finalize the Resource Mobilization Action Plan in consultation with the partners;
- establish synergies with the Framework produced by the WASAG working group on Finance.

Annex 1: WASAG progress 2017-2020

Since the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) was launched in 2016, it has been formally established as a partnership, elected a Steering Committee twice, and has been endorsed and supported at various international meetings, including its own First International Forum in March 2019, and two endorsements by the Committee on Agriculture: Chronologically, the key events include:

Date	Event
October 2016	Endorsed by the Summit of Water Ministers at the Second World Irrigation Forum, Chiang Mai, Thailand
November 2016	Officially launched during UNFCCC COP22, Marrakech, Morocco
January 2017	Endorsed by 83 Ministers of Agriculture during the 9th Berlin Agriculture Minister's Conference at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture and recognised by the Agriculture Ministers of the G20, Bonn, Germany
April 2017	First Partner's Meeting, adoption of the Rome Statement on Water Scarcity in Agriculture, and establishment of the Interim Steering Committee, Rome, Italy
September 2017	Endorsed by the UNCCD COP 13 as a knowledge-sharing partnership to help countries develop their drought preparedness plans, Ordos, China
August 2018	Establishment, after elections, of the First WASAG Steering Committee during the Stockholm World Water Week, Stockholm, Sweden
October 2018	Endorsed and supported by the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) as a key coordination mechanism to adapt to water scarcity in agriculture in a changing climate, Rome, Italy
March 2019	First International Forum on Water Scarcity in Agriculture where Partners adopted the 17 Praia Commitments, Praia, Cabo Verde
September 2020	Establishment, after elections, of the Second WASAG Steering Committee (by Zoom)
September/ October 2020	Acknowledged and supported by the 27th session of the Committee on Agriculture and requested to continue to support countries in addressing water scarcity in agriculture (by Zoom)

WORKING GROUPS

The establishment of the WASAG working groups has been critical in implementing its vision and pursuing its objectives. Since 2017, WASAG has established the following thematic working groups, as key action areas, which are led by its partners (other than FAO):

 Water & Migration	which aims to identify practicable solutions to alleviate the pressure caused by water scarcity and migration, and consequent impact on agriculture and livestock, food and nutrition security.
 Drought Preparedness	which aims to identify practicable solutions to deal with droughts and their impact on agriculture, livestock, food security and nutrition.
 Financing Mechanisms	which aims to identify innovative financial mechanisms for interventions dealing with water scarcity in agriculture in the context of climate change.
 Water & Nutrition	which aims to create awareness, capacity and evidence on the linkage between water and nutrition.
 Sustainable Agriculture Water Use	which aims to increase awareness and action by agriculture and related sectors for more sustainable agricultural water use to address water scarcity for enhanced food security and nutrition.
 Saline Agriculture	which aims to explore the opportunities offered by saline environments (water and soil) for agriculture.

The working groups have been working on their mandates from the beginning of WASAG. The actions, contributions and workplans of each working group are available on the [working group website](#).

*The relevance of each working group to the 17 Praia commitments are shown in Annex 2.

**In order to achieve its mandate, some working groups can be added or dismantled, following an assessment of their performance or continued relevance by the Steering Committee.

Cross-cutting themes include empowering women, empowering youth and awareness raising in all aspects of WASAG's work.

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE (COAG)

The [Committee on Agriculture](#) (COAG) is FAO's Governing Body providing overall policy and regulatory guidance on issues relating to agriculture, livestock, food safety, nutrition, rural development and natural resource management. During its 26th Session in October 2018, 15

Member Countries of COAG explicitly highlighted the importance of WASAG. Subsequently, the Committee on Agriculture endorsed and supported the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) as a key coordination mechanism to adapt to the effects of water scarcity in agriculture in a changing climate both at national and global levels, in sustainable and inclusive manners, requesting FAO to report to COAG periodically on the progress of the partnership and to develop an umbrella programme, including a funding strategy.

This first endorsement and support of WASAG by the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) during its 26th session of October 2018 is a major milestone for WASAG, effectively giving the partnership the mandate to exist and report to COAG.

Further, the 27th session of COAG which took place in September and October 2020 recognised the achievements of WASAG with several countries confirming that it was responding to a recognised need and requested that it continues to report to COAG.

As such, the WASAG Strategy for 2021 to 2024 will involve this reporting and will rely on a greater involvement Member Countries, with the support and guidance of COAG. In this regard, a strategic packaging of the reporting to COAG, highlighting the strategic work plans, targets and achievements of WASAG and its working groups will be prioritized, in addition to demonstrating the implementation of the recommendations of the previous sessions COAG, starting with the 26th session of COAG of 2018 and the 27th session of COAG of 2020. Key to these recommendations is support to countries in addressing water scarcity to agriculture.

FIRST WASAG FORUM AND THE PRAIA COMMITMENT

WASAG held its 1st **International Forum on Water Scarcity in Agriculture** in Praia, Cabo Verde from 19 to 22 March 2019, to coincide with the celebrations of the World Water Day 2019 with the theme of 'Leaving no one behind'. With a focus on Cabo Verde, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and West African countries, the Forum illustrated how water scarcity in agriculture can be addressed and turned into an opportunity for sustainable development, food and nutrition security.

During the Forum, participants, led by the different WASAG working groups, developed and endorsed the [Praia Commitment](#), a set of 17 commitments that along with the Rome Statement constitute a major milestone and a key document for WASAG. Each WASAG working group is the custodian of at least one commitment, in addition to the commitments are relevant to some of the working groups or to all of them.

OUTREACH AND EVENTS

Since its launch, WASAG has played and continues to play a role in many global and regional events, bringing partners together, advocating and giving greater visibility and political attention to water scarcity and agriculture. Among these events are:

- the 22nd UNFCCC'S Conference of the Parties (COP) in Marrakech, Morocco, in 2017;
- the 8th World Water Forum in 2018 in Brasilia, Brazil;
- the Stockholm World Water Weeks in 2017, 2018 and 2019;
- the World Water Day celebrations in 2019 in Praia, Cabo Verde and in 2020 (virtually);
- the 3rd World Irrigation Forum in 2019, in Bali, Indonesia.

WEBINARS BY A PARTNERSHIP AT WORK

The unforeseen and sudden changes imposed by COVID-19 in the midst of preparing this Strategy have turned into an opportunity to demonstrate the commitment of the Partners, the coherence of their collaboration and the relevance of the themes of the working groups. This has emerged through webinars which were mostly organized by the working groups and which are effectively a proof of concept that the partnership is at work. The attendance has reached 350 participants at time, the minimum having been 120 participants. Some working groups organized back to back seminars, and additional topics such as water scarcity, gender and quinoa were presented. Non WASAG partners have also contributed to the webinars. As a result of their success, other partners have also started approaching WASAG to hold joint webinars. All presentations and video recording of the webinars are currently available on [WASAG website](#). The outcomes and policy recommendations from these webinar are being compiled into a report and resourceful materials.

The webinars are set to become a major activity of the partnership with possible different pathways such as:

- (1) the maturing of community of practices, such as on Water and Nutrition, on Sustainable Agriculture Water Use, Drought Preparedness etc., which will produce outputs such as policy briefs, guidelines, best practices, etc.;
- (2) a repository of experts who will readily be available to provide technical support to WASAG stakeholders, with a virtual one stop shop for various needs, including capacity development, project development, implementation and evaluation;
- (3) a critical mass of experts that could foster consensus on the state of knowledge of emerging topics and influence decision making at international, regional and country levels.

SUPPORT BY COUNTRIES

To date, several countries have demonstrated their commitment to WASAG, providing different kinds of support. These countries include (in alphabetical order):

- **CABO VERDE** - The **Government of Cabo Verde** hosted and organized the first WASAG International Forum in Praia, Cabo Verde in March 2019.
- **ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN** – The **Islamic Republic of Iran** supports and is a co-leader of the WASAG working group on saline agriculture.
- **ITALY** - The Italian Ministry of Agriculture established an **Italian Chapter of WASAG** which brings together Italian institutions working in addressing water resources management for agriculture. They are active members of the Working Group on Sustainable Agriculture Water Use and will soon publish a publication on ‘pressurized irrigation systems’. They also helped organized the first WASAG International Forum and sponsored scholarship for a Cape Verdean student at CIHEAM Bari.
- **QUÉBEC (CANADA)** - The **Government of Québec** has funded two interns to join the WASAG Support Team at FAO and maintains a close relationship with WASAG.
- **SPAIN** - The **Government of Spain** hosted an International Symposium on the use of nonconventional waters in November 2019 and is promoting a training for irrigation technologies (MoU signed at the World Water Forum 8).
- **SWITZERLAND** - The **Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG)** has signed a funding agreement to support WASAG and its work for three years (2019-2022), including the first WASAG International Forum. This is a direct follow up on the recommendations of the 26th session of FAO’s Committee on Agriculture (COAG).

Annex 2: Praia Commitment table

Relevance of Praia commitments to each of WASAG’s six working groups

Refer to the full text of the Praia Commitment for details on each commitment	Water & migration 	Drought preparedness 	Financing mechanisms 	Water & nutrition 	Sustainable water Use 	Saline agriculture 
1. Cooperate within the framework of WASAG to tackle the challenges of water scarcity in agriculture.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Develop understanding and insights to enhance water-use efficiency in line with local contexts.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Advocate for integrated planning processes involving different stakeholders for better decision making.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. Promote water as a driver of development for all to reach the SDG targets.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5. Support farmers and associations to increase their resilience.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6. Promote good governance for all dimensions of water scarcity in agriculture.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7. Support the institutionalization of a proactive and risk-based approach to drought preparedness.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
8. Provide policy makers with tools and guidelines through a one-stop shop.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9. Encourage the mutualisation of resources and promote innovative financing mechanisms.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
10. Encourage innovative technologies including reuse of treated wastewater for agriculture.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11. Bring focus on sustainable management of water resources to address water-related migration.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
12. Build a community of practice and develop a framework to link nutrition & water management.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
13. Propose ways to live with salinity, particularly in SIDS.						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14. Integrate climate-smart agriculture and innovative practices including drought/salt tolerant crops.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
15. Promote a culture of sustainable water use in agriculture.					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
16. Identify criteria and indicators for sustainable agricultural water use measurement and monitoring.					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
17. Encourage community-based approaches and people centered policies.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

