

ROADMAP

Development of a New National Agriculture Sector Strategy (NASS) and National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP) for Yemen

Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation of the Republic of Yemen

1. BACKGROUND

Notwithstanding its great agriculture and economic potential, for many decades Yemen has been among the poorest countries in the world. With the impact of the conflict, the country has by far the largest humanitarian needs. The major instability that the conflict brought, import/export restrictions, limited accessibility and mobility within the country and the damage caused to major infrastructure have devastated the country's economy. The gross domestic product (GDP) has declined by 41 percent since March 2015 (equivalent to a total loss of USD 32 billion or USD 1,180 per capita) and poverty is estimated to have increased to 77 percent in 2018.¹ Since 2015, the currency has lost 80 percent of its value, 28 percent alone in 2017. Losses in infrastructure have been estimated at USD 19 billion, bringing massive disruption of services across all sectors.²

Agriculture has historically been a major sector in Yemen's economy providing a source of employment for more than 50% of the Yemeni workforce, but this has been consistently declining. Back in 1994 agriculture contributed to more than 24 percent of the national GDP, however the sector's share of the GDP started to decline in 2000, down to 8.2 percent in 2010, to its lowest point at 6 percent in 2017 due to the conflict. Agriculture is essential to the revitalization of the Yemeni economy. While the agricultural sector suffered a reduction in output due to the conflict –mainly due to a lack of inputs such as water, fertilizer, seeds and fuel shortages, but also as a result of damaged agricultural equipment, irrigation systems, and storage facilities, as well as deteriorated electricity services and logistical chains, and shortages of animal fodder and veterinary services– overall agriculture seems to be the most resilient sector with the lowest negative growth rates throughout the conflict.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'s Plan of Action (POA) 2018-20³, the main factors contributing to this decline include: (a) limited availability and high cost of agricultural inputs and animal feed; (b) widespread plant and animal pests and diseases; (c) increasing production of qat as a cash crop with corresponding reduction of available land and scarce water for food production; (d) emigrating workforce; (e) limited public resources allocated to the sector; (f) deteriorating groundwater and land resources; and (g) inequitable access to arable land.

While the conflict has brought new challenges and exacerbated existing ones, the sector has historically faced most of these major problems. Prior to the crisis Yemen used to import up to 90 percent of its food even as up to 70 percent of its population lives in the rural areas and are dependent on agriculture for livelihood. These major problems and the great opportunities that are available for the agricultural sector in the country, motivated at least three rounds of strategy development for the agricultural sector since the beginning of the 1990s. The first two rounds of strategies took a long time to be approved and while they

¹ Joint IFPRI-World Bank-CSO Yemen study 2019. "Economy-wide impact of conflict and alternative recovery scenarios". Forthcoming IFPRI MENA Policy Note.

² FAO Plan of Action 2018-20, based on Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. Yemen Socioeconomic Update, January 2018.

³ FAO Plan of Action 2018-20 for Strengthening resilient agricultural livelihoods (2018)

properly depicted the main priority problems in the sector, they lacked effective solutions and failed to present a clear path for achieving their main objectives. These were replaced by the last round in 2012 when the National Agriculture Sector Strategy (NASS) was put in place and then revised in 2013, covering the period of 2012-2016.

NASS was designed to be a key component of the National Food Security Strategy (NFSS)⁴, the Development Plan for Poverty Reduction (DPPR) for 2011-2015 and the 2009 Yemen National Adaptation Program of Action. The sector strategy was designed aiming to raise domestic food production, increase rural incomes and employment, and ensure sustainability of the environment and natural resources. The NFSS and DPPR encompass other sectors such as public finance, trade and commerce, gender, water, basic social services, infrastructure, as well as climate change, among others. Many supportive policies related to agriculture are embedded in these policies and programs. They also provided guidance to the NASS to focus on key issues related to the sector, including efficient irrigation and expansion of rainfed farming as part of the response to water scarcity in the country. The NASS was developed through a participatory process, which engaged an array of stakeholders from different government institutions, multilateral organizations (UN Agencies, World Bank, IFAD, IFPRI etc.), research institutions, the private sector and the civil society. These stakeholders were widely consulted during the comprehensive review and analysis of the agricultural sector, the review of related strategies, field visits, consultation workshops with key participants in the agriculture sector, and interview with key informants.

The implementation of NASS and other related strategies was soon disrupted by the conflict, which erupted in 2014-2015 and followed successive phases up to now, leaving just hopes for a quicker resolution. As of 2015, the country entered a cycle of protracted war that significantly affected all aspects of life of local population in both rural and urban areas. The conflict in Yemen has drastically affected implementation of development projects. Nearly all development activities came to a standstill at the onset of conflict in 2015 and most financing agencies left the country. All activities in the agricultural and fisheries sector shifted to humanitarian efforts in principle. Some development projects continued despite the fragile security in the country, but the focus of the projects were primarily humanitarian.

2. MOTIVATION FOR DEVELOPING A NEW NASS AND NAIP

The reconstruction and recovery of Yemen will demand rebuilding the economy and its production capacity, restoring Government institutions, public infrastructure and restoring social networks. Until now, it has been difficult for an official donor-led reconstruction process to take place and the first development plan prepared so far is that of the MoPIC/Aden in March 2019 under the title “Reconstruction and Economic Recovery Priority Plan”. The plan is designed for initial two years with provision for expansion to five years.

In the case of the agricultural sector and food security, the Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan (YHRP) and the FAO Plan of Action 2018-20 (POA) are the most important interim plans developed with support from the UN and other development partners. These plans clearly define the main priorities for intervention in the sector and have been greatly used by the international community working in Yemen. However, the GoY finds important to put the soonest a solid plan to start the process of recovery even while the conflict is still ongoing. It is crucial to put in place a new NASS and related National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP), which respond to National Multi-sectorial Development Plans and guide concerted reconstruction and recovery efforts immediately, combining humanitarian response with more longer-term development interventions. Yemen faces many challenges including high levels of poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition,

⁴ The NFSS was developed as a multi-sector strategy with clear food security targets and a [7-point action plan](#) with technical support from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

especially among children, rapidly expanding population, severe resource constraints, and security concerns. The development of the agriculture sector will have a key role in addressing most of these challenges.

This roadmap document developed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MAI) with the technical support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), describes the process that the Government and its partners will undertake to review the former NASS and NAIP, define the new set of priorities and investment needs, and develop a revamped NASS and NAIP which can guide forward looking actions in the agricultural sector for a new period of five years. MAI is planning to take a food systems approach for the new NASS to more comprehensively reflect the important role that agriculture can play for the Yemeni economy, job creation along the supply chains, poverty reduction and the nutrition of people. The MAI requested in 2018 the Technical Support from FAO to support the GoY to undertake this important task, and have received the confirmation from FAO that is ready and willing to support the process with resources and its technical capacity. Given its long track record of work in Yemen, including supporting the development of Yemen's National Food Security Strategy (NFSS), and the GoY and FAO have been able to secure the commitment of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to be a key partner for the development of the NASS/NAIP. Specifically, IFPRI in collaboration with the Central Statistical Agency (CSO) and the World Bank has recently updated its economy wide model for Yemen, which could be immediately used to provide technical support throughout the strategy development with a focus on a) helping setting realistic and achievable NASS targets, and b) prioritizing policy and investments to achieve the NASS targets.

3. THE PROCESS TO DEVELOP THE NEW NASS AND NAIP

The NASS and its related NAIP are planned as key elements for the achievement of Yemen's food and nutrition security and overall development strategies. They respond to long standing problems of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, as well as problems related to declining agriculture productivity, lack of coherent policy, limited household and community resilience to shocks, water scarcity, and challenging security situation in the country. As such, under the leadership of the MAI and Technical Assistance of the FAO, the GoY will engage in a two-year process to put in place a new NASS and NAIP, which will be prepared guided by research-based evidence and in a highly participatory manner with the active participation of a variety of actors from the main line Ministries and Institutions related to agricultural sector; Multilateral Organizations such as the IFAD, UN Agencies and the World Bank; the private sector; and the civil society including international and local NGOs. Given the deterioration of access and disruption of communication throughout the country, an important emphasis will be placed on engaging decentralized actors from the different Governorates in Yemen and decentralized institutions.

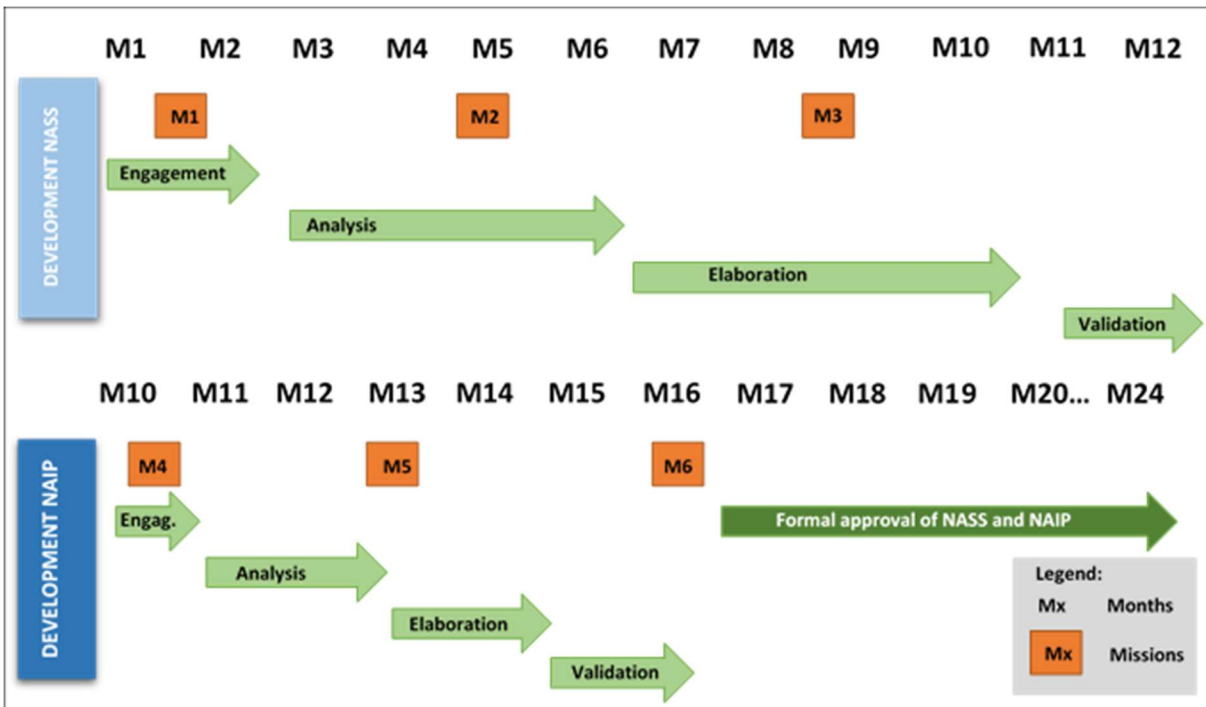
The process will be consultative and as described in Figure 1 below it will include 3 national consultations plus a series of decentralized workshops to cover all the Governorates. The whole process can be broken down in three main sub-processes:

- **Comprehensive review of the 2012-2016 NASS and evidence-based development of the new sector strategy:** the idea is to engage in a **12-month** process to identify the main implementation challenges with a focus on the impacts of the conflict, lessons learned, opportunities, emerging issues, prioritization of policies and actions and generate key recommendations to guide future actions in the new strategy. This 12-month phase will have four different stages, namely engagement (2 months), analysis (4 months), elaboration (4 months) and validation (2 months);
- **Development of the National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP):** for a 7-month period that starts in the tenth month of the development of the strategy, and the focus will be on developing a conducive investment plan to fully fund the implementation of all actions required to achieve the

targets defined in the new NASS. This 7-month period will have four different stages as follows, engagement (1 month), analysis (2 months), elaboration (2 months) and validation (1 month);

- **Formal approval for NASS and NAIP:** this consists of an 8-month period for the formal approval of NASS and NAIP which will take place after the final documents are completed by the MAI (see in more detail in *Section 4*).

Figure 1. Tentative timeline of main process milestones



The consultation process will include workshops and key informant interviews throughout the governorates and at the national level with smallholder and medium farmers and breeders, landless laborers, community and farmers organizations, water user associations, commercial farmers, and a variety of cooperatives. Also NGOs and CBOs, elected local government and decision makers, researchers and a variety of technical specialists. Furthermore, the new NASS and NAIP documents will be peer reviewed by different organizations, institutions and specialists. The quality of stakeholder participation should be high. There have been regular participatory design processes for the last NASS/NAIP and a number of other strategies, projects and activities in the rural areas in the past decade, and this strategy development process with surely benefit from stakeholders that have been engaged in the processes and also from all the knowledge that have been generated.

The consultations will also benefit from the recent emergence of popular voices and particularly those of young people and women. In the past several years, Yemen has developed a strong participatory approach in its design of public investments in rural development and agriculture. The political and social movements beginning in 2011 have intensified and broadened involvement of ordinary people and encouraged them to express themselves with greater determination. This is particularly true in the case of women and youth. As a result, the involvement of ordinary Yemeni male and female farmers of all ages will be key participants in the process all along.

The whole process considers the following activities, which are included in more detail in the *Annex 1*:

- Comprehensive reviews of the institutional set-up and existing relevant work and needs assessments resulting in several background papers conducted by each one of the TWGs;
- Stakeholder consultations and consensus building for the identification and prioritization of the issues to be addressed, formulation of the new NASS structure, identification of the interventions to be implemented, and development of a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework;
- Stakeholder consultations and consensus building on the development of the NAIP based on prioritized issues to be addressed in the new NASS;
- Model-based assessment that helps prioritizing stakeholder recommendations and quantifying the contribution of these recommended actions towards the NASS objectives;
- Preparation of the main documents of the new NASS and the NAIP;
- Formal approval for the new NASS and NAIP and their content and promulgation of a decree for its application;
- Delivery capacity building on result-based management, monitoring and evaluation, SDGs monitoring, and reporting (FAO to provide technical support on this).

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS OF THE NASS/NAIP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The work for the development of the new NASS/NAIP will be organized around four main functional bodies: the MAI/FAO Technical Taskforce (TTF), the National Steering Committee (NSC), the National Thematic Working Groups (TWGs), and the Quality Assurance Team (QAT). These four bodies will be performing an array of functions, including management of the process, supervision and leadership, analysis, capacity building, stakeholder involvement and consensus building, and quality assurance. The functional bodies and their functions can be summarized as follows:

MAI/FAO Technical Taskforce (TTF): this is the core team organized by MAI and FAO for managing the strategy development process from organizational as well as from the technical viewpoint, mobilizing resources and planning activities. The membership of the TTF include the main management and technical focal points from MAI and FAO, besides of International and National Senior Experts that will be hired to lead the development of the main documents.

National Steering Committee (NSC): the GoY shall designate a national project coordinator from MAI to work with TTF to coordinate government technical input and support the project steering committee. The members of the NSC include:

- The National Project Coordinator (NPC) from MAI designated by the GoY to work with the FAO team to coordinate government technical input and support the PSC;
- The Team Leaders for each one of the Technical Working Groups which should be also nominated by the GoY among reputed experts from MAI or other governmental agencies to lead and coordinate the work of the six national TWGs.

National Thematic Working Groups (TWGs): these are the key tool to gather and analyze information relevant to the implementation of the outdated NASS/NAIP as well as to carry out participatory consultations at key stages in the process for identifying the new set priorities. The TWGs are composed by experts on the specific topics relevant to NASS, from the GoY institutions, independent agencies and research centers. Each TWG is led by a team leader and comprises a number of 3 to 6 experts as needed.

Main topics covered by the TWG include: environmental sustainability (water, land, climate change); agricultural production; livestock (poultry, cattle, camel, small ruminants); agri-food value chains and agri-business; institutional issues (human resources, R&D and technology transfer, policy and regulations); social inclusion (poverty, gender, employment, food security and nutrition); and information and communication.

Quality Assurance Pool (QAP): the quality of intermediate outputs (e.g. background papers) and final outputs will be assured by the QAP at different stages of the process. QAP will be composed of highly reputed national and international research institution members and technical experts to discuss the contents of such outputs.

5. APPROVAL PROCESS FOR NASS AND NAIP

Upon the conclusion of the of all the processes related to the development of the new NASS and its NAIP and the approval of the documents by the Technical Task Force and the National Steering Committee, the process for the formal approval and promulgation of the decree starts and will evolve as follows.



6. UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES OF THE NASS

A number of guiding principles will be crucial for the proper development of the new NASS. The following will be adopted to guide the development process:

- Drawing on the agriculture sector priorities and taking a food systems approach that is based on evidence from current long and medium term National Development Plans and the National Food Security Strategy;
- Building interfacing actions and modalities in the NASS with the development plans of other sectors, including infrastructure and transport; trade, industry and cooperatives; health; and plans of other private, civil society and development partner actors;
- Building on past achievements, lessons learned and experiences and if still relevant rolling over uncompleted actions from the implementation of the NASS and NAIP 2012-2016;

- Considering the new set of challenges and institutional and political arrangements that are prevailing in the country since the beginning of the conflict in 2014-2015;
- Fostering implementation synergies and linkages among various priority and strategic development actions;
- Taking into account emerging priority sector issues in the development of priority actions with a special emphasis on emerging items related to the conflict and its externalities;
- Focusing reconstruction and recovery efforts on the importance to prepare the agriculture sector and the food system in the country to achieve key Sustainable Development Goals and to be more resilient to shocks.

7. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF NASS AND NAIP

An important part of the development of the new NASS and NAIP is the establishment of clear and well agreed implementation arrangements for the NASS/NAIP. This includes the definition of the implementation structure as well as the development of the monitoring and evaluation plan. The following is a brief description of the arrangements that have been defined so far.

▪ Implementation structure

The implementation of NASS and NAIP will be coordinated at national level with the Supreme Council for Food Security and within MoPIC with the Food Security Technical Secretariat and Steering Committee. The application of NASS will be under the immediate responsibility of MAI and its Directorates. The NSC established during the development of the strategy and NAIP will be transformed into a NASS Steering Committee (NNSC), which will be the main body looking after the implementation of the NASS/NAIP, with a special mandate to secure funds for implementation and that programs are implemented in line with the NASS objectives and priority areas. The NNSC will also work with a National Technical Secretariat (NTS) which will be created to provide the technical leadership needed in different technical areas that are covered by the NASS.

Adequate funding of important public services is a concern under the NASS, particularly to enable local-level bodies to function. Therefore, the NNSC and NTC will play an important role on making sure that the NASS is implemented mainly through decentralized, local-level demand responsive programs tailored to each governorate and district's needs. This will require allocation of funds used for NASS implementation to be allocated to the territories, even if in the context of the programs that donors and other actors will be funding as part of NASS. NNSC and NTS will count with members representing the territories.

▪ Monitoring and Evaluation

By providing a guidance framework for the policies and development of the sector as a whole, the implementation of NASS must, on the one hand, ensure an efficient allocation of the resources to implement its most impactful programs in the sector and, on the other, reinforce linkages between the various actors, including the central and local governments; producers, animal breeders and service suppliers; NGOs, community organizations, educational and research institutions; the general public; and development partners. Verification of the effectiveness of NASS activities will be monitored and evaluated through the use of objectively verifiable indicators that will be established at different levels (impact, outcome, output and activity levels). Measures of poverty reduction, financial growth and rural transformation are among the impact indicators to be addressed in medium to long-term. The result indicators (outcome) to be achieved in the medium term include enhanced family income, enhanced agricultural output, enhanced food access, improved family nutrition, and levels of value addition on agricultural value.

The identification of these indicators, their targets and the data collection and analysis process will be used in the implementation of NASS will be defined as part of the M&E plan developed during the NASS

MAI Cabinet								
Activity 4.3. Cabinet decree approving establishment of the Technical Secretariat at MAI								X
Activity 4.4. The decree of H.E the Minister of MAI is issued setting-up the NTS at MAI with the mandate to lead the implementation of NASS/NAIP								X
Output 5. Capacity building of selected staff from relevant GoY institutions								
Activity 5.1. Development of detailed training programs on RBM, M&E and SDGs						X		
Activity 5.2. Mobilization of the trainers from FAO and IFPRI						X		
Activity 5.3. Conduction of the training sessions							X	X