Executive Summary

Egypt Policy Dialogue on Scaling Resilient Nature-Based Water Solutions (RNBWS)

Date: 24 June 2025 | **Location**: Cairo, Egypt | **Organizers**: IWMI, CEDARE, and national partners

Context

Egypt faces escalating challenges from soil salinity, water shortages, and climate risks to agriculture and livelihoods. The Al-Murunah project convened a national policy dialogue to position Resilient Nature-Based Water Solutions (RNBWS) as scalable, investment-ready approaches to address these challenges by restoring agricultural land, improving water security, and strengthening climate resilience. Unlocking the Scaling Potential of RNBWS in Egypt, speakers from the governments of Egypt and the United Kingdom, international institutions, private sector firms, academia, and non-governmental organizations spoke about RNBWS in relation to:

- **Tangible Benefits for Communities and Ecosystems**: Nature-based approaches (NbS) — such as agroforestry, inter-cropping, and soil and water management — can integrate with existing infrastructure and offer practical, low-cost options for farmers, communities, and local governments alike to enhance water use efficiently, restore soils, and support climate resilience. Strong multi-stakeholder collaboration is key.
- **National Priorities in Focus**: RNBWS directly support Egypt's long-term development goals, including Vision 2030, the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), and climate commitments under the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). They provide a way to meet environmental targets and sustainable development objectives.
- **From Local Pilots to National Impact**: The Al-Murunah pilot in Beheira Governorate showed how RNBWS can work on the ground to enhance agricultural productivity and community resilience, and create economic opportunities, especially for women and youth involved in rural value chains.

What Continues to Challenge the Scaling of NbS?
While the potential is clear, progress is slowed by policy gaps, limited coordination among institutions, low awareness among farmers, and inconsistent understanding of nature-based approaches. Many initiatives depend heavily on donor funding, making it difficult to scale sustainably.

Looking Ahead: Strategic Priorities to Unlock Public and Private Investment and Scale RNBWS in Egypt

To address these challenges and seize the noted opportunities, participants suggested the following:

Embed Nature-based Approaches in National Planning Tools to De-Risk Investment	• Integrate RNBWS into Egypt's national water, agriculture, and climate strategies (e.g., NAP, Agriculture Strategy) to ensure long-term policy backing. • Leverage and strengthen existing coordination platforms (e.g., NWFE – Nexus of Water, Food and Energy Program, and the Water Council) to track progress, align incentives, and ensure regulatory clarity—providing a stable policy environment for public and private investment.

Strengthen Local Governance for Scalable Delivery	• Empower local government and Water User Associations (WUAs) with planning and financial authority to implement locally tailored RNBWS, creating decentralized investment pipelines. • Align local development plans with national strategies to enable place-based investment pipelines.
Accelerate Private Finance and Bankable Models	• Design and promote bankable RNBWS business models, backed by robust return-on-investment (ROI) and co-benefit metrics (e.g., carbon credits, water savings, biodiversity gains). • Enable Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and blended finance mechanisms through risk-sharing tools, incentives, and targeted subsidies. • Foster academic–industry collaboration to scale innovations from field/lab to market, enabling a steady pipeline of investable, climate-smart technologies.
Build Demand Through Community Engagement, Inclusion, and Market Activation	• Scale public awareness and demonstration projects to build trust and adoption among smallholders, creating ready markets for RNBWS technologies and services. • Promote inclusive entrepreneurship by supporting women- and youth-led green enterprises and innovation hubs.
Invest in Capacity Building and inter-sectoral collaboration	• Develop localized guidance tools (manuals, risk maps, and investment briefs) to inform site-specific planning, reduce due diligence costs for investors, and help bridge knowledge gaps between sectors. • Institutionalize innovation platforms (e.g., policy hackathons, innovation sprints) that bring together government, the private sector, academia, and communities to co-create solutions.

Next Steps for Al Murunah: From Dialogue to Scaling Pathways and Investment in RNBWS

Building on the momentum from the Egypt Policy Dialogue, the following priority actions will help drive the transition from pilot success to scaling of integrated and bankable RNBWS:

- **Translate Awareness into Commitment:** Support integration of RNBWS into national policy and financial frameworks — ensuring clarity for investors, development partners, and implementing agencies.
- **Position Egypt as a Regional Leader:** Showcase Egypt's RNBWS innovations and business cases at Cairo Water Week (October 2025) and, potentially, Arab Sustainable Development Week (September 2025) to influence regional strategies and attract cross-border investment.
- **Advance Institutional Anchoring:** Follow up with the Soil, Water and Environment Research Institute (SWERI) and Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation (MWRI) to embed RNBWS into ongoing national processes, including National Agricultural Strategy revisions and updates to the NAP and/or NDC, laying the foundation for sustained public-private collaboration.

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