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DOHA, QATAR — Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries plan to launch a global dry land alliance in 2014 to deal with water scarcity and food security in 51 countries, according to officials with the regional grouping.

"Seventeen countries, spearheaded by GCC countries, Egypt, Iraq, Morocco and Tunisia will establish the Global Dry Land Alliance (GDLA) in the first quarter of 2014," Badr ben Omar al Dafaa, a former Qatari diplomat appointed as executive director of the alliance, announced on March 19.

"The alliance will aim at building partnerships to deal with potential water and food crises in the next few years," he said.

"Qatar, which will run the alliance for the first two year, [and] in cooperation with other GCC countries will channel funds to boost the alliance," said al Dafaa.

The GDLA will formulate a convention that commits arid countries to cooperate in addressing the threats of food and water insecurity.

The conventions will include precautionary measures, crisis response mechanisms and initiatives to further scientific research to secure water, food and energy resources.

The alliance will support programs by government, corporate, academic and international organizations aimed at achieving food security in arid countries.

"It will also improve food and water security policies in member countries, promote innovative financing mechanisms, and formulate comprehensive common strategies for water and energy usage," according to the Qatari official.

A number of international organizations have expressed interest in the GDLA, including the Islamic Development Bank, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank.

"The UN secretary-general supported the creation of the alliance and UN agencies will support it," al Dafaa added.

The GDLA will establish a set of food security indicators to gauge agricultural production and trade in participant countries.

An early warning system at the national and regional levels will be set up to reduce the negative effects of droughts, floods, and desertification.

Furthering the construction of solar-powered desalination stations for agricultural purposes will also be a top priority for the alliance.