



AGRICULTURE



CCO BRIEF
ON
AGRICULTURAL
COOPERATION

COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE
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CCO BRIEF ON AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION

I. Introduction

Agriculture with its intrinsic nature plays a distinctive role in ever increasingly connected world economies. It is seen as an important engine of growth and unique source for poverty reduction in most of the developing world. Empirical studies demonstrate that agriculture is the most effective sector in generating income for the poorest segments of the population. Hence, it is accepted as a key sector for economic growth, reducing poverty and sustainable rural development especially in developing countries. In many member countries of the OIC, agriculture is one of the leading sectors in terms of income, employment and trade.

The global lockdown due to the pandemic of COVID-19 has deeply affected the agriculture and food systems, like other economic sectors, in almost all countries. It has obligated governments to take actions on travel, trade, tourism, imports, exports, and transportation to control and minimize the effects and spread of the outbreak. Thus, the pandemic quickly put serious strains on the food supply chains involving farmers, agricultural inputs, processing plants, shipping, retailers, and more resulting in an unforeseen pressure on food supply systems and food sustainability.

II. Agricultural Cooperation under the COMCEC

Increasing the productivity of agriculture sector and sustaining the food security in the OIC Member Countries is the strategic objective of the COMCEC Strategy. Considering the destructive impacts of the pandemic on the agriculture sector the COMCEC Agriculture Working Group has devoted its Meetings held in 2021 to discuss this important issue.

Within this framework, since the 36th COMCEC Session, the COMCEC Agriculture Working Group held its 16th Meeting focusing on the sustainability of the food supply chains during turbulent times like the COVID-19.

A. How to Ensure the Sustainability of the Food Supply Chains in Turbulent Times: COVID-19

(16th Meeting of the Agriculture Working Group)

The 16th Meeting of COMCEC Agriculture Working Group (AWG) was held virtually on May 27th, 2021, with the theme of “How to Ensure the Sustainability of Food Supply Chains in Turbulent Times: The Case of COVID-19”.

A research report with the same theme is being prepared for two consecutive COMCEC AWG meetings (16th and 17th). While the preliminary findings of the report was submitted to the 16th AWG meeting, the final version of the report will be submitted to the 17th AWG meeting, to be held in September 2021. The main objective of the study is to assess the current situation of ensuring the sustainability of food supply chains in turbulent times in OIC member states under the effects of COVID-19 with an aim of laying down policy recommendations for a more sustainable, responsible and efficient food supply management system to contribute to food security. Within this scope it should also contribute to the identification of existing gaps in

understanding the role of COVID-19 on sustainability of food supply chains from farm to fork in relation to economic development and food security and safety in the OIC member states.

The preliminary findings of the aforementioned report were presented during the 16th Meeting of the Working Group. The presentation indicated that despite the OIC member countries have exhibited significant improvement in agricultural development and food security over the last years, the degree and the speed of the development are uneven between and within countries. Parallel with the global trend the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted food supply and food sustainability in the OIC countries as well mostly due to the policies and actions taken by governments mainly to control and minimize the effects and spread of the outbreak. This leads to food price fluctuations, food insecurity, and malnutrition. Particularly low-income member countries suffer from poor infrastructure, inadequate capacity, and inefficient use of agricultural resources. It was mentioned that there are two main channels through which food insecurity interacts with Covid-19. First, a decrease in food production and supply and the associated increase in food inflation bring about disruptions in food production and supply chains. Second, a decrease in demand and reduced calorie intake, and compromised nutrition trigger income reductions.

The final version of the research report will be submitted to the 17th Meeting of the Working Group which will be held on September 16th, 2021.

All the documents and presentations made during the 16th Working Group Meeting are available on the COMCEC website. (www.comcec.org)

B. COMCEC Financial Support Instruments

COMCEC Project Funding

COMCEC Project Funding (CPF) is the other important instrument of the Strategy. Projects financed under the CPF need to serve multilateral cooperation and must be designed in accordance with the objectives and the expected outcomes defined by the Strategy in its agriculture section. Projects also play important roles in realization of the policy recommendations formulated by the member countries during the AWG meetings.

Under the 7th Call for Project Proposals made in September 2019, 5 projects were selected to be financed by the CCO in 2020. However, implementation of these projects postponed to 2021 due to international travel restrictions arising from the COVID 19 pandemic. Also, under the 8th Call for Project Proposals made in September 2020, one project was selected to be financed by the CCO in 2021. Hence, all the agriculture projects are expected to be finalized in 2021. The selected agriculture projects to be completed during the 2021 implementation year are as follows;

The project titled “Enhancing Capacity for Warehousing and Storage of Cereals and Cowpeas” will be implemented by Benin in partnership with Niger, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire. The project aims at increasing the awareness and knowledge of the stakeholders on good practices for warehousing and storage of grains in West Africa.

The second project titled “New Breeding Technologies for Food and Nutritional Security” will be implemented by COMSTECH in partnership with Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Malaysia, Pakistan,

Saudi Arabia and Turkey. The project aims at increasing public and private sector institution's capacity on nutrition and food security through advanced breeding technologies.

The third agriculture project titled "Capacity Building on Cereals and Cowpeas Storage" will be implemented by Niger with the partnership of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria. This project aims at sharing knowledge and good practices on warehousing and storage of grains among the partner countries.

Other important project titled "Enhancing Food Security through National Food Balance Sheets" will be implemented by SESRIC in partnership with Bangladesh, Djibouti, Indonesia, Jordan, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sudan, Suriname, Turkey and Uganda. Purpose of the project is promoting reliable and up-to-date data collection so as to ensure sound analysis of food security through increasing the capacity of the member countries on developing and preparing the annual food balance sheets.

Also, Surinam will implement the project titled "Capacity Building on Irrigation Systems in Vegetable Crops" with the partnership of Indonesia and Turkey. This project aims to contribute to ensuring food security and food safety for the populations in the project partner countries by increasing capacity of the stakeholder on water management.

Fifth project titled "Contract Farming for Linking Small Farmers to Markets within OIC Member Countries" will be implemented by Islamic Republic of Iran with the partnership of Turkey, Oman and Malaysia. The project aims at assessing key features, strengths and weaknesses of contract farming and sharing the relevant knowledge within the partner countries.

COMCEC COVID Response

Under the COMCEC COVID Response Program initiated by the CCO in order to assist member states in their efforts to alleviate the negative effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on member country economies, 3 projects were selected to be financed by the CCO in 2021. Selected projects are as follows;

First project titled "Facilitating Poor, Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups' Access to Food in West Java Province" will be implemented by Indonesia. Purpose of the project is assessing the current conditions of the vulnerable groups to further formulate policies for them to facilitate their access to food.

Turkey will implement the second project titled "Acceleration of Transformation of Digitalization in Agriculture Sector for Ensuring Sustainable Food Security". This project aims to determine a road map for adoption and dissemination of digital technologies by key actors in Turkish agricultural sector as well as to investigate the gaps, obstacles and challenges triggered by COVID-19.

Third agriculture project titled "Investigating the Effects of Covid-19 and Related Policies on Iranian Agricultural Sector" will be implemented by Islamic Republic of Iran. Purpose of the project is assessing the economic consequences of COVID-19 outbreak and particularly evaluating the performance of support packages provided by the government in agriculture sector.