



BRIEF ON AGRICULTURE

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COMCEC

CCO BRIEFS

AGRICULTURE

**COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE
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BRIEF ON AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION

Agriculture is one of the most significant sectors for economies of developing, particularly less developed countries. It is one of the main economic activities that provide employment in the global economy, especially in the regions suffering from poverty. Besides, it has been occupying a higher place on the international economic agenda since the food crisis of 2007 and 2008.

Agriculture in the World

Agriculture remains significant for people's life in today's globalized world. This sector is crucial for millions of people for meeting their basic needs and for income generation. In this regard, increasing world population, especially in the developing countries, resulted in a growing demand for agricultural products. In order to meet the increasing demands of the world population, agricultural productivity needs to be increased all over the world.

Today, agricultural population still represents a remarkable portion of the total population in the world, particularly in LDCs. According to the World Bank, agricultural population in the world accounts for 37,6 percent of the total population. It accounts for more than 60 percent of the total population in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). In addition, agriculture constitutes a significant part of the economy in many countries. The share of agriculture in the total GDP of the LDCs accounts for 24,4 percent. In sub-Saharan Africa, more than 60 percent of the total population lives in rural areas and most of this population depends on agriculture for income generation.¹

Agriculture in the COMCEC Region

Agriculture is also significant for the economy of the COMCEC Region where there are 21 least developed member countries according to UN classification. Agricultural population represents more than one-third of the total population in the COMCEC countries in 2011². In the COMCEC Member Countries, rural population accounts for 52.8 percent of the total population of the COMCEC. Furthermore, agricultural population in the COMCEC Region represents nearly 35 percent of the Member States' total population. As shown in Figure 1, agricultural population even exceeds 70 percent in several COMCEC-LDCs.

Agriculture is an important means of broad-based income generation and it remains as one of the most significant sources of income in many member countries. It accounts for approximately 29 percent of total GDP of OIC-LDCs in 2011.³ According to the Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries (LIFDC) List, which is prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), out of the 62 LIFDC in the world, 30 are COMCEC Member Countries. It is estimated that approximately 27% percent of the population of the COMCEC is living below the income poverty threshold of USD 1,25 a day and almost half of the COMCEC Population lives below the poverty threshold of USD 2 a

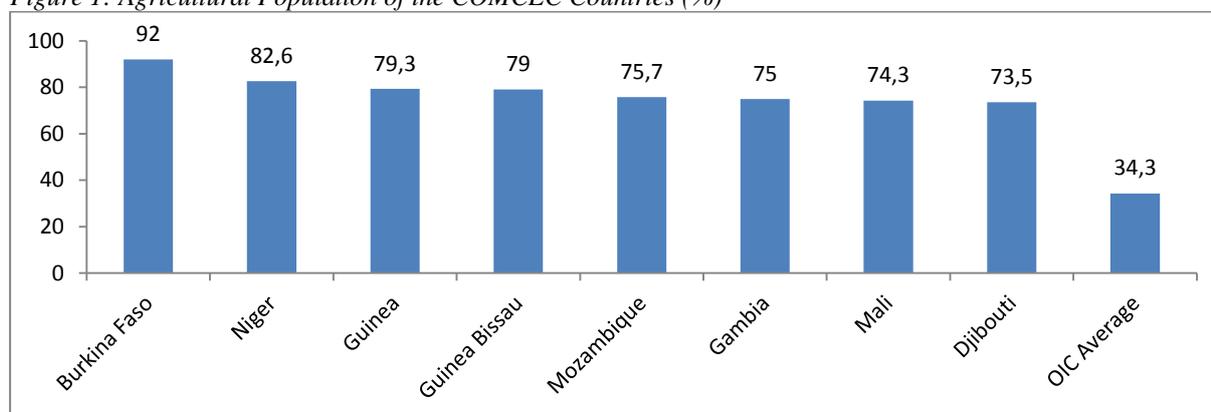
¹ World Bank Data

² Ibid.

³ FAOSTATS

day.⁴ Millions of people living under poverty line in the COMCEC region depend on agriculture to sustain their life.

Figure 1: Agricultural Population of the COMCEC Countries (%)



Source: Calculated by using FAO online database

Furthermore, agriculture sector has a great potential for enhancing intra-OIC agricultural trade. According to the FAO statistics, as shown in Figure 2, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Algeria and Iraq are the main importers of agriculture products in the COMCEC Region. On the other hand, as demonstrated in Figure 3, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cote d'Ivoire and Turkey are the countries having surplus in terms of their agricultural trade balance.

Figure 2: Some COMCEC Members Having Agricultural Trade Deficit, 2010 USD Billion

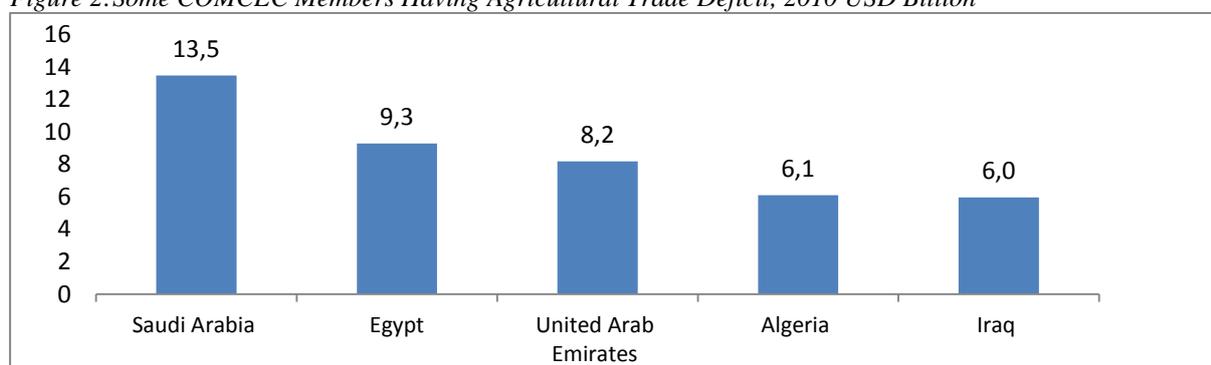
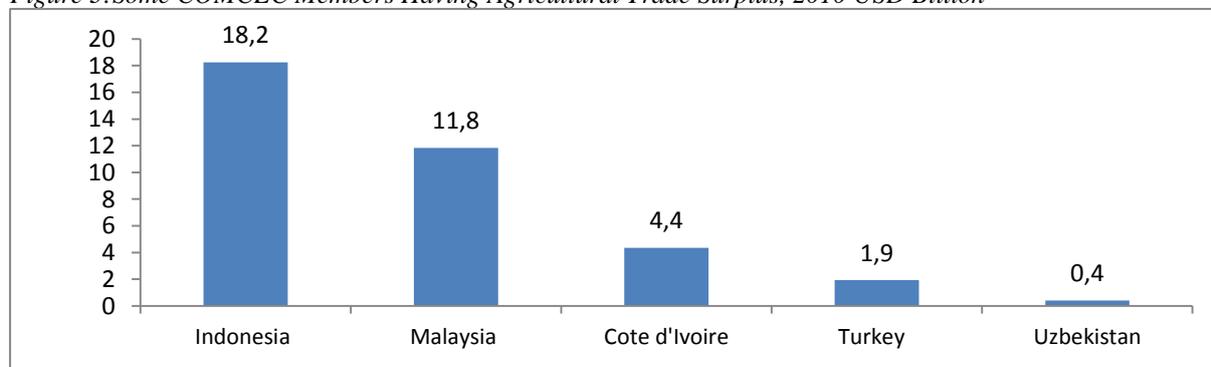


Figure 3: Some COMCEC Members Having Agricultural Trade Surplus, 2010 USD Billion



Source: FAO

⁴ FAO Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries (LIFDC) – List of 2013

Main Challenges of the Agriculture Sector in the COMCEC Region

The majority of the COMCEC Member Countries is not self-sufficient in terms of food production and considerably depends on import of agricultural products. Besides, agricultural production in the COMCEC Region is mainly concentrated in several Member Countries, namely Indonesia, Turkey, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan, Iran, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Morocco. More than 75 percent of the total agricultural products in the COMCEC Region are produced by these countries. In addition, millions of people in the COMCEC Region suffer from food shortages and they do not have access to sufficient food.

The agriculture sector in the COMCEC Region has mainly been suffering from, among others:

- Low agricultural productivity,
- Lack of institutional framework to provide necessary adjustments for more efficient and productive agriculture sector,
- Inadequate public sector investment in physical infrastructure.
- Lack of private sector investments in farming and agribusiness enterprises,
- Lack of sustainable natural resource management (land, water, fisheries and forests)
- Post-harvest losses.

Efforts under the COMCEC

Agriculture is one of the significant cooperation areas of the COMCEC. It has been prioritized by the COMCEC Economic Summit held in November 2009 in İstanbul. The COMCEC Strategy, adopted by the 4th Extraordinary Islamic Summit held on 14-15 August 2012 in Makkah, has also determined agriculture as one of the six cooperation areas of the COMCEC.

The COMCEC Strategy defined “Increasing the productivity of agriculture sector and sustaining food security in the COMCEC region” as its strategic objective. With respect to its implementation, the COMCEC Strategy envisages the establishment of Agriculture Working Group to provide a regular platform for the member country experts for discussing their common issues of concern and sharing experiences and good practices in this field. In this respect, the first Meeting of the COMCEC Agriculture Working Group will be held on June 6th, 2013 in Ankara with the theme of “Increasing Agricultural Productivity in the COMCEC Region: Improving Irrigation Capacity.”

In this meeting, the Agriculture Working Group is expected to discuss the ways and means of enhancing cooperation for improving irrigation capacity and water use efficiency in the member countries with a view to increasing agricultural production, identifying the challenges faced by the member countries and the role of modern irrigation methods to address them.

Members of the Agriculture Working Group will also have the chance to propose multilateral cooperation projects within the framework of the new COMCEC Project Cycle Management, which is another important instrument for the operationalization of the Strategy. The projects

to be financed under the COMCEC PCM need to serve multilateral cooperation and be designed in accordance with the objectives and the expected outcomes defined by the Strategy in its Agriculture section.

The other activities in the field of agriculture under the auspices of the COMCEC can be summarized as follows:

In parallel to the decision of the 28th Session of COMCEC, the Workshop on “Enhancing the Capacity of the Member States in Wheat Production” was held on 15-16 January 2013 in İzmir, Turkey, by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock of the Republic of Turkey and the COMCEC Coordination Office.

The workshop emphasized the importance of:

- Enhancing institutional and human capacity in the member states for increasing wheat production in the COMCEC Region.
- Improving cooperation and communication among the agricultural research centers of the member countries
- Conducting joint research programs and projects in wheat production
- Improving data collection, compilation and processing capacity of the member states
- Encouraging investments and developing joint investment programs and projects
- Introducing new varieties in wheat production for increasing productivity

Furthermore, The COMCEC Task Force, established in 2009 in line with the relevant decisions of the COMCEC Economic Summit and the 25th Session of the COMCEC, prepared the Draft Framework for Cooperation in Agriculture, Rural Development and Food Security in the OIC Member States and submitted it to the 28th Session of the COMCEC.

Till now, 6 Ministerial Meetings on Agriculture have been held. The 6th Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture was held on 3-5 October 2011 in İstanbul, Turkey, with the theme of “Food Security: Agricultural Development and Access to Food and Nutrition in OIC Countries”. The Meeting highlighted the importance of exchanging knowledge and experience and developing technical cooperation, capacity building and training programs among the member countries. The 7th Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development will be held on 14-16 November 2013 in Senegal.

Lastly, since the COMCEC Economic Summit held in 2009, several other activities (Such as the High Level Officials/Experts Meeting in İzmir, 2010 and the Workshop on Agriculture and Rural Development in Antalya, 2010) have been held in this field.

