

THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE 10TH MEETING OF THE AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP

The COMCEC Agriculture Working Group (AWG) has successfully held its 10th Meeting on September 28th, 2017 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of “Improving Agricultural Market Performance: Creation and Development of Market Institutions”. During the Meeting, Agriculture Working Group, made deliberations on improving agricultural market performance. Accordingly, the participants have come up with some policy recommendations.

The Member States of the AWG are kindly invited to communicate their final observations on the said policy recommendations, if there is any, to the COMCEC Coordination Office by October 13th, 2017. The comments received before October 13th, 2017 will be able to be incorporated into the Document. After incorporating the Member States’ contributions, this document will be submitted to the 33rd Ministerial Meeting of the COMCEC to be held on 20-23 November 2017 in İstanbul, as an outcome of the 10th AWG Meeting.

Policy Advice I: Establishing/improving a Farmer Registry System for farmers/farmer organizations to provide customized supports and assistance as well as extension and market information for farmers.

Rationale:

Lacking institutions/authorities where farmers are registered hinders collection of market information. Registration of farmers enables governments to develop customized policies and to collect, analyze, and disseminate statistics, data, as well as information related to agricultural sector. The registry system could also be utilized for granting and monitoring incentives as well as developing customized support and assistance to upgrade farmers’ production capacity and enhance their access to information about the indicative prices. It may also increase the efficiency and performance of the overall agricultural market system as the available market information would indicate opportunities for connecting agricultural production with processing, value-addition, and other post-harvest activities, and, eventually, consumption.

Policy Advice II: Developing policies/programs/mechanisms to improve farmers’ timely access to quality inputs (e.g. seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, and other key ingredients) with a view to increasing quality, quantity and marketability of end products.

Rationale:

Many smallholders/small-scale farmers have a limited access to high-quality, certified inputs and often only have access to low-quality or even imitated inputs. Governments may develop and supervise authorities (or re-mandate one of the current ones) which would be responsible for the quality assurance, distribution of inputs (e.g. feeds, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and equipment) and certification of the domestic and imported inputs. This would also help to increase the overall productivity and performance of the entire agricultural market system.

Policy Advice III: Providing need based capacity development support and training to farmers and farmer associations for increasing their access to warehousing and storage capacity.

Rationale:

Lack of storage, warehouse, and post-harvest facilities compel farmers to sell their products immediately after harvest. This causes surplus of products during the post-harvest period and results in lower prices. Warehousing and storage systems facilitate smallholders' access to storage facilities, which would enable them to store and sell their products when supply is low(er) and, hence, market prices are better. In addition, storage facilities also increase smallholders' access to credit (storage of products as form of collateral).

Agriculture cooperatives can set up warehouses of their own. A key to success for cooperatives is the direct involvement of primary producers through ownership or contractual arrangements backed by the producers' common market power of the downstream processing, marketing, and distribution elements of the agricultural market system. Without this, the producers can only be price-takers and can get very limited benefit/profit from the market system.

Policy Advice IV: Establishing/improving the ingredient and input traceability as well as marketing oriented product standardization and certification to enhance safety and marketability of agricultural products in both domestic and international markets

Rationale:

The traceability of food in the market system is critical for food safety and for broader strategic as well as market monitoring purposes. The functioning of the broader food market system is considerably hampered without traceability in the supply chain.

A traceability system could enable agricultural market institutions to trace farmers or areas which do not meet export requirements in terms of standardization, food safety, and sanitary and phytosanitary measures. As a critical complementary to traceability, qualified standardization of products (e.g. size, volume, and ingredients) is required to improve the market access for smallholders' products. Traceability systems based upon sanitary, phytosanitary, feed and food safety regulatory framework, (like animal identification system) feed monitoring and food establishment registry would be an important step to develop the capacity for the surveillance of the supply chain.

Instruments to Realize the Policy Advices:

COMCEC Agriculture Working Group: In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above-mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.

COMCEC Project Funding: Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office calls for projects each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the member countries participating in the Working Groups can submit multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For the above- mentioned policy areas, the member countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding and the COMCEC Coordination Office may finance the successful projects in this regard. These projects may include organization of seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing of analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.