

## COMCEC COVID-19 AGRICULTURE CONSULTATION MEETING

### “THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE IN THE OIC MEMBER STATES”

(Virtual Meeting, June 30th, 2020)\*

“Algeria : the experience of the ministry of agriculture and rural development in tackling the COVID 19 crisis”

**Ms Malika Fadila Korichi Hamana (Director of organic farming, labeling and promotion of agricultural production / Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development)**

### **Part 3. Member Country Experiences in Tackling COVID-19 Crisis in the Area of Agriculture and Food Security**

Initially, I extend my sincere thanks to the COMCEC for creating an opportunity in organizing this important **COVID-19 Agriculture Consultative Meeting** to be held today, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to exchange experiences on the ways the countries members of the COMCEC coped with COVID 19 and its consequences.

The majority of the countries including COMCEC members have taken several measures, including lockdown, quarantine, social distancing which led to the drastic reduction of commercial and economic activities.

The Algerian government has had measures undertaken to limit the spread of COVID-19 by the closure of almost all businesses, and all places of high people concentration as markets including wholesale, retail, cattle.

The stopping of all public transportation, the limitation of 50% of public services workers were also among the important measures.

The lockdown went gradually then had been generalized with the increase of positive diagnostic COVID 19 cases on the national territory.

As consequence, various curfews have been established. Actually from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. (still in effect).

These decisions obviously had a strong impact on agricultural activities, in view of the requirements for diaries feed and milking, plant protection and veterinary treatments as the pandemic had spread while the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development had launched vaccination campaigns. In addition, the closure of businesses had also affected the granaries, sellers of agricultural inputs, private veterinary clinics...

Among the threats, this long lasting situation provokes or could be : a perturbation in food supply needs and offers, the loss of jobs (and income), the lack of investments and direct financing, the decline in exports etc;

**The most important measures are the following :**

#### **At the level of intersectoral coordination**

In order to tackle the pandemic and to ensure the continuity of agricultural activity, including animal husbandry, strong concertation and high-level intersectoral coordination (government) were reinforced by daily monitoring of the local level (48 wilayas –governorates), with the chairmanship of ministry of Interior and national level.

Other joint committees (MADR-Ministry of Solidarity-local authorities) have been established in order to coordinate social actions and lessen the impact on impacted households.

For the ministry of agriculture and rural development, the monitoring is focusing on supply of subsidized basic foods (milk, flour and semolina, pulses...), the authorized movement of farmers, herders and beekeepers, the continuous supply of food chains and agriculture inputs (seed, forages, pesticides, fertilizer ...), stock management, etc.

#### **Disinfection measures**

The Agriculture and Rural Development Sector with its decentralized services (directorate of agricultural services, forest conservation), chambers of agriculture as well as the inter-branch organization, farmers and breeders have been heavily involved in disinfection operations and sterilization of farms, public places, by the mobilization of people, spraying equipment and fund of products.

#### **Solidarity measures**

Very close work was carried out to identify families whose confinement impacted livelihoods. The establishment of solidarity operations to reduce the social cost of these necessary measures, and to ensure the supply of agricultural products and food, in particular those supported by the State, and forming part of the food ration of the Algerian, such as milk, semolina cereals and flour, pasta, fresh vegetables, potato, pulses, meat, poultry, eggs and food products such as oil, sugar, tomato puree and concentrate, coffee and tea etc.

Close monitoring was done with the decentralized services of the Ministry in charge of Solidarity. Numerous caravans of solidarity were thus organized at the level of the wilayas, to reach remote rural areas and strongly impacted, and towards the Wilaya of Blida which was the most affected by Covid19, due to the number of infected and death and who had been in total lockdown during a long period of time.

#### **Food supply monitoring and regulation**

Whether at the local or central level, daily monitoring was done to assure the availability of milk, semolina and flour, poultry, fresh vegetables, potatoes, etc.

The detailed and permanent monitoring concerned the grain availability of the flour mills (monitoring of their quotas and milled quantities). A significant increase was ensured in order to be able to meet the specific demand related to lockdown and quarantine.

Daily potato destocking monitoring by wilaya helped regulate the market and the prices. It was the same with poultry.

## **Multiplying points of sale**

In order to bring products closer to consumers, especially during the Ramadhan, a multitude of points of sale were opened by agro-food economic groups under the supervision of the sector and at farm level, in order to decentralize markets and ensure a large multiplicity of points of sale by avoiding the regrouping of people (safety distances) but also to promote direct sales and increase farmers' incomes during this difficult period.

- More than 380 point-of-sale operations located in 90 municipalities.
- The products are mainly:
  - Seasonal vegetable crops: PDT, tomato, zucchini, salad, green beans, peas, eggplant, fennel, lettuce, pumpkin, aromatic herbs, beans, spinach, carrot, onion, beetroot, artichoke, pepper, pepper...
  - fruits: oranges, Deglet Nour dates, watermelon, melon, strawberry, banana...
  - poultry
  - honey
  - pasteurized and processed milk

It should be noted that for the wilayas of the far south, it was decided to strengthen the nearby markets, because the farms are too far implemented from the centers of residence of the population.

## **Travel permits**

Awareness-raising work was carried out at the level of intersectoral and local coordination, which resulted in the promulgation of Walis decrees relating to the issuance of exceptional travel authorizations for farmers and stockbreeders and sometimes other economic operators in the agricultural sector (Grainetier, veterinarians (clinics and animal drugs sellers) and traders of agricultural inputs (seeds, pesticides, fertilizers), milk collectors, agricultural worker ...)

The orders therefore made it possible for the heads of daïras with the sub-divisions to grant exceptional travel authorization to farmers, breeders, poultry farmers, beekeepers, milk collectors and distributors, employees in slaughterhouses and suppliers of meat and poultry, transport of fodder including green, private veterinarians to ensure the sustainability of the agricultural sector activities.

## **Point 4 further opportunities within the COMCEC**

The followings topics are highly related to the virtual COMCEC "COVID-19 agriculture consultation meeting" and have been discussed as recommendations for further capacity building programs and R&D cooperation projects:

1. development of e-markets for farmers including women,
2. psychology of the customers (on price, on refuge food and agriculture products...) and the inclusion of social sciences in agriculture cooperation projects;
3. to develop sustainable local neglected crops and agrobiodiversity to enhance the resilience of the farmers agriculture systems, the access of high quality diet with local food /crops;
4. to study ways how to achieve the SDGs in this pandemic era Specifically the SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 17 (lessen the COVID19 impact on the achievement of the goals and targets=.