

## **Policy Recommendations adopted by 31st Session of the COMCEC**

- **Research and extension services of the farmer organizations need to be improved for increasing agricultural productivity**

**Rationale:** The delivery of research and extension services is vital for the farmer organizations especially in production phase. Success in agricultural productivity level highly depends on the decisions shaped by the information, knowledge and technologies provided to the farmer organizations. However, due to the lack of financial resources allocated to these services and insufficient infrastructure, the quality of research and extension services is not at desired level in the agriculture sector in many member countries. Therefore, the technical capacity of the farmer organizations in terms of research and extension services need to be improved for increasing agricultural productivity through sharing knowledge and technology in the member countries. The importance of improving the research and extension services of the FOs is also highlighted in the responses of the Member Countries to the policy questions as well as in the analytical study as one of the important policies that would strengthen FOs in the member countries.

- **The capacity of farmer organizations to have access agricultural market information and dissemination of the market information to their members need to be improved**

**Rationale:** The capacity of farmer organizations' access to agricultural market information and dissemination of it in a timely and effective manner has a great importance for farmers to enhance greater access to domestic and foreign markets, to enable production planning, and to improve communication and information access among all stakeholders. The low skills of farmer organizations' access to market information and disseminate it to their members result in high fluctuations in the commodity prices and instability of farmers' income year to year. The analytical study and the answers to policy questions also highlighted the need of greater access and effective dissemination of market information.

- **Adopting/developing quality standards, implementing quality control and identifying market opportunities for standard compliance of agricultural products**

**Rationale:** One of the main challenges for the promotion of agricultural value chains in the OIC Member Countries is ensuring quality along supply chains. Informal characteristic of many value chains is one of the main reasons for the lack of quality standards and incentives for quality improvement. Ensuring quality in formal chains is also a significant challenge due to poor infrastructure, high transport costs and lack of capacity and knowledge on quality standards. In this respect, training and other capacity-building activities are required for supporting them to achieve compliance with emerging quality standards. Moreover, existing quality standards in the Member Countries should be harmonized with the international standards for enabling farmers to penetrate into the international agricultural markets.

Furthermore, producers generally face difficulties in producing products which comply with standards for food safety and quality. Similarly, difficulties occur in identifying favourable markets for their products. Nonetheless, there are also market opportunities for the producers depending on

type of product and target market. For instance, halal products and organic products hold considerable market opportunities for the producers in the Member Countries.

- **Improving transport and storage facilities for promoting value chain development in the Member States through well-developed public-private partnerships**

**Rationale:** The OIC Member Countries have relatively weak agricultural infrastructure, especially in terms of storage facilities and means of transport, which result in high costs and high post-harvest losses, and hinder smallholder farmers' access to market. Hence, developing agricultural infrastructure is particularly important for reducing post-harvest losses and high input costs as well as improving producers' market access. Nonetheless, this requires additional financial resources. Beside public investments, private sector involvement is also needed to have better agricultural infrastructure and logistics. In this respect, welldeveloped public-private partnerships and interested international organizations can be utilized for securing additional financial resources and sharing risks and benefits.

- **Supporting agro-processing and packaging industries to increase the value added of agricultural products**

**Rationale:** Agro-processing industries play a major role in adding value to the agricultural commodities. They upgrade agricultural products from raw materials to sophisticated and high-value commodities and contribute to income generation and to foreign exchange earnings. They also facilitate smallholder farmers' access to agricultural value chains. Nonetheless, in terms of actors, agricultural value chains in the Member Countries highly depend on the large number of smallholder farmers, small-scale processing units and small wholesalers and retailers. In addition, agricultural value chains in the Member Countries mainly depend on raw material such as wheat, rice, maize, fruit and vegetables or milk etc. There is a need to improve agro-processing industries in the Member Countries for adding value to the agricultural products and linking producers to the agricultural value chains. In this respect, public and private sector can be encouraged through sound policies and incentives with a view to increasing investments in agro processing industries. Governments need to support small and medium enterprises through research and development (R&D) activities.