

## **THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF 7<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE COMCEC AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP**

The COMCEC Agriculture Working Group (AWG) has successfully held its 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of “Reducing On-Farm Food Losses in the OIC Member Countries”. During the Meeting, Agriculture Working Group made deliberations for policy approximation among the Member Countries regarding the on-farm food losses in the OIC Member Countries. The Room Document, prepared in accordance with the main findings of the analytical study conducted for the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of AWG and the answers of the Member Countries to the policy questions, was the main input for the discussions. During the Meeting, the participants discussed the policy recommendations given below.

### **Policy Advice I: Identifying the knowledge and information gaps regarding the levels and specific causes of on-farm food losses for key crops and food products with a view to providing solutions for each OIC Member Countries**

#### **Rationale:**

Globally, great efforts have been exerted on improving agricultural productivity, increasing agricultural production, promoting farm activities, and encouraging entrepreneurs in agri-business investments to meet the growing demand for food. Recently, many developed countries, international organizations, multilateral platforms such as G20 have put the issue of food losses and waste on their agenda. Despite the global progress in terms of food loss assessments and food loss reduction, the endeavours for reducing food losses are not at desired levels in the OIC Region, which have vast resources such as labor, land, water, fertilizer, capital and energy.

In this regard, identifying the possible causes of on-farm losses and providing solutions for the losses of crops, animal foods and fishery products of highest interest to the OIC Member Countries would help preventing food losses and ensuring food security in the OIC Region. Nonetheless, most of the OIC Member Countries do not have necessary data/information on the levels and specific causes of on-farm food losses. Therefore, in order to reveal the exact level of on-farm losses and develop sound policies for addressing them, full scale food loss assessment studies may be conducted for the Member Countries by utilizing national and international resources. Furthermore, participation of the Member Countries to the international organizations-sponsored food loss assessment case studies may be encouraged.

### **Policy Advice II: Improving/developing agricultural extension, training and outreach activities for reducing on-farm food losses**

#### **Rationale:**

Agricultural extension services, training and outreach activities and providing necessary information to farmers are very instrumental in preventing on-farm food losses. In this regard,

providing necessary information to farmers about the basic practices such as integrated pest management, sanitation and hygiene, soil and water management, use of maturity indices, gentle harvesting and handling, proper curing of roots and tubers or drying of cereals, pulses, and oilseeds is of particular importance in this respect. To illustrate, in order to properly use agrochemicals in pest management, farmers should know the proper application rates, the time and conditions for application, safety procedures, and so forth.

Agricultural extension services and training and outreach activities may also be very crucial in identifying and analysing farmers' production problems. Moreover, new farming methods and techniques can be introduced by agricultural extension, training and outreach activities so that efficiency and productivity of agricultural sector increase. Furthermore, dissemination and extension of the various technologies through demonstrations to farmers would also contribute to enhance agricultural production processes.

**Policy Advice III: Developing specific programs/projects to address on-farm losses in agricultural value chains in cooperation with the relevant OIC Institutions.**

**Rationale:**

Practices or methods undertaken during the harvesting stage of the production directly affect the level of on-farm food losses and thereby agricultural productivity. For instance, if crops do not receive adequate nutrition, or suffer from pests, sun-burn or wind damages, it would lead to decrease in yield.

In this framework, OIC institutions in collaboration with the relevant international organizations and NGOs may design and provide type projects, e-learning programs and a series of workshops for farmers on food loss assessment, reduction of food losses, and the costs and benefits of making changes in harvesting and handling practices for the various food groups. These 'type projects' may describe key actions, technology packages and include budgets that could be used to develop similar projects in the OIC Member Countries on reducing losses in the value chains. Hence, developing projects which are open to collaborative efforts and feasible with the current resources can enhance collective actions to reduce food losses in the OIC Member Countries.

**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.