

ROOM DOCUMENT FOR THE POLICY DEBATE SESSION OF THE 8TH MEETING OF THE COMCEC AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP

A policy debate session was held during the 8th Meeting of the Agriculture Working Group to come up with some policy recommendations for reducing postharvest losses in the OIC Member Countries and approximating policies among the Member Countries in this important field. The policy advices given below have been identified in light of the main findings of the analytical study titled “*Reducing Postharvest Losses in the OIC Member Countries*” and the responses of the Member Countries to the policy questions which have already been sent by the COMCEC Coordination Office.

Policy Advice I: Setting up national postharvest losses reduction coordination committees with a view to identifying, prioritizing and sharing postharvest losses data and practices across a range of strategic commodities and raising awareness on postharvest losses

Rationale:

Handling and processing of commodities require the necessary technical knowledge and expertise. However, researches on postharvest issues are very scarce among the OIC Member Countries and the benefits that can be gained from them are poorly acknowledged. In this respect, identifying the specific causes of postharvest losses through producing and prioritizing the data related to the postharvest losses in strategic commodities are crucial for ensuring food security. On the other hand, most of the Member Countries do not have the necessary institutional mechanisms to directly deal with the levels and specific causes of postharvest losses. In this regard, establishing coordination committees would be very instrumental for identifying causes of postharvest losses, sharing the good practices and raising awareness. These committees may include all the stakeholders from public sector, private sector and NGOs.

Policy Advice II: Mobilizing agricultural finance providers to allocate more financial resources with a view to addressing agricultural infrastructure investment needs in postharvest losses

Rationale:

Underutilization of proper technologies and lack of required infrastructure investments are among the major causes of postharvest losses in the Member Countries. Ensuring adequate financing is needed for smallholder farmers and agribusiness to adjust latest technologies and methods as well as make necessary infrastructure investments. In this regard, mobilizing finance providers such as development banks, agricultural credit cooperatives or donors, is of particular importance to enable farmers and agribusiness to adjust modern technologies and have necessary equipment for reducing postharvest losses.

Policy Advice III: Improving and developing agricultural extension, training and outreach research activities for reducing postharvest losses

Rationale:

Agricultural extension services, training and outreach activities and providing necessary information to farmers are very instrumental in preventing postharvest losses. Handling, transportation and storage processes should be properly dealt with, particularly for the perishable products. Hence, designing and making use of appropriate methods and technologies bear great importance throughout these processes. In this regard, dissemination and extension of the various technologies through agro-industrial education, training and demonstrations to farmers would contribute to reduce postharvest losses. Therefore, these activities should be extended in the 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.