

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 9TH MEETING OF THE COMCEC AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP

The Agriculture Working Group (AWG) held its 9th Meeting on February 23rd, 2017 with the theme of “*Reducing Food Waste in the OIC Member Countries*”. During the Meeting, the participants deliberated on important policy issues about reducing food waste in the OIC Member Countries and approximating policies among the Member Countries on this important subject. The policy advices presented below have been identified in light of the main findings of the research report prepared specifically for the Meeting and the responses of the Member Countries to the policy questions which were sent by the COMCEC Coordination Office ahead of the Meeting.

Policy Advice I: Developing a specific legislative framework and road map for reducing food waste in a holistic context including supply chain

Rationale:

Development of a legislative framework is considered to be a key issue for reduction of food waste. Many countries have regulations to prevent waste in entire food supply chain. Thus, they aim to ensure that all food is adequately separated from the waste stream and is made available for human consumption. Nonetheless, researches indicate that few OIC Member Countries have legislative framework related to food waste, such as Qatar, Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan and Indonesia.

In this respect, the OIC Member Countries, which do not have any legal framework on food waste, can develop a legal framework and food waste road map. Prior to this, the Member Countries should evaluate the level of waste in general as well as for specific product groups and sectors so that they may focus their efforts to the areas where significant amount of the waste occurs. Doing so, the Member Countries would also contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 12.3 which is “By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses”.

Policy Advice II: Promotion of food banks and food distribution networks

Rationale:

Creation of food banks and food distributions networks are considered to be among the leading ways of reducing food waste both globally and within OIC Member Countries. These initiatives could play an important role in the distribution of food surplus to the needy people. An important successful initiative, in this regard, is the Egyptian-based food bank model. The program was initiated in 2005 and donates more than 17 million meals each month. This program facilitated the participation of more than 400 hotels and restaurants, ranging from five star hotels to local coffee shops in the Egyptian food bank system.

In this framework, development of food banks and distribution networks will help member countries in reducing food waste. Furthermore, the distribution of food that is being unnecessarily wasted can also increase access of poor to food, and thereby can help Member Countries achieve food security. Therefore,

the Member Countries are encouraged to establish food banks or to improve the efficiency of the existing ones.

Policy Advice III: Conducting cohesive initiatives and campaigns to increase awareness on food waste in supply chain and consumption

Rationale:

The research report conducted for this Meeting reveals that significant proportion of the people living in the OIC Member Countries have little concern for food waste. It is also indicated that if they had access to further information on the environmental impacts associated with food waste and the provision of solutions on how to reduce food waste, this would encourage them to reduce food waste. Lack of concern for food waste is applicable to both households and the food service sector. Taking this into consideration, conducting food waste initiatives and creating food waste campaigns should be a priority for OIC Member Countries.

There are various crucial campaigns and initiatives conducted internationally and by member countries to reduce food waste such as Save Food Initiative of UN, Pakistan's 'one-dish law', Indonesia's 'Law on Food' and Turkey's 'Do not waste your bread'. For instance, Turkey has conducted a 'Do not waste your bread' campaign, which resulted in 18 percent reduction in bread waste amounting to US\$ 131 million per day. The OIC Member Countries may examine the experiences of these initiatives, in terms of implementation, evaluation and monitoring taking their unique cultural and social settings into consideration. Furthermore, the active involvement of relevant stakeholders along the food supply is of particular importance for the success of the campaigns/initiatives. In this respect, the campaigns/initiatives should be designed in a way to ensure the active involvement of relevant stakeholders including businesses, local authorities and consumers.

Instruments that can contribute to realizing 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 where the COMCEC Coordination Office may finance 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.
