

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE 15TH MEETING OF THE COMCEC AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP**

A policy debate session was held during the 15th Meeting of the COMCEC Agriculture Working Group. The Working Group came up with some concrete policy recommendations for enhancing good governance practices for ensuring food security and nutrition in the Member Countries. The policy recommendations given below have been identified in light of the main findings of the research report titled "*Good Governance for Ensuring Food Security and Nutrition in the OIC Member Countries*" and the responses from the Member Countries to Policy Questions conveyed by the COMCEC Coordination Office.

***Policy Recommendation I: Developing a comprehensive national food security and nutrition strategy and/or strengthening the existing food security policies and strategies to extend their reach and inclusiveness so that everyone can reap the benefits, including the poorest and the most vulnerable to achieve food security and nutrition for all.***

***Rationale:*** An enabling legal framework accompanied by a comprehensive food security and nutrition policy is of particular importance for the success of the food security governance. A comprehensive food security and nutrition strategy could be developed as the first step of planning for good food security governance. Under the shadow of COVID-19; the said strategy could specifically re-define the vision, goals and priorities of the country on food security governance in line with the current and future food security and nutrition trends of the country, and guide complementary and cross-cutting strategies, laws, and programs, as well as activities for achievement of objectives. In this regard, the member countries may utilize the experiences and facilities provided by the OIC Institutions (e.g. COMCEC, IOFS, SESRIC, SMIIC, IsDB) as well as the international organizations (e.g. UNFAO).

***Policy Recommendation II: Establishing a high level national coordination mechanism (i.e. an inter-ministerial or presidential council) for ensuring a healthy and sustainable multi-stakeholder dialogue for the effective coordination of all governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in the processes of policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring; and endowing it with significant execution power and sufficient human and financial resources.***

***Rationale:*** For successful food security and nutrition policies, governance and coordination mechanisms need to be drastically upgraded in all areas from policy formulation to implementation and monitoring. Effective coordination and coherence mechanisms require an inclusive and participatory process in which all segments of the population, especially the most vulnerable, have their needs and rights properly represented. Different stakeholders have their own objectives, policy preferences, and functions, and this creates an inherent fragmentation in the sphere of governance. The OIC member countries may thus benefit from establishing a high level national coordination mechanism (i.e. inter-ministerial or presidential council), endowed with significant executive power. Member countries may benefit from mandating the operations, meetings, responsibilities, accountability criteria, and stakeholder participation mechanisms of their national coordination mechanisms. Moreover, they are recommended to ensure that the national coordination mechanism has sufficient human and financial resources.

***Policy Recommendation III: Improving the coordination and coherence of policy actions on food security and nutrition in turbulent times (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic) at all levels ranging from sub-national to national; national to bilateral or multilateral; sub-regional to regional, and finally, from OIC-level to global level.***

***Rationale:*** The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic downturn are expected to worsen food insecurity and malnutrition situation in many countries mainly through (i) the declining availability of food (due to contraction of food production and trade) and (ii) the access to food (due to employment and income losses). Recently published figures indicate that, by the end of 2020, 130 million people in low and middle income countries will be added to those already suffering from acute hunger before the pandemic started. Roughly half of the OIC Member Countries are among the countries that face the highest risks due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Minimizing the risks associated with the pandemic necessitates good governance practices especially with respect to the coordination of policy actions at national and sub-national levels and bilateral, OIC-level and finally global levels.

***Policy Recommendation IV: Designing a detailed and transparent implementation plan for the national and sub-national tasks and equipping the fieldwork personnel with relevant know-how and allocating sufficient financial resources to each and every step of the implementation process.***

***Rationale:*** Adopted policies and programs that are not supported by detailed and transparent implementation plans may end up being partially implemented or not implemented as a result of departures of critical post-holders due to new appointments and other bureaucratic obstacles. This is more than highly possible in this new era where COVID-19's negative effects are felt considerably. Therefore, the top challenge regarding implementation is to design the policies and programs with an explicit implementation plan for the national and sub-national tasks. One of the main governance challenges regarding implementation is associated with the lack of sufficient human and financial resources. Therefore, the OIC member countries may focus on mechanisms to train the field-work personnel so as to equip them with relevant know-how, and to allocate sufficient financial resources to each and every step of the implementation process.

***Policy Recommendation V: Establishing an online platform/food information systems (e.g. vulnerability atlas, food security fora) that ideally transmits real-time information on monitoring food security and nutrition governance with a view to generating credible data and statistics and formulating evidence-based policies.***

***Rationale:*** COVID-19 pandemic has shown once more the importance of the monitoring of acute food insecurity through the food information systems. Limited availability of timely, reliable and consistent data on food security and nutrition hampers evidence-based decision making by both public and private sector actors in the Member Countries as well as the international organizations. Besides utilizing the existing instruments such as OIC Statistical Commission (OIC-StatCom) more effectively, new projects that are inter and intra related with other harshly affected sectors (tourism, trade, finance etc.) from COVID-19 need to be designed and conducted to generate credible data and statistics, to strengthen the Member Countries' capacities to analyze them, and support the development of policies, investment and action plans based on this evidence all across the OIC.

***Policy Recommendation VI: Promoting capacity building and knowledge/experience sharing among the OIC Member Countries in the four levels of good governance of food security and nutrition (i.e. (i) Policy and Legal Framework (ii) Coordination and Coherence (iii) Implementation, and (iv) Information-Monitoring-Evaluation.)***

**Rationale:** There are lessons that member countries can learn from the experiences of fellow members within the OIC. When effective sharing and capacity building mechanisms are established, successful outcomes of well-tested food security governance policies and practices in one country can allow others to adopt those without making the costly mistakes that the initiating country may have made during the process of fine-tuning new initiatives, saving valuable resources. Hence, regular or occasional gatherings of policy makers as well as practitioners from member countries to discuss common problems related to food security governance, and creation of staff exchange and training programs can be encouraged. The growing experience of all countries with on-line gatherings and meetings during the pandemic presents itself as an opportunity to make such events increasingly feasible. Also, the countries may seek technical assistance from OIC institutions and/or seek project-based funding from the OIC and other international bodies.

**Instruments to Realize the Policy Recommendations:**

**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.

**Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS):** IOFS, as a specialized institution of the OIC dedicated to promoting food security and nutrition, may contribute to policy formulation in the OIC member countries and support good food security governance within the OIC.

**SESRIC:** Member Countries may utilize the Capacity Building Programs of SESRIC as well as OIC Statistical Commission in the areas related to food security and nutrition.

**IDB Group:** The facilities of the IDB Group, particularly the IsDB Agriculture and Rural Development Policy Implementation, may be utilized by the Member Countries to achieve good governance of food security and nutrition.

**SMIIC:** The Technical Committees of the SMIIC can be utilized.