



**Standing Committee
for Economic and Commercial Cooperation
of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC)**

**Proceedings of the 5th Meeting of the
COMCEC Agriculture Working Group**

**“IMPROVING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY:
STRENGTHENING FARMER ORGANIZATIONS
IN THE OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES.”**



**COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE
March 2015**



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**PROCEEDINGS OF THE 5TH MEETING OF
THE COMCEC AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP
ON**

**“Improving Institutional Capacity: Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the
OIC Member Countries.”
(March 5th, 2015, Ankara, Turkey)**

**COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE
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For further information please contact:

Mr. Mehmet FİDAN
Expert

Mr. Mustafa Adil SAYAR
Expert

COMCEC Coordination Office
Necatibey Caddesi No: 110/A
06100 Yücetepe
Ankara/TURKEY
Phone : 90 312 294 57 10
Fax : 90 312 294 57 77
Web : www.comcec.org
E-mail : comcec@comcec.org
mfidan@comcec.org
msayar@comcec.org

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Introduction

The 5th Meeting of the COMCEC Agriculture Working Group was held on March 5th, 2015 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of “Improving Institutional Capacity: Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the OIC Member Countries”.

The Meeting was attended by the representatives of 11 member countries, which have notified their focal points for the Agriculture Working Group namely, Indonesia, Jordan, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Suriname, The Gambia, Tunisia and Turkey. Representatives of COMCEC Coordination Office, SESRIC, Islamic Development Bank (IDB), General Committee for Agricultural Cooperation in the European Union (COGECA), PANKOBİRLİK, Jordan Exporters and Producers Association (JEPA) and Dalberg Global Development Advisors have also attended the Meeting.¹

After the opening remarks of Mr. Mehmet Metin EKER, the Director General of the COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO), and Dr. Saad Ali BAYUMI, Producer Organizations Coordinator, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation as the Chairman of the Meeting, the representative of the CCO made a presentation on “COMCEC Agriculture Outlook 2014”. In his presentation the representative of the CCO briefed the participants about the current state of the agriculture sector with special reference to the agricultural sources and common challenges in the member countries as well as the essence of the agriculture sector for their economies.

The Meeting discussed the findings of the analytical study titled “Improving Institutional Capacity: Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the OIC Member Countries” which was prepared by the COMCEC Coordination Office especially for the Meeting with a view to enriching the discussions. In this respect, the Meeting considered the role of farmer organizations (FOs) in enabling farmers to realize economic benefits that they would not otherwise achieve alone, and the current strength of farmer organizations within the OIC as well as collaborative solutions to increase the effectiveness of FOs in the member countries. Furthermore, the representatives of the member countries have shared their experiences, achievements and challenges about the role of farmer organizations (FOs) in enabling farmers to realize economic benefits.

The Meeting also provided the opportunity for the participants to consider the experience of international institutions, NGOs and local authorities in activation policies and programmes. Lastly, the participants were informed about the COMCEC Project Cycle Management (PCM) and the ongoing projects that are being implemented under the COMCEC PCM.

¹ The list of participants is attached as Annex 4.

1. Opening Session

In line with the tradition of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Meeting started with the recitation from the Holy Quran. Following the recitation from Holly Quran, Mr. M. Metin EKER, Director General of the COMCEC Coordination Office shortly introduced the participants the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC), which has been working towards enhancing economic and commercial cooperation among the 57 member countries for 30 years.

Mr. EKER, in his opening remarks, informed the participants about the COMCEC Strategy, which was adopted by the 4th Extraordinary Session of the Summit Conference, held in 2012, in order to give a new impetus and to add new dimensions to the ongoing cooperation among the member countries. Mr. EKER mentioned that the COMCEC Strategy introduced a new mission. According to the new mission, COMCEC will serve as a platform where knowledge is produced, experiences are shared, common understanding is built and policy approximation is achieved in common development challenges.

Afterwards, Mr. EKER expressed that agriculture is one of the six WGs which convenes twice a year. He stated that increasing the agriculture productivity in the OIC Member Countries is the strategic objective of the agriculture section of the COMCEC Strategy. The outputs of these WG meetings are reported to Ministerial Meeting for final deliberation and decision. He emphasized that two important mechanisms were introduced with the Strategy, Working Group (WG) and COMCEC Project Cycle Management. Working Group (WG) Mechanism provides a regular platform for bringing experts from relevant ministries and institutions of the member countries to discuss major cooperation areas identified by the COMCEC Strategy.

Mr. EKER, furthermore, stressed the COMCEC PCM through which the member countries as well as the related OIC institutions may apply for financial support to the projects that are developed to realize the objectives of the COMCEC Strategy. COMCEC PCM aims to directly engage the member countries' institutions and the OIC institutions into the cooperation efforts under the COMCEC. Briefly mentioning the operating mechanism of the PCM, Mr. EKER, expressed that regular calls for project proposals being made by the COMCEC PCM Department usually in September. He reminded the participants that in September 2015 there will be a similar call and invited them to consider submitting project proposals on behalf of their respective institutions.

Substantial portion of OIC population lives in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. In 2012 the agricultural population in OIC countries was 35 percent. In this sense, agriculture is a vital sector for economies of our member countries not only because it is directly related to the food security in member countries but also it has importance for generating income and employment. Around 80 percent of all farms in the OIC Countries are small holder farmers. Therefore, we should concentrate more on the efficiency of the small holder farmers and how they can be more productive for increasing the overall agricultural output in our Member Countries.

Then Mr. EKER expressed that theme of this Meeting is also related to the objective of increasing the smallholder farmers' efficiency. In this respect, an analytical study titled "Improving Institutional Capacity: Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the OIC Member Countries" prepared for this Meeting. According to Study, 47 out of 52 Member Countries have national-level institutional and legal arrangements giving legal standing/status to farmer organizations and other co-operatives. Furthermore, 81% of the Member Countries (42 out of 52 analyzed) have some sort of apex body for farmer organizations.

Subsequently, Dr. Saad Ali BAYUMI, Producer Organizations Coordinator, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, was designated as the chairman of the Meeting. He thanked all participants for electing him as the Chairman and welcomed them all to the 5th Meeting of the Agriculture Working Group.

2. The COMCEC Agriculture Outlook 2014

Mr. E. Emrah HATUNOĞLU, Expert from the COMCEC Coordination Office has made a presentation on the key findings of the COMCEC Agriculture Outlook 2014.

Mr. HATUNOĞLU informed the participants that he will first focus on the performance of OIC member countries' agricultural sector performance by looking at GDP, trade, population, labor productivity, Crops production and yields. Secondly, he will examine the land use, irrigation and fertilizer usage of OIC countries.

He mentioned that there is an increasing trend regarding the share of OIC Agricultural production in the world agricultural production. Agricultural GDP of OIC Member Countries was 192 billion \$ with a share of 15 percent in the world's agricultural production in 1990 whereas in 2013 these figures have reached to 677 billion \$ and 21 percent respectively. Furthermore, OIC member countries have 29 percent of total world agricultural area. However, they have a relatively lower performance in agriculture. Therefore, there is a need to increase the share of OIC agricultural production in the world.

Mr. HATUNOĞLU, looking at the sub-regional level namely, African, Arab and Asian groups, noted that Asian group has the highest contribution to the agricultural production over the years. The contribution of Asian group to this value is 400 billion \$ which is more than half of the agricultural GDP of the OIC Region. However, from the statistics it can be pointed out that the relative performance of African group is getting stronger compared to the Arab and Asian groups. From 1990 to 2013, the share of African group agricultural GDP in OIC agricultural GDP increased from 16 percent to 22 percent.

He stated that agricultural commodity trade of the 57 OIC Member Countries has increased considerably in the period from 1990 to 2011. In 2011, total agricultural commodity import of the OIC Region reached to 205 billion US Dollars from 35 billion US Dollars in 1990. Correspondingly, total agricultural commodity export of OIC has also risen to 143 billion US Dollars. He noted that the ratio of export to import was around 58 percent in 1990, it increased to almost 70 percent in 2011. Although the OIC Region has agricultural trade deficit, the increasing trend in export/import ratio is good news.

Mr. HATUNOĞLU underlined that the share of OIC Member countries' agricultural imports in the world increased to 15,2 percent in 2011 from 9,9 percent in 1990. Correspondingly, the contribution of OIC agricultural exports to world total agricultural export reached to 10,9 percent. He states that the important point is that both agricultural import and export has significantly risen in the period of 2005-2011.

He emphasised that according to the SESRIC statistics, the agricultural population of the OIC Member Countries was 566 million as of 2012. This means that 35,5 percent of OIC total population is agricultural population. While the agricultural population was 492 million people in 1990, it increased to 568 million people in 2012. Moreover, the share of agricultural population in total population is decreasing in the OIC. While the share agricultural population in total OIC population was 47,7 percent in 1990, this figure realized as 42,8 percent in 2000 and 35,1 percent in 2012.

Mr. HATUNOĞLU stated that labor productivity was higher than the world average in the OIC in all examined years of 2000 and 2012. In this framework, Arab Group has the highest labor productivity among the three regions with a 5.000 Dollar/person in 2013. The level of labor productivity in African Group is the least one in the OIC. It is also lower than world average. The low levels of mechanization and fertilizer use, water scarcity and using labor intensive methods are the main reasons of the low agricultural labor productivity in this sub-region.

Mr. HATUNOĞLU noted that OIC Member Countries' total land area is 3,2 billion hectares and it is equal to almost 25 percent of the world. Almost 1,42 billion hectares, representing 44,5 percent of this total land is used as agricultural area. Out of 1,42 billion hectares agricultural area, 293 million hectares are arable land, 55 million hectares are reserved for permanent crops, and 1,04 billion hectares are used as permanent meadows and pastures. He underlined that most of the OIC Member Countries' agricultural area consists of permanent meadows and pastures with 73,5 percent.

Regarding the share of agriculture sector in water consumption he mentioned that agricultural sector is the most important user of freshwater with 70 percent at the global level. In the OIC, the level of share of agriculture in total water consumption is the highest with 90 percent. In addition to OIC, in developing regions like Africa and Asia, agriculture uses 86 and 81 percent of their total water, respectively. This situation discloses that share of agriculture in water consumption is higher in continents having low level precipitation than arid and semi-arid ones. Mr. HATUNOĞLU informed the participants that looking at the period between 2002 and 2011, the fertilizer use in OIC Region increase to 50 kg/hectar to 70 kg/hectar. Even this increasing trend is promising for agricultural productivity, the fertilizer usage is still at the level of world average.

He expressed that according to the FAO report, 868 million people representing 12,5 percent of the global population chronically suffer from undernourishment. It clearly reveals that most of the OIC Member Countries are located in the area facing severe hunger especially in Asian and Sub-Saharan African group countries. Moreover, hunger ratio is lower in countries located on Mediterranean Basin. This Figure displays that the number of undernourished people in the OIC decreased from 194 million people in 1990-1992, to 179 million people in 2005-2007 in parallel with the global trend. However, this figure increased to 185 million people in 2010-2012. Mr. HATUNOĞLU emphasized that looking Food Security Index it can be seen that it includes 34 OIC Countries. On the other hand, comparing 2013 and 2014, it can be seen that most of the OIC countries have improved their Food Security Score considerably. While 26 out of 34 OIC countries has improved their score, only 8 OIC countries have deteriorated their score.

He concluded his presentation with underscoring the challenges and recommendations. He noted the challenges of OIC Agriculture sector as follows:

- ✓ Low productivity,
- ✓ Inefficient use of land and water resources
- ✓ Inefficient use of agricultural machinery and technologies,
- ✓ Poor market performance,
- ✓ Inadequate agricultural planning and strategy making,
- ✓ Lack of reliable and up-to-date data,
- ✓ Lack of effective governance
- ✓ Poor risk management of natural disasters

He also made some recommendations for a strong agriculture sector across the OIC region as follows:

- ✓ To make efforts to increase agricultural productivity,
- ✓ To increase collaboration on information share,
- ✓ To increase intra-OIC agricultural technology transfer,
- ✓ To make efforts to enhance intra-OIC agricultural investments,
- ✓ To increase efficiency of agricultural commodity markets

3. Improving Institutional Capacity: Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the OIC Member Countries

3.1. Overview of Farmer Organizations and Policy Environment in the Member Countries

Mr. Aly-Khan JAMAL, Head of the Agriculture & Food Security Practice at Dalberg Global Development Advisors, made a presentation on “Farmer Organizations and the Policy Environment in Member Countries”.

In his presentation, Mr. JAMAL focused on the major findings of the study on “Improving Institutional Capacity: Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the OIC Member Countries”, prepared for the 5th Meeting of the COMCEC Agriculture Working Group.

Mr. JAMAL began his presentation by explaining why farmer organizations (FOs) are important. He explained that they are active in all stages of agricultural value chains, from the provision of inputs for primary production to the processing, distribution, and export of value-added processed goods. He gave examples of some of the benefits farmers can see through membership in FOs, including access to improved storage and transport options to reduce marketing costs and losses, and access to new types of markets to realize higher prices for their goods.

Mr. JAMAL then discussed common capacity challenges faced by FOs around the world, which can be divided into three types: Agricultural-Related, including for example the ability to provide training and inputs for their members and access information about pricing and markets; Managerial, including for example understanding contract law and registration procedures as well as basic accounting; and Political Engagement, including the ability to effectively advocate for their members. He also noted that FOs sometimes suffer from low participation rates, which can be due to factors including the perception that FOs are controlled by the government (which reduces members’ sense of ownership and desire to participate), the exclusion of groups such as women or very small-scale farmers, and the perception that FO leadership is weak or unaccountable. He stressed that perception is just as important as reality in this regard, since FO success depends on active participation and the trust of its members.

Afterwards, Mr. JAMAL informed that participants about the state of FOs in the Member Countries. He first stated that in many OIC countries, membership in FOs is fairly high, and presented statistics on FO membership as a percentage of the total agricultural workforce in 20 OIC countries. The average of these countries’ participation rates is 30%, which he noted compares favourably with non-OIC low and middle-income countries such as Ghana, Thailand, and Ethiopia. However, he explained that data availability is a major challenge, as data on the number of FOs or the number of

FO members was available for only 58% of OIC countries examined². In 42% of countries, no data at all on the size of the farmer organization sector is available, which creates challenges for understanding whether interventions to expand FOs are working. He noted that this is a problem around the world, not just in the OIC.

Next, Mr. JAMAL emphasized that within the OIC, many governments have established bodies with a specific mandate to work with farmer organizations. 73% of countries examined had such a body, which is a positive step as it represents a tangible commitment by the government to strengthen FOs. He expressed, however, that the next task is to ensure that such bodies are effective at delivering services in the field. Also on the subject of Member Country government actions, he noted that the study uncovered many examples of Member Country policies and initiatives designed to strengthen FOs, and that these fell into 3 categories. He briefly presented nine such examples from across the OIC, including one from each category: for countries that have recently undergone a process of political change. Mr JAMAL explained Egypt as an example, where constitutional protections for Farmers Organizations have recently been introduced, within a broader context of supporting the development of civil society institutions. For countries that face challenges related to food and water security, Mr JAMAL pointed to Kuwait as an example where the Ministry of Agriculture has promised further efforts to support FOs in collaboration with the Kuwaiti Farmers' Union in light of rising production costs. Finally for countries in West Africa, where significant experimentation has been undertaken in FOs – primarily driven by a thriving donor environment that has a high level of focus on Farmers Organizations – Mr JAMAL noted the examples of Benin that has made it easier to form and register FOs, and Guinea-Bissau, which was the first country in the world to implement Recommendation 193 from the International Labor Organization.

Mr. JAMAL then presented a series of short case studies on actual farmer organizations in the OIC, which were visited and assessed as part of the study. These FOs were found in four countries (Senegal, Morocco, Uganda, and Indonesia), and were rated using a six-dimension scoring tool that assesses an FO's performance according to "best practice" goals in the areas of Governance, Business Fundamentals, Representation, Strategic Potential, TA & Other Services, and Economic Gains to Members.

The first case study focused on the Uganda Coffee Farmers' Alliance (UCFA), a national and sub-national FO focused exclusively on coffee. Mr. JAMAL explained that this organization consists of 50,000 farmers organized into three levels of FOs (village, district, and national) and provides services for its members including negotiation with international buyers and assistance with obtaining credit and farming inputs. He mentioned that it has a strong governance structure, but its challenges include side-selling by its members (which deprives the UCFA of revenue from commissions) and a lack of a long-term written development strategy.

The second case study covered Tighanimine Filahia Argan Oil Cooperative, a local Moroccan women's FO focused on the production and marketing of argan oil. Mr. JAMAL noted that this FO helps its members to access better overseas and domestic markets for their goods and earn a higher income by selling certified products, and that it is especially strong in its governance structure and business fundamentals. He mentioned that its challenges include a small client base, competitive pressures, and limited long-term strategic planning or budgeting.

Next, Mr. JAMAL presented the example of the Consortium for Agrarian Reform (KPA) in Indonesia, which is a national-level "apex" FO focused on advocacy for small-scale farmers. He explained that this FO differs from others profiled in that it focuses more on political advocacy and the provision

² please look at the Annexes of the analytical study titled "Improving Institutional Capacity: Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the OIC Member Countries" for the details regarding the Member Countries examined in the Study,

of legal services to members (e.g. for those facing eviction), although it also helps its members access information, inputs, and financial services. He mentioned that the KPA is the strongest in Representation but has challenges including a lack of access to inputs for its members and a lack of access to better markets and value-addition opportunities.

The final case study was on the Cadre de Concertation des Producteurs d'Arachide (CCPA), a national-scale Senegalese FO focused on groundnut production and marketing. Mr. JAMAL explained that this FO has over 10,000 members and supports local producer groups by training their leaders, linking farmers to inputs including improved seeds, and advocating for government support to the groundnut sector. He noted that it is strong in representation and business fundamentals but faces challenges including a perceived lack of support from local partners and the government and a lack of a coherent approach to the training of staff.

Following these case studies, there were a series of clarification questions raised by the attendees from various Member Countries, as well as a short discussion on specific challenges faced by farmer organizations in the Member Countries.

Questions and Remarks

Remark: Mr. Kalaitzis, representing COGEGA underlined that the reasons forcing farmer organizations to change themselves needed to be evaluated. Furthermore, the wider development framework that is driving changes have to be taken into account, besides market developments. The wider political context also needed to be taken into consideration. In this respect, one of the main drivers for this context is market liberalization. In other words, widening competition in the market as well as different aspects of conditions across countries is the fundamental force to direct change for farmer organizations.

Question: Representative of Sudan, Dr. Saad Ali BAYUMI, raised two issues. He firstly stated that when the number of farmers joining a farmer organization increased, the management problems occurred. Secondly, in Sudan farmers do not trust the farmer organizations. In this framework, he asked that how can we convince to the farmers join farmer organizations?

Answer: The issue of trust is very dependent on historical, geographical and cultural matters. However, there are some generalities. One of these generalities is that farmers do not want to have farmers plunging into an organization directly which has several hundred thousand members. Because, it is unclear how much real influence they could have in decision making, etc. Uganda has good practice in dealing with this issue. They have three tier structure, the national level organization (21 district cooperatives) and under each of these there are local farmer organizations.

3.2. Recent Trends in Strengthening Farmer Organizations (FOs) at a Global Level and Recommendations for the Member Countries

Mr. Aly-Khan JAMAL, Head of the Agriculture & Food Security Practice at Dalberg Global Development Advisors, presented findings on “Recent Trends in Strengthening FOs at a Global Level and Recommendations for the Member Countries”, also based on the findings from the study on “Improving Institutional Capacity: Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the OIC Member Countries” mentioned in the previous section.

Mr JAMAL began by explaining that there are five key principles that are characteristic of strong farmer organizations, namely 1) a trusted, shared agenda; 2) financial stability; 3) an educated and skilled membership base; 4) good governance; and 5) resourceful and effective outreach. He noted that actions to help FOs develop these characteristics often focus on building capacity in three areas, including technical capacity, institutional and managerial capacity, and political capacity.

Mr JAMAL continued his presentation by giving examples of different strategies for building capacity in these three areas. He noted that bodies that want to support FOs often engage directly with FOs to address their technical constraints in production and marketing. He explained that FO-supporting bodies also engage directly with FOs to improve their managerial capacity and political capacity. In this area, he mentioned that among other actions, outside bodies can provide training to farmer-managers to develop managerial capacity, as well as coaching and mentorship on financial management. He also noted that FO-strengthening bodies can play a role in improving the enabling environment, for example by advocating for regulations that affirm the rights of members and require good FO governance structures, or by encouraging the removal of government control to allow FOs to maintain autonomy.

To illustrate how a cohesive strategy to support FOs on all fronts can be developed, Mr. JAMAL shared an example of one organization's multi-part strategy for strengthening FOs, which involved activities across four different focus areas, including 1) investing in strengthening service providers; 2) investing in training models for FOs; 3) building an evidence base of and sharing findings on solutions that work; and 4) amplifying the voice of the farmers through advocacy work. He also discussed the UN International Labor Organization (ILO)'s Recommendation 193 as an example of a pro-FO legislative framework that is designed to be incorporated into national policy. He explained that Recommendation 193 contains legal principles that foster the creation of strong FOs on the basis of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equity, and solidarity.

The discussion then turned to recommendations for COMCEC Member Countries to consider in order to strengthen FOs within the OIC. Mr. JAMAL first discussed ways of incorporating the voice and needs of FOs into agricultural budgeting and program development, such as by advocating for increased budgetary support to extension services that serve FOs and by ensuring that FO voices are heard in consultations between member governments and international agricultural donors. He then discussed the recommendation to advance smallholder-focused financial services within the OIC, such as by encouraging the conducting of market research in order to identify the needs of FOs in specific regions and explore and test potential financial product solutions.

Afterwards, Mr. JAMAL presented some thoughts on ways that Member Countries could collaborate with each other and with organizations outside the OIC in order to strengthen OIC FOs. First, he mentioned that there is an opportunity for Member Countries to collaborate with the ILO to incorporate the pro-FO principles of Recommendation 193 into their national laws. Second, he noted that there is the possibility of convening a policy learning exchange, in collaboration with an international agricultural group such as CGIAR or IFAD, where representatives from the Member Countries could meet to discuss and learn about pro-FO policy experimentation happening in other regions of the OIC.

The third such recommendation was that Member Countries collaborate with SESRIC and international groups such as the FAO to encourage better collection of FO-related data. He explained that there were three types of statistics that would be beneficial to focus on, namely 1) the number of registered FOs; 2) an estimate of FO membership as a percentage of the agricultural workforce; and 3) budgetary allocations to FO-promotion efforts.

The presentation concluded with a short discussion focusing on how Member Countries perceived and responded to recent global trends for strengthening FOs.

Questions and Remarks

Question: An important problem in Palestine is that the cooperatives work alone and make efforts only for their own projects rather than the projects considering the interest of all farmers. In this regard, how can we strengthen the cooperative spirit and culture among farmers?

Answer: With respect to the question of the Palestinian delegate, the representative of COMCEC Coordination Office stated that in many member countries this feeling might be there. The enabling environment issue, the existence of legal framework and a supporting agency might be helpful to overcome difficulties that are generated due to lack of experience with cooperatives. Selfishness is a human weakness and it can be everywhere not only in developing countries also in developed countries. The institutions and legal arrangements are there to subsume these difficulties that would be faced due to human weakness and to overcome the lack of spirit for cooperation. In that sense, if there is a well-established enabling environment, legal and institutional arrangements and if there is already cooperatives running successfully, an incomer, no matter how selfish drives he has inside, will have to abide by the rules and customs that are already there and practiced.

4. Policy Discussion Session

During the policy discussion session, moderated by Dr. Metin TÜRKER, Deputy Director General at Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock of the Republic of Turkey, the participants focused on mainly two issues; improving research and extension services of the farmer organizations in the Member Countries and improving access and dissemination of farmer organizations to the market information.

At the outset, Mr. Mustafa Adil SAYAR, Expert at the COMCEC Coordination Office, made a presentation on the answers of the Member Countries to the policy questions and policy recommendations highlighted in the room document.

In his presentation Mr. SAYAR informed the participants that for developing common language and approximating policies as well as finding solutions to the challenges faced by the Member Countries, CCO aims to enrich discussions made during the meeting and to add policy dimensions to the discussions. For this purpose, CCO prepares and shares policy questions with the Member Countries. In consideration of the answers of the Member Countries and recommendations made by the analytical study, a room document, which includes policy recommendations regarding the theme of the WG Meeting, is prepared and distributed by the CCO. After the finalization of these policy recommendations, they are submitted to the COMCEC Ministerial Meetings as an output of the working group meetings.

Similarly, for this meeting, some policy questions prepared and distributed to registered members of the AWG before the meeting. Mr. SAYAR informed the participants that they received responses from 8 countries out of 24 countries registered to the AWG (These are Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Mauritania, Palestine, Sudan, Suriname and Turkey). The policy questions were as follows:

1. Does your country have any strategy/programme for encouraging farmer organizations to build technical capacity of smallholder farmers?

2. Has your country conducted joint technical support programmes / projects in cooperation with other countries and international organizations to strengthen farmer organizations?
3. Do you have any regulations or strategies/ programmes creating environment for building autonomous farmer organizations?
4. Do you have any specific institution/department in your country providing technical and financial support to farmer organizations?
5. What are the other cooperation opportunities among the Member Countries for increasing the efficiency of farmer organizations? Which concrete steps can be taken under the umbrella of the COMCEC?

Mr. SAYAR summarized the responses of the Member Countries. He stated that most of the respondent Member Countries have a strategy or legal framework for technical capacity-building of farmer organizations. Most of these countries are especially focused on agricultural extension services and agribusiness management. For instance, Indonesia has a comprehensive legal framework which contains the development of agricultural research and extension capacity and also development of business management skills among farmers. Regarding enabling regulatory environment for building autonomous farmer organizations, all member countries have such regulations, but it is also underlined that farmer organizations need advisory role of the government for reaching information and technology transfer.

The respondents also focused on the need of establishing a network among the farmer organizations in the Member Countries. Besides, sharing successful farmer organization practices were also highlighted in the answers of the member countries.

Mr. SAYAR concluded his presentation with introducing the Room Document prepared in light of the answers to the policy questions and recommendations given in the analytical study. In this respect, the following two issues are highlighted in the Room document. These are: “improving research and extension services of the farmer organizations” and “improving access and dissemination of market information.”

Based on intensive deliberations, CCO drafted attached document³ reflecting the main points of agreement by the delegations. It was agreed that CCO will circulate this draft document to all members of Agriculture Working Group for their views and comments to be conveyed to the CCO. After incorporating the Member States’ contributions, this document will be submitted to the 31st Meeting of the Follow-up Committee of the COMCEC as well as 31st Ministerial Session of the COMCEC to be held on 13-14 May 2015 and 23-26 November 2015 respectively, as an outcome of the 5th AWG Meeting.

The policy recommendations highlighted by the participants are as follows:

- 1- Research and extension services of the farmer organizations need to be improved for increasing agricultural productivity.
- 2- The capacity of farmer organizations to access to agricultural market information and dissemination of the market information to their members needs to be improved.

³ The policy recommendations document is attached as Annex 3.

5. Member State Presentations

In this section, member country representatives had chance to present the activation policies/programmes being implemented in their respective countries. Participants from Cameroon, Tunisia and Turkey made presentations.

5.1. Indonesia

Mr. Fathan RASYID, Director, Ministry of Agriculture of Indonesia made a presentation on the Agriculture Extension in Indonesia: Moving towards Farmer Empowerment. At the beginning of his presentation MR. RASYID informed the participants that about 45 percent of the country's work force engaged in agricultural activities. Therefore, agricultural development has a central role as the backbone of Indonesia economic development. The substance of agricultural development is to develop agricultural human resources. This can be achieved if the positive interaction between the farmers and agricultural extension occur as a partner for farmers who implement system and sustainability.

He stated that agricultural extension services as an integral part of agricultural development has been implemented since before the independence of Indonesia. After independence, agriculture extension policy in Indonesia was centralized (top down) with a tight coordination between related institutions from the center to the regions. This centralized process allowed Indonesia to achieve self-sufficiency in rice by 1984. In 2006, Indonesia established law No 16/2006 on Agriculture, Fishery and Forestry Extension System.

Mr. RASYID noted that the purpose of this law is to give directives for farmer empowerment and capacity building by non-formal education to develop agribusiness and increase their prosperity. The law guides implementation of agricultural extension services carried out by the Government and Local Governments. Organization of agricultural extension is arranged jointly between the extension and farmers. Moreover, institutional relations of the agricultural extension from central to the district are open. Financing of extension services is a shared responsibility between the central and local governments, farmers and private funding. The law obligates local government to organize agricultural extension institutions at provincial and district levels. Most of provinces and districts have established extension institutions and have a budget for extension activities, which cover the operational costs for all field extension staff.

He noted that the main strategy is to establish credible extension institution in order to increase better service for farmer, private sector and other stakeholders. Moreover, to increase competency and professionalism of extension worker and to occupy one village one extension worker by optimizing the role of public, temporary, contractual extension worker and farmer facilitator. In this framework, five main programs developed, namely Extension Institution Development, Extension Manpower Development, Farmer Institution Empowerment, Optimizing Extension Implementation Arrangement and Improving Provision Support to Extension Facilities and Financial.

Regarding the personnel management and development he stated that the management of extension personnel at the localities was transferred from central to provincial and district government and some of extension workers were transferred to other offices. There is a shift in the paradigm of extension approaches from top-down to dialogic extension that involve farmer

participation. Furthermore, besides the government extension workers, farmer facilitators also serve other farmers at village level and work as agricultural extension workers (farmer to farmer extension).

Mr. RASYID lastly stressed that national extension systems in Indonesia is ongoing process, continuing to focus on technology transfer strategy for the sustainability of staple food crops, with the goal of achieving national food security and improving the incomes and livelihoods of limited resource farm households. In this respect, the law no 16/2006 on system of agricultural, fishery, and forestry extension revitalized agricultural extension in Indonesia and gave opportunity for private sector and NGO become involved in agricultural extension. In addition, the law no 19/2013 on Farmer Protection and Empowerment gives an opportunities to decentralized, farmer-led and market-driven extension towards farmer empowerment by strengthening farmer organizations.

5.2. Palestine

Mr. Fouad KHARMA, Head of NGOs Division, from Ministry of Agriculture of Palestine, made a presentation on the experience of Palestine on the agricultural co-operatives. In his presentation Mr. KHARMA stated that first co-operative (for tobacco farmers) was established in Acre in 1924. However, unorganized cooperative work had started before this year due to strong traditional family and community ties. The first law for cooperatives issued in 1933 and about 244 Arab Cooperatives were registered by 1948. He noted that majority of these cooperatives focused on agriculture, rural development and transportation.

Mr. KHARMA informed the participants that General Directorate of Cooperatives/ Ministry of Labour (MoL) is the official body responsible for registering and supervising cooperatives. Jordanian Cooperative Law No. 17 of 1956 still applies in the West Bank, and Egyptian Cooperative Law No. 50 of 1933 and the Cooperative Regulation No. 1 of 1934 are still operational in the Gaza Strip. Recognizing the need for a new law that meets and copes with the challenges and development aspirations of the cooperative movement in Palestine, the General Directorate of Cooperatives, in collaboration with ILO, has finally drafted a new law on cooperatives in 2010. Draft Law was forwarded to the President's Office for approval in June 2010.

He stated that the Draft Law envisages the establishment of the General Commission for Regulating Cooperatives (GCRC), a semi-autonomous policy and service structure, including all line ministries (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture) and stakeholders. GCRC has a planning, coordinating, facilitating and regulatory role. Its key objectives include:

- ✓ Down policies and annual, mid-term and long-term plans for the cooperative sector.
- ✓ Strengthen coordination and cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions.
- ✓ Ensure the implementation of the new law on cooperatives and its subsequent by-laws and regulations.

With regard to the current situation of Palestinian Agricultural Cooperatives, Mr. KHARMA noted that total number of active cooperatives in Palestine is approximately 610. Around 283 of these cooperatives are farmers' cooperative. Value of Assets of cooperatives is estimated at \$137 million. Agricultural cooperatives' share is 18 percent. He further explained that the production value of cooperative agricultural holdings is estimated at \$233 million, which accounts for 28 percent of the total agricultural production.

He stated that around 46 percent of active cooperatives operate in agriculture and approximately 19 thousand workers (22 percent of agriculture labour force) are employed in these holdings. Moreover, Agricultural cooperatives work mainly in 5 sub-sectors (livestock 32 percent, crop production 29 percent, agricultural services 25 percent, olives 10 percent, rural development, saving and lending 4 percent).

Regarding the support of the government to the agricultural cooperatives, Mr. KHARMA stressed that most funding comes from donors, sometimes in coordination with government competent bodies, but in many cases directly to the cooperative.

In his presentation Mr. KHARMA underlined that the main challenges are; weak relations between state and cooperatives, weak cooperative spirit (cooperative principles/ values) among cooperatives, weak administration & financial skills, etc. He concluded his presentation with mentioning some recommendations;

- ✓ Approving the new cooperative law (GCRC, Cooperative Institute, Coop. Development Fund)
- ✓ Institutionalizing cooperative education and training (Cooperative Institute) to enhance cooperation principles and values.
- ✓ Institutionalizing financial support (credit services through Cooperative Development Fund).
- ✓ Replicating good practice case studies at the national, regional and global levels.
- ✓ Introducing special support programmes for women cooperatives.
- ✓ Promoting regional and inter-regional cooperation toward cooperative development.
- ✓ Membership in the ICA (exchange expertise, skills, etc.)

5.3. Turkey

Dr. Erhan EKMEN, Coordinator from the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock of the Republic of Turkey made a presentation on “Producer Organizations in Turkey and Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the OIC Member Countries.” In his presentation, Dr. EKMEN highlighted the importance of farmer organizations in the world and EU, structure of FOs in Turkey, and finally gave some recommendation for the OIC Member Countries.

At the outset, Dr. EKMEN underlined the significant roles of farmer organizations. Considering the global food crises derived from population growth, climate change, reduction of land and water resources, Agricultural cooperatives and agri-food and food distribution cooperatives play a major role in improving of food security and contributing to the eradication of hunger.

Dr. EKMEN also explained the regulations regarding producer organizations in European Union. According to Mr. EKMEN, after the reform process in EU Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy in 2013, responsibilities and tasks of the EU producer organizations were much more increased than before. He also informed the participants regarding the responsibilities of producer organizations in the EU as follows:

- Keeping of the records of farmers, produced and marketed products,
- Preparation of the production and marketing plan,
- Establishment of operating fund for the plan,
- Operation of the intervention system if it is necessary for price stability in the market and the realization of the planned production.

He also underlined that Turkey aims to harmonize the policies with EU in order to increase the competitiveness of the producers in the market and the value chain such as their counterparts in Europe. With this purpose, Turkey conducted many projects with EU in this harmonization process.

Dr. EKMEN also informed the participants regarding the administrative and legal framework of agricultural producer organizations in Turkey. General Directorate of Agricultural Reform in the Ministry has many roles for strengthening farmer organizations such as:

- Organizing farmers
- Principal agreement changes and legislative works,
- Collaboration and cooperation with international producer organizations,
- Harmonization with the EU of Turkish agricultural organizations during the Accession Period to the EU,
- Support and audit organized farmers,
- Empowering institutional capacity of agricultural organizations.

In order to support producer organizations for market access, the Ministry provides support of the training and publications for producer organizations, gives them advantages in financing technology, education and competition in comparison to big marketing organizations.

Dr. EKMEN concluded his presentation by giving some recommendations for the OIC Member Countries. He highlighted the importance of sharing of information and experience between producer organizations in the Member Countries with technical training and expert exchange. Moreover, he also underlined the significance of establishing joint brands that allow for opening up to global markets and jointly organising trade fairs and exhibitions or attending globally acclaimed major activities with joint stands. He also informed the participants that a new project of Turkey on “The Establishment of Database, Network Connection and Web-pages of Smallholders Farmer’s Agricultural Cooperatives between COMCEC Member States” has been final-listed within COMCEC Project Funding Mechanism and will begin its implementation this year.

6. Multilateral Efforts/Non-Governmental Initiatives for Supporting Farmer Organizations

6.1. COGECA’s Experience in Strengthening Farmer Organizations

Mr. Prodromos KALAITZIS, Senior Policy Advisor on “Developments in EU Agri-food Cooperatives”, General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives (COGECA), made a presentation regarding the experiences of COGECA in Strengthening Farmer Organizations.

At the outset, Mr. KALAITZIS informed the participants that European agri-food cooperatives constitute the main type of organisational structure of European farmers. Their main objective is to gain as much value added for their products, by building-up a more competitive business position in the food supply chain. He stated that the agri-cooperative sector in Europe, comprises of some 22, 000 cooperatives that represent around 50% of the agri-food industry. These employ some 660,000 people and generate a global turnover of some 350 billion euro.

He noted that European agri-cooperatives present a wide range of different type of structures, profile and dimension throughout the EU. The first and main trend can be found in market leading cooperatives that follow business strategies to improve their overall competitiveness. Thus, frequently these cooperatives follow long-term strategies for growth through mergers and

acquisitions to obtain the necessary “critical mass”/ size to invest and start operating at a scale where synergies can be achieved, while keeping costs at a competitive level. On the other hand in the European South/ Mediterranean area, a tendency of spanning activities in multiple sectors exists (multipurpose cooperatives) in an effort to target local markets (Southern EU countries), while serving the pluri-activity of farmer members. Nevertheless and regardless of how important these biggest agri-cooperatives may be, it should not be forgotten that the vast majority of the EU’s 22,000 agri-cooperatives, are small and medium sized enterprises. Furthermore in some countries (e.g. Mediterranean and newer Member States), cooperatives are still underdeveloped and the existing ones face major economic challenges to survive.

Mr. KALAITZIS stated that European cooperatives in particular, pursue and intensify their efforts to further restructure and operate in global food supply chains, through two main courses of action;

- An internal one, by building stronger and more competitive enterprises, further consolidated, with improved governance and other entrepreneurial agreements.
- A second line of action by pursuing a better positioning in the food supply chain. Cooperatives and farmers have less countervailing power, in particular against a handful of global retailers. They are thus subject to frequent abuses of market power. Therefore ensuring a more balanced and better functioning food supply chain is of paramount strategic importance and this can only be achieved by improving the regulatory framework.

Business strategies for agri-food cooperatives must focus on improving performance through more elaborated structures, governance and a gradual building of an improved position in the food supply chain. In practice however, and in addition to the above, cooperatives strive to develop with limited resources facing weak policy framework and public institutions.

Regarding producer organisations in the reformed CAP, Mr. KALAITZIS noted that in concrete terms, Producer Organisations (cooperatives) should develop their actions aiming at increasing their economic dimension to, ultimately, increase their countervailing power in increasingly highly concentrated chains. At the same time Producer Organizations (POs) must further integrate in the food supply chain to improve the added value generated and further invest to improve quality and the level of services provided within the food supply chain.

He concluded his presentation with mentioning that the new national/regional rural development programmes will offer the regulatory framework for the support to setting up new producer groups as well supporting existing POs and cooperatives in undertaking new value addition activities. In addition to that, the reformed single CMO includes provisions to allow certain competition policy derogations so that POs could coordinate the joint actions of their members in order to collectively negotiate and improve their countervailing power in the food supply chain.

Question: One of the most important problems in OIC member countries is that farmers could not get enough amount of income from food chain process. Farmer Organizations (FOs) can help their members to capture higher share of value added from value chain. The objective of the cooperatives is to maximize farmers’ profit. However, in your presentation you mentioned that the objective of cooperatives to maximize value to user members. Can you explain this point in a more clear way?

Answer: As COGECA we have 22000 cooperatives in the EU and only very small numbers are big ones. This indicates that there are few big players. The small ones have to compete with bigger players like Nestle, Danone, etc. We have to also compete with much stronger players which have much higher bargain power, the retailers, like Carrefour, Metro, etc. 85 percent of the total turnover in the food retailing is concentrated in the hands of the some 145 buyers. Then how to maximize

farmers' value. The most fundamental objective of the COGECA is to be more competitive in that value chain, so to become more competitive like the big ones and improve our bargaining power to reduce this gap.

6.2. NGO's Experience in Strengthening Farmer Organizations

Mr. Zuhair Arif JWEIHAN Chairman of the Jordan Exporters and Producers Association (JEPA) made a presentation on the "NGO's Experience in Strengthening Farmer Organizations". In his presentation Mr. JWEIHAN noted that as a non-profit organization (NGOs) JEPA was established in 1994. It is the only business association in the horticulture Sector in Jordan, and its members constitute a diverse range of businesses and interests: growers, importers, exporters, packing houses, input supply companies, nurseries, and other related businesses. He furthermore stated that JEPA dedicated to improve and promote the competitiveness of Jordan horticultural produce in the global market and recognized by all horticultural stakeholders in Jordan as a high quality service provider association.

He noted that JEPA provides advisory and training services for acquirement of international certificates such as Global Gap, HACCP, BRC, ISO (22000, 9001) and Organic, at very competitive rates and follow-up to maintain the highest level of commitment to these standards. It also provides market intelligence services to its members.

Afterwards, Mr. JWEIHAN mentioned that JEPA organizes training programmes for its members, non-members, stakeholders and JEPA staff directly or in cooperation with other local and international organizations and conducting awareness programs as well as workshops on different topics of focus. It also has various activities for promotion of the its members such as;

- Organizing and participating in National and International specialized fairs.
- Conducts trial shipments for: new targeted markets and existing markets (for quality assurance purposes).
- Organizes trade missions.
- Organizes field days for members, stakeholders and partners.
- Regulating contract farming and setting a dispute settlement mechanism.

Moreover, considering the JEPA's role as the major representative of a diverse Agri-business interests, it has positioned itself in different committees and has voiced the Jordanian agricultural needs and problems locally and internationally, both in the government and the private sectors.

He underlined that despite the fact that JEPA receive support from many institutions such as Jordan and Amman Chamber of commerce, European Commission, etc., it face many challenges. Financial problems are one of the most important challenges. The only regular source of income is annual membership fees, which are approximately 15,000 JDs. Thus, we allocate too much efforts and energy for finding necessary funds to sustain our association and services. The inconsistency and changing priorities of donors made it difficult for JEPA to plan, forcing JEPA to limit itself to yearly short term plans. Furthermore, even though JEPA is present with the government in various councils, these councils do not meet on regular basis; the government tends to take decisions that affect the sector without taking into consideration the private sector's needs and opinions.

Mr. JWEIHAN informed the participants that after the initiatives of the JEPA, Saudi market reopened to the Jordanian vegetables after 20 years of boycott, agricultural inputs exempted from sales taxes, cold storage facility was established in Queen Alia International Airport, and transfer of knowhow and new technologies to neighbouring countries was provided.

He concluded his presentation with emphasizing the objectives of JEPA. In this framework, he stated that JEPA aims;

- Increasing its exports to European markets and increasing added value of its exports in other markets.
- Increase services provided by JEPA and enhancing existing ones.
- Certifying all of the export farms in Jordan.
- Creating a JEPA brand for quality assurance and standards.
- Introducing renewable energy resources in farms, i.e. solar and wind energy.

6.3. The Union of Sugar Beet Growers Cooperatives (PANKOBİRLİK)

Mr. Cem KAPTAN, Manager at the Union of Sugar Beet Growers Cooperatives, made a presentation on PANKOBİRLİK and Turkish sugar sector.

At the outset, Mr. KAPTAN mentioned that the number of agricultural cooperatives in action in the Turkish agricultural sector is 13.266 and the total number of the members of these cooperatives is 4.382.497. He stated that there are 31 cooperatives under the PANKOBİRLİK and 1.5 million farmers are member of these cooperatives. In comparison to 1641 agricultural credit cooperatives and 1.5 million farmers being member of these credit cooperatives, the PANKOBİRLİK is more effective.

Afterwards, Mr. KAPTAN showed the beet cultivation area in Turkey and 33 plants spreading country-wide. While 25 of these plants are state-owned 5 of them belong to cooperatives under the PANKOBİRLİK and remaining 3 plants belong to private companies. He added that the PANKOBİRLİK has 312 stores in 64 provinces.

Regarding the market share of the PANKOBİRLİK, MR. KAPTAN expressed that 40% of total beet production is ensured by the plants belonging to the cooperatives under the PANKOBİRLİK despite only 5 out of 33 plants belong to PANKOBİRLİK.

Then, Mr. KAPTAN enumerated the services provided by the PANKOBİRLİK as below:

- Supply and distribution of inputs
- Management and coordination
- Consultancy
- Auditing
- Training
- Supervision
- Representation
- Publication and communication

Thereafter, Mr. KAPTAN touched upon some different domains that PANKOBİRLİK has plants such as bioethanol factory, meat and dairy integrated plant, animal feed factory, natural potato warehouse etc.

Lastly, he addressed some challenges in agricultural sector in Turkey. He mentioned that privatization process may result in regional concentration, a more competitive agricultural sector and some shutdowns. As the PANKOBİRLİK, Mr. KAPTAN stated that they are not totally against privatization, but he expressed that privatization should be reasonable and in conformity with sustainable agricultural policies.

7. The Way Forward: Utilizing the COMCEC Project Cycle Management (PCM)

Mr. Ali ORUÇ, Expert in COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO) made a presentation on the COMCEC Project Funding. Mr. ORUÇ noted that COMCEC PCM is one of two main instruments for the operationalization of the COMCEC Strategy. He informed the participants COMCEC PCM has simple rules, a clearly defined financial framework and flexible procedures. Also, the CCO and Development Bank of Turkey provide continuous support to member countries at all stages of the Project Funding.

He stated that project management process starts with an idea, the initiation phase, and it continues with identification, planning, appraisal and implementation of the project activities. Lastly, it finalized with monitoring and evaluation phases. CCO, especially, provide technical support to member countries for transformation of ideas into the projects. After phases of project selection, Development Bank of Turkey provides technical support to project owner during project implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. Mr. ORUÇ noted that the potential beneficiaries or project owners are relevant ministries of COMCEC Member Countries that are registered to respective working group and the OIC institutions operating in the field of economic and commercial cooperation.

With regard to the project selection criteria, Mr. ORUÇ informed that participants that it starts with the strategy's principles. In this perspective, project proposal has to be in line with the strategy's principles. For each cooperation area, a certain strategic objective and output areas are defined in the Strategy. The project proposal also has to serve to strategic objective and output areas of respective cooperation area with multilateral aspect. In order to meet the multilateralism criteria the project owner can share the activities of project among partner countries or partner countries can participate to the project activities such as training programs, workshops, seminars etc. Lastly, sectoral themes were added as new criteria in the second call. He also underlined that active participation of member countries to respective working group meetings is considered by COMCEC Coordination Office while evaluating of project proposals.

He mentioned that COMCEC Project Funding finances the soft projects such as technical cooperation, capacity building projects, research and analytical studies, study visits, workshops, etc. On the other hand, he underlined that infrastructure or feasibility projects are not financed by COMCEC Project Funding.

Mr. ORUÇ stated that three main actors in the mechanism are CCO, Project Owners and Development Bank of Turkey. The process starts with Project Owner's application to the COMCEC Coordination Office. The Office evaluates project proposals submitted by the member countries and OIC institutions and selects eligible projects and transfers list of successful project proposals to the Bank. Then project owners start project implementation. Project owners make operational and financial reporting to the Development Bank of Turkey and the Bank finances their activities based on their reporting. Lastly, the Bank makes reporting to the CCO on the Program level.

He stressed that the first call for project proposals was made in September 2013 and there was a great interest from member countries and OIC institutions. In this regard, 98 project proposals were submitted by 23 countries and 3 OIC institutions. 8 projects selected to be financed and these projects were completed in 2014. One of these projects was in field of agriculture sector, namely "Pakistan Bioremediation Model for Wastewater Treatment and Capacity Building Program among OIC Countries."

Mr. ORUÇ noted that Second call for project proposals started in September 2014 and applications process ended as of December 26th, 2014. 62 project proposals were submitted by member countries and relevant OIC institutions, and 17 out of 62 projects were final-list to be financed. Furthermore, five of them are agriculture projects submitted by Chad, Indonesia, Suriname, Turkey and Uganda.

He informed the participants about the recent changes made in the mechanism during the second call for projects;

- ✓ Hired independent appraisal for project proposals
- ✓ Determined upper limit for project coordinator's and expert's fees
- ✓ Added new criteria for project selection which is the sectoral themes for each cooperation area.
- ✓ Revised some durations of project submission period.

He lastly stated that the third call for project proposals will be announced in early September, 2015, and invited member countries of the Agriculture Working Group and the OIC institutions to submit their project proposals.

8. Closing Remarks

The Meeting ended with closing remarks of Mr. M. Metin EKER, Director General of the COMCEC Coordination Office.

Mr. Metin EKER thanked all the participants for their valuable contributions. He underlined that the observations, comments and critiques of the participants on the analytical study prepared specifically for the Agriculture Working Group Meetings would be most welcomed in order to improve its quality. He stated that the policy discussions made during the Moderation Session was important and the outcomes of this Meeting would be presented to the 31st Session of the COMCEC. Mr. EKER also highlighted the importance of PCM mechanism and invited the Member Countries as well as the relevant OIC Institutions to submit their projects.

Mr. EKER also informed the participants that the next (6th) Meeting of the Agriculture Working Group will be held on October 8th, 2015 in Ankara with the theme of "Promoting Agricultural Value Chains in the OIC Member Countries".

Before concluding, Mr. EKER thanked again the Chairman of the Meeting, Mr. BAYUMI for his valuable contributions to the meeting and all the participants and wished them a safe trip back home.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Agenda of the Meeting



AGENDA

5th MEETING OF THE COMCEC AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP

(March 5th, 2015, Ankara)

*"Improving Institutional Capacity: Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the OIC
Member Countries"*

Opening Remarks

1. The COMCEC Agriculture Outlook
2. Recent Trends in Strengthening Farmer Organizations (FOs) at a Global Level
3. Farmer Organizations in the OIC Member Countries
 - Overview of Farmer Organizations and Policy Environment in the Member Countries
 - Selected Case Studies
4. Policy Options for Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the Member Countries
5. Member State Presentations
6. Multilateral Efforts and Non-Governmental Initiatives for Supporting Farmer Organizations
7. Utilizing the COMCEC Project Funding

Closing Remarks

Annex 2: Programme of the Meeting



DRAFT PROGRAMME

5th MEETING OF THE COMCEC AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP
(March 5th, 2015, Ankara)

“Improving Institutional Capacity: Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the OIC Member Countries.”

08.30-09.00 **Registration**

09.00-09.15 **Opening Remarks**

09.15-09.45 **The COMCEC Agriculture Outlook**

- *Presentation: Mr. E. Emrah HATUNOĞLU
Expert
COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO)*
- *Discussion*

09.45-11.00 **Overview of Farmer Organizations and Policy Environment in the Member Countries**

- *Presentation: Mr. Aly-Khan JAMAL*
Head of Agriculture and Food Security
Dalberg Global Development Advisors

- *Questions for Discussion*
 - *Is there an apex body for farmer organizations in your country? If yes what are the functions of this body?*
 - *What are the policies/programmes implemented in your country for strengthening farmer organizations? What are the challenges faced by your country in this respect?*

11.00-11.15 Coffee Break

11.15-12.15 Recent Trends in Strengthening Farmer Organizations (FOs) at a Global Level and Recommendations for the Member Countries

- *Presentation: Mr. Aly-Khan JAMAL*
Head of Agriculture and Food Security
Dalberg - Global Development Advisors

- *Question(s) for Discussion*
 - *How does your country perceive the recent global trends for strengthening farmer organizations and how does it respond to these trends?*
 - *What are the main factors attracting farmers to involve in farmer organizations in your country? (i.e. providing access to resources, obtaining higher value-added products)*

12.15-13.45 Lunch

13.45-15.15 Policy Options for Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the Member Countries

Moderator : Dr. Metin TÜRKER
Deputy Director General
Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock
Republic of Turkey

Presentation: "Responses of the Member Countries to the Policy Questions on Strengthening Farmer Organizations"
Mr. Mustafa Adil SAYAR
Expert, COMCEC Coordination Office

There will be a moderation session under this agenda item. The participants are expected to deliberate on the policy options/advice for strengthening farmer organizations in the Member Countries. *The Room Document on Policy Options for Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the Member Countries* was prepared by the CCO, in light of the findings of the analytical study prepared specifically for the Meeting and the answers of the Member Countries to the policy questions which have already been sent by the CCO. This Document has been shared with the Agriculture Working Group focal points with a view to enriching the discussions during the Session and coming up with concrete policy advice for the policy approximation among the Member Countries in this important field.

- *Question(s) for Discussion*
 - *How can the cooperation be furthered among the Member Countries for strengthening farmer organizations and what are the cooperation opportunities in this regard?*

15.15-15.30 Coffee Break

15.30-17.00 Member State Presentations

- *Discussion*

17.00-18.00 Multilateral Efforts/Non-Governmental Initiatives for Supporting Farmer Organizations

- Presentation: “COGECA’s Experience in Strengthening Farmer Organizations”
 - *Mr. Prodromos KALAITZIS*
Senior Policy Advisor
General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives (COGECA)
- Presentations: “NGO’s Experience in Strengthening Farmer Organizations”
 - *Mr. Zuhair Arif JWEIHAN*
Chairman
Jordan Exporters and Producers Association (JEPA)
 - *Mr. Cem KAPTAN*
Manager
PANKOBİRLİK
 - *Questions for Discussion*
 - *What are the success factors and challenges for multilateral initiatives in strengthening farmer organizations?*
 - *What lessons can be learned from NGOs’ / multilateral experiences?*

18.00-18.15 Utilizing the COMCEC Project Funding

- *Presentation: Mr. Ali ORUÇ*
Expert
COMCEC Coordination Office
- *Discussion*

18.15-18.30 Closing Remarks

Annex 3: Policy Advices of the 5th COMCEC Agriculture Working Group Meeting

The COMCEC Agriculture Working Group held its 5th Meeting on March 5th, 2015, in Ankara with the theme of Improving Institutional Capacity: Strengthening Farmer Organizations in the OIC Member Countries.” with the active participation of the member countries. The participants, during the Meeting, have considered the role of farmer organizations (FOs) in enabling farmers to realize economic benefits that they would not otherwise achieve alone, and the current strength of farmer organizations within the OIC as well as collaborative solutions to increase the effectiveness of FOs in the member countries. The mentioned issues were also highlighted in the analytical study prepared specifically for this meeting, sent to the Working Group focal points and participants before the meeting by the COMCEC Coordination Office.

The member countries of the Agriculture WG are kindly invited to share their views and observations on this document to the COMCEC Coordination Office by **April 24th, 2015**. Any comments received after this date will not be able to be incorporated into the Document. After incorporating the member countries’ contributions, this document will be submitted to the 31st Session of the COMCEC to be held on 23-26th November, 2015 as an outcome of the 5th Agriculture WG Meeting.

After the discussions on the above-mentioned issues, the Working Group highlighted the policy advices as below.

Policy Advice 1. 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.

Policy Advice 2. The capacity of farmer organizations to access to agricultural market information and dissemination of the market information to their members needs 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.

Instruments to Realize the Policy Advices:

- ***COMCEC Agriculture Working Group:*** In its subsequent meetings, the COMCEC Working Group may elaborate on the above mentioned policy areas and the sub-areas in a more detailed manner.
- ***COMCEC Project Funding:*** Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office calls for project each year. By this way, 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 and their sub-areas, the COMCEC Coordination Office may finance the successful projects and collaborative efforts by taking account their priorities and its budgetary constraints. The projects may include seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.
- ***Capacity Building Activities:*** With the COMCEC Coordination Office's resources and member countries' own resources, some capacity building and technical assistance programs on the aforementioned policy areas and their sub-areas can be organized in the member countries. These activities may include seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.

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Annex 4: List of Participants

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS OF 5th MEETING OF THE COMCEC AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP (March 5th, 2015, Ankara)

A. INVITED STATES

THE REPUBLIC OF GAMBIA

- Mr. SERING MODOU NJIE
Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Gambia

THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

- Mr. FATHAN RASYID
Director, Ministry of Agriculture of Indonesia

THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

- Mr. YOUSEF ABDELGHANI
Minister Plenipotentiary, Embassy of Jordan

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF MAURITANIA

- Mr. ISMAIL SIDIMAHMOUD
Director, Ministry of Livestock

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

- Mr. KHASIB SULAIYM SAIM AL-MAANI
Director of Extension and Plant Production,
Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries Wealth
- Mr. ALI AL-HARRASI
Director of Agriculture Development,
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Wealth

THE STATE OF PALESTINE

- Mr. SAMER ALTEETI
Director of Policies and Planning,
Ministry of Agriculture

- Mr. FOUAD KHARMA
Head of NGOs Division, Ministry of Agriculture

THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

- Mr. SALEM ALSANEA
Agronomist, Ministry of Agriculture

THE REPUBLIC OF SUDAN

- Dr. SAAD ALI BAYUMI
Producer Organizations Coordinator,
Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation

THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME

- Mr. HARNANDANPERSAD MOENSI
Coordinator of Ressort, Ministry of Agriculture,
Animal Husbandry and Fisheries

THE TUNISIAN REPUBLIC

- Ms. SAMIA BEN CHEIKH AHMED EP BEN SLIMA
Director, Ministry of Agriculture
- Ms. LAMIA EL PHIL EP ESSAAFI
Assistant Director, Ministry of Agriculture

THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

- Mr. METİN TÜRKER
Deputy Director General
- Mr. AYHAN BARAN
Head of Department,
Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock
- Dr. MELİK AYTAÇ
COMCEC Funded Project Contact Person
- Dr. NEZAKET CÖMERT
Professional Engineer
- Mr. ADNAN HORAN
Coordinator,
Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock
- Dr. ERHAN EKMEN
Coordinator

- Mr. TAHSİN TÜFEKÇİ
Coordinator,
Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock
- Mr. MEHMET AYDIN BELGE
Coordinator
- Dr. İZZET YILMAZ
Engineer
- Mr. HÜDAYİ ERCOŞKUN
Engineer, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock
- Mr. MUSTAFA GÖKŞEN
- Mr. ALİ BERK

B. INVITED INSTITUTIONS

COGECA

- Mr. PRODRAMOS KALAITZIS
Advisor, General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives

DALBERG GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT ADVISORS

- Mr. JAMAL ALY KHAN
Head of Agriculture & Security

JEPA

- Mr. ZUAHIR JWEIHAN
Chairman,
Jordan Exporters Association for Fruit and Vegetables

PANKOBIRLIK

- Dr. CEM KAPTAN
Director
- Dr. TANER TAŞPINAR
General Manager

SESRIC

- Mr. FADI ABDULLAH FARASIN
Researcher

GUEST

- Mr. BART SLOB
Senior Advisor, Royal Tropical Institute (KIT)

C. COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE

- Mr. METİN EKER
Director General, Head of COMCEC Coordination Office
- Mr. MUSTAFA TEKİN
Head of Department
- Mr. SELÇUK KOÇ
Head of Department
- Mr. FATİH KAYA
Head of Department
- Mr. E. EMRAH HATUNOĞLU
Expert
- Mr. MEHMET FİDAN
Expert
- Mr. MUSTAFA ADİL SAYAR
Expert
- Ms. HANDE ÖZDEMİR
Coordinator of Registration Office
- Ms. HAVVA KÖSEOĞLU
Registration Office
- Ms. H.GÜL SAYIN
Coordinator of Documentation Center
- Ms. OZAN LİF
Coordinator of Documentation Center
- Mr. KEMAL ARSLAN
Coordinator of Meeting Rooms
- Mr. ALİ VURAL
Photographer
- Mr. ERCAN İBİK
Coordinator of Transportation

- Ms. NAZİFE GÜLGEN
Social Program
- Mr. NAZIM GÜMÜŞ
Protocol Relations
- Mr. M.AKİF ALANBAY
Protocol Relations

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