



AGRICULTURE



**CCO BRIEF
ON
AGRICULTURAL
COOPERATION**

**COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE
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CCO BRIEF ON AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION

I. Introduction

Agriculture with its intrinsic nature plays a distinctive role in increasingly connected world economies. It is seen as an important engine of growth and unique source for poverty reduction in most of the developing world. Empirical studies demonstrate that agriculture is the most effective sector in generating income for the poorest segments of the population. Hence, it is accepted as a key sector for economic growth, reducing poverty and sustainable rural development especially in developing countries. In many member countries of the OIC, agriculture is one of the leading sectors in terms of income, employment and trade.

The global lockdown due to the pandemic of COVID-19 has deeply affected the agriculture and food systems, like other economic sectors, in almost all countries. It has obligated governments to take actions on travel, trade, tourism, imports, exports, and transportation to control and minimize the effects and spread of the outbreak. Thus, the pandemic quickly put serious strains on the food supply chains involving farmers, agricultural inputs, processing plants, shipping, retailers and more, resulting in an unforeseen pressure on food supply systems and food sustainability.

II. Agricultural Cooperation under the COMCEC

Increasing the productivity of agriculture sector and sustaining the food security in the OIC Member Countries is one of the fundamental objectives of the COMCEC Strategy. Considering the destructive impacts of the pandemic on the agriculture sector the COMCEC Agriculture Working Group has devoted its Meetings held in 2022 to discuss this important issue.

Within this framework, since the 37th COMCEC Session, the COMCEC Agriculture Working Group has held its 18th and 19th Meetings focusing on the Transforming Food Systems After COVID-19: Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems in the OIC Member Countries.

A. Transforming Food Systems After COVID-19: Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems in the OIC Member Countries (18th and 19th Meetings of the Agriculture Working Group)

The 18th and 19th Meetings of COMCEC Agriculture Working Group (AWG) were held virtually on May 16 and October 10, 2022 respectively, with the same theme “Transforming Food Systems After COVID-19: Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems in the OIC Member”.

A research report on the topic was prepared for two consecutive COMCEC AWG Meetings (18th and 19th). While the preliminary findings of the report were submitted to the 18th AWG Meeting, the final version of the report was submitted to the 19th AWG Meeting. The report assessed the current situation of transforming food systems in the OIC member countries under the effects of COVID-19 and came up with some policy options for a more sustainable, responsible and efficient transforming food systems to contribute to food security.

The research report highlighted that global food supply is at a turning point. As climate change, population growth and a heavy reliance on natural resources make an impact, the need for new approaches to food and agricultural production is abundantly clear. There are 5 major points for agricultural transformation at global level: demography, climate change & sustainability, digital transformation, COVID-19, Geopolitics. OIC member countries are under the heavy influence of these challenges as well.

The report also underlined that while OIC countries accounted for more than one-fourth of the world's agricultural land area, agricultural production faced severe problems. To manage problems, OIC member countries need to enhance production, improve productivity and develop a sustainable value chain in food and agriculture. To meet the increasing demand of food and to respond to new market opportunities, agricultural systems in the OIC member countries need to be more sustainable by generating and applying new knowledge and innovations. Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems (AKIS) could address these problems by linking Education, Research, and Extension to boost agricultural productivity. AKIS has a strong potential to enhance economic performance of farming and contribute to agricultural sustainability.

Main challenges on the issue were identified in the report as follows:

- Insufficient institutional structure with deficient communication mechanism,
- Overlapping power, authority, jurisdiction among actors and institutions
- Insufficient human resource capacity and under financing of human resource development
- Weak linkages among research, education, and extension components of AKIS
- Unstable policy and strategic framework of the country on agriculture

During the 19th Meeting, the participants carried out discussions on the topic and the main findings of the research report elaborated on some policy options to contribute to the transforming food systems. In line with the discussions, the Meeting came up with a set of policy recommendations to be submitted to the COMCEC Ministerial Session for adoption as below:

- Developing a sound stakeholder coordinating and consulting mechanism to provide a common framework in which all actors can operate in an aligned and harmonized way.
- Making use of Public-Private Partnerships for effective AKIS governance and financing
- Investing in new talent for agriculture through developing connections and networks between youth and AKIS institutions to prepare workforce of the future.
- Including seasonal agriculture workers into the AKIS for better harnessing their potential in terms of investment, job creation and agricultural productivity.
- Developing a sound system for effective monitoring and evaluation from the beginning to better understand the impact of AKIS.
- Strengthening the information and communications technology (ICT) Systems for AKIS to address the need for localized and customized information.

- Developing an AgriTech & FoodTech ecosystem for the creation and growth of new companies and supporting the existing ones.
- Developing a virtual network of OIC AKIS institutions to increase collaboration among OIC Member Countries.

All the documents and presentations made during the 18th and 19th Working Group Meetings as well as the above-mentioned research report are available on the COMCEC website. (www.comcec.org)

B. COMCEC Financial Support Instruments

COMCEC Project Funding

COMCEC Project Funding (CPF) is the other important instrument of the Strategy. Projects financed under the CPF need to serve multilateral cooperation and must be designed in accordance with the objectives and the expected outcomes defined by the Strategy in its agriculture section. Projects also play important roles in realization of the policy recommendations formulated by the member countries during the AWG meetings.

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Under the 9th Call for Project Proposals under the CPF, four projects have been selected to be implemented in 2022. The projects being implemented under the CPF in 2022 are as follows;

The project titled “Promote Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture to Ensure Food Security and Good Nutrition in West Africa” is being implemented by Benin in partnership with five beneficiary countries. The project aims at increasing the capacity human and institutional capacity on the implementation tools of nutrition sensitive agriculture for food security and good nutrition.

Other important project titled “Creating Awareness on the Importance of Agriculture Commodity Exchange Markets” has been implemented by ICCIA in partnership with seven beneficiary countries. Purpose of the project was to create awareness among the relevant stakeholders on the importance of agriculture commodity exchange markets and its benefit to the agriculture sector. The project also aims at sharing knowledge among the partners on the business model for a successful the respective exchange markets.

The third agriculture project titled “Capacity Building on New Technologies to Reduce Post-Harvest Losses” is being implemented by Türkiye with the partnership of six beneficiary countries. This project aims at sharing knowledge and good practices on using new technologies for warehousing and storage of grains.

Lastly, IOFS has been implemented the project titled “Building the capacity of OIC member states in Food Security Governance” with 20 beneficiary counties. This project aimed at assisting OIC member states in building the institutional capacity of government agencies in the implementation of food security governance practices.

COMCEC COVID Response

Under the COMCEC COVID Response Program initiated by the CCO in order to assist member states in their efforts to alleviate the negative effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on member country economies. The program is based on financing certain types of projects, which would focus on needs assessment, sharing expertise, providing direct grants to final beneficiaries.

Within the framework of the 2nd Call for Project Proposals of the COMCEC COVID Response, Türkiye is implementing a sharing expertise project titled “Resilience in the seed sector with the rising of risks after COVID-19” with four beneficiary countries. The project is to investigate good practices in terms of how seeds are supplied and distributed during the COVID-19 and to investigate how to act at the institutional level in such crises for the future.

The project, titled “Reduction of Food Loss and Waste during COVID-19 through Promoting Climate Smart Agriculture” is being implemented by Azerbaijan. With the project, it is aimed at increasing human and institutional capacity of Azerbaijan on measurement of food loss and waste and also development strategies and effective tools for preventing the loss and waste.

The project titled as “Increase rice productivity to ensure food security and sovereignty in Benin” will be implemented by Benin. The project aims at increasing the availability of rice by improving its productivity. In line with this objective, rice seed and mineral fertilizer will be distributed to small producers.