



AGRICULTURE



**CCO BRIEF
ON
AGRICULTURAL
COOPERATION**

**COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE
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I. Introduction

The world has been undergoing a rapid economic and technological transformation in recent years. In this process, global major problems, including drought, increases in cost of production and global hunger due to climate change as well as regional conflicts, are adversely affecting the food supply chains. Considering this reality, agriculture is one of foremost sectors for the economies worldwide, particularly in OIC member countries. The development of this sector is also critically important for addressing the pressing issues such as food security, poverty, and economic development.

As one of the leading sectors in most OIC member countries, agriculture is providing food, income, and employment for the large segment of societies. The agriculture sector accounts for 10.4% of GDP in OIC countries, which is much larger than the world average of 4.3%. Additionally, 216 million people in OIC countries are working in agriculture sector, equivalent to 32% of their total employment. While the proportion of employment in agriculture has decreased in the past decade, it is noteworthy that about 1.4 billion hectares of land in OIC countries, amounting to one-third of the world's total agriculture land, is still dedicated to agriculture sector.

However, OIC member countries face challenges in ensuring agricultural development and food security for their populations. Among these challenges, the escalation of conflict and insecurity within their territories stands as a critical concern. Therefore, the agriculture sector is critical for many OIC member countries to generate income, increase welfare, and eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, especially under the impact of COVID 19. Given its importance, agriculture was identified as a cooperation area in the COMCEC Strategy and Agriculture Working Group (AWG) was established with the strategic objective of “Increasing the productivity of agricultural sector and sustaining food security in the COMCEC region”.

In order to reach this objective, the COMCEC Strategy has determined (i) increasing productivity, (ii) regulatory framework and institutional capacity, (iii) reliable and up-to-date data, and (iv) market performance and access as output areas under the agriculture cooperation area.

The AWG elaborated on the above-mentioned output areas in its previous gatherings and discussed irrigation systems, on-farm and post-harvest food losses, food waste, agricultural market institutions and market information systems, resilience of and ensuring food security and good governance for ensuring food security and nutrition.

II. Agricultural Cooperation under the COMCEC

Considering the important dimensions of agricultural inputs (such as land, water, seeds, fertilizers, energy, human resources), which are among the most important elements for sustainable food security in the OIC Member States, the COMCEC AWG devoted its Meetings in 2023 to discuss on "Ensuring the Sustainability of Agricultural Inputs to Combat Food Insecurity in OIC Member Countries." In this framework, this study aims to examine

agricultural inputs (seeds, energy, fertilizers and plant protection agents, etc.) in OIC countries with their demand and supply sides and to present good practices for country and region-based problems in the form of a guide.

A. Ensuring the Sustainability of Agricultural Inputs to Combat Food Insecurity in OIC Member Countries (20th and 21st Meetings of the Agriculture Working Group)

The 20th and 21st Meetings of COMCEC Agriculture Working Group (AWG) were held on 11 May 2023 and 12-13 October 2023, respectively, with the same theme “Ensuring the Sustainability of Agricultural Inputs to Combat Food Insecurity in OIC Member Countries”.

A research report on the topic was prepared for two consecutive COMCEC AWG Meetings (20th and 21st). While the preliminary findings of the report were submitted to the 20th AWG Meeting, the final version of the report was submitted to the 21st AWG Meeting. The report assessed the agricultural inputs at the OIC scale with dimensions such as optimum cost, supply stock, management and governance and came up with some policy options to provide permanent and feasible solutions to such problems.

The report examines the primary inputs in food production such as; effective and productive use of agricultural land, seeds, use of machinery, fertilizers and pesticides, water resource management and irrigation systems, access to finance. The report also underlines that water is a scarce resource in arid and semi-arid regions where many OIC countries are located. OIC countries have a relatively small average land area and an agricultural structure dominated by small-scale, labor-intensive production. The average use of fertilizer per hectare of arable land in OIC countries (climbed from 69.6 kilograms in 2010 to 85.6 kilograms in 2020) is still significantly low, when compared to the non-OIC developing countries and developed countries. OIC countries have a relatively small average land area and an agricultural structure dominated by small-scale, labor-intensive production. To manage those problems, OIC member countries need to enhance productivity through the using of modern machinery, fertilizers, and efficient irrigation techniques and adapting to new technologies and farming practices. Main challenges on the issue were identified in the report as follows:

- Inefficient agricultural resource management
- Need for using modern inputs
- Underdeveloped land market
- Limited modern finance
- Insufficient infrastructure
- Weak of rural roads' network and accessibility
- Underdeveloped the irrigation system and electricity facilities
- Climate Change

During the 21st 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

agricultural inputs. 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:

- Promoting conservation agriculture practices with a view to managing agricultural ecosystems for sustainable productivity, increased profitability and food security that protects natural resources and the environment.
- Encouraging drip irrigation, water harvesting, drought tolerant crops, non-conventional water management and dry farming practices that support effective use of water resources and water saving, and the participation of agricultural producers in the application processes.
- Supporting effectively use of organomineral fertilizers and organic pesticides, which provide greater productivity and production increases compared to the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and also contribute to the improvement of plant health and soil.
- Developing a smart agriculture system for effective monitoring and evaluation to better understand the impact of productivity increases and reducing cost as well as environmental compatibility
- Improving circular agriculture practices through using a minimum amount of external input or reusing agricultural wastes to ensure fertilizer and renewable energy production.
- Encouraging the use of closed farming methods and technologies by private sector enterprises with a view to ensuring better control of environmental factors, increased productivity and continuous production in the off-season.
- Strengthening the coordination and sustainability of initiatives among public institutions and organizations by taking into account the data and evidence-based risk predictions developed by the initiatives at the beginning of the implementation processes
- Supporting small-scale farmers, peasants and households in effective management their agricultural activities by capacity building, training, access to market information and customized financial products to optimize their decision-making process also disseminating technology and facilitating eco-friendly but relatively costly solutions.
- Increasing to use Certified Seed Production and Improved Seeds in Agricultural Production in order to enhance productivity and to support food security.

All the documents and presentations made during the 20th and 21st 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.

Under the 9th Call for Project Proposals under the CPF, four projects were selected to be implemented in 2022. The projects 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” was implemented by Benin in partnership with five beneficiary countries. Beneficiary countries were Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Togo. The project aimed 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” were 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 aimed 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” was implemented by Türkiye with the partnership of six beneficiary countries. This project aimed to share 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.

Furthermore, under the 10th Call for Project Proposals under the CPF, 6 projects have been selected to be implemented in 2023. These projects are as follows:

The project titled “Increasing Agricultural Productivity in West Africa through Promoting Village Beekeeping” will be implemented by Benin in the partnership of Uganda. The project aims at increasing capacities of small holder on village bee keeping in order to increase productivity of the main food crops in Benin.

The Gambia also will implement a project titled “Capacity Building on Data Collection, Analysis and Reporting in the Agriculture Sector”. The project aims to increase technical capacity of officials working in agriculture sector on data collection, analysis and reporting techniques.

The project titled “Needs Assessment on the Adoption of Sustainable Approaches for Rice Cultivation in Facing Climate Change” will be implemented by Malaysia. The project aims at increasing paddy farmers’ awareness and adoption of sustainable approaches/technology to increase rice productivity against the impacts of climate change.

Türkiye also will implement the project titled “Capacity Building on Using Remote Sensing Systems in Agriculture” with the partnership of Malaysia. The project aims at improving human and institutional capacity of Ministry of Agriculture of and Forestry of Türkiye on remote sensing systems through knowledge and experience sharing activities.

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 implemented a sharing expertise project titled “Resilience in the seed sector with the rising of risks after COVID-19” with four beneficiary countries which are Azerbaijan, Morocco, Malaysia, Pakistan. The project aimed 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” was implemented by Azerbaijan. The project aimed to increase 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” implemented by Benin. The project aimed to increase the availability of rice by improving its productivity. In line with this objective, rice seed and mineral fertilizer were distributed to small producers.