

## **Summary Conclusions of the High-Level Regional Consultation on Policies to Respond to High Food Prices in Asia and the Pacific Region**

### **1-2 October 2012, Bangkok, Thailand**

Ministers of Agriculture and senior government officials, representatives of development partners, including UN agencies, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), civil society organizations and the private sector from 20 Asian countries participated in a High-Level Regional Consultation. It was convened in co-partnership among ADB, FAO, IFAD, and WFP to discuss policies to respond to high food prices in Asia. The High-Level Regional Consultation was attended by over 120 participants, including the participation of 10 ministers / vice-ministers.

The participants appreciated action taken by the organizers in calling this consultation in the backdrop of rising global food prices, specially of maize, wheat and soybeans. The meeting noted an estimated decline of wheat and coarse grain output by 5 percent and 1.5 percent respectively, this year affected by severe droughts in United States of America, the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and some other countries. Concern was expressed on declined cereal stock position and a reversal of supply-demand balance which switched to short supply mode in global market. There is a possibility of a perceptible decline of global cereal stock next year. It appears high and volatile food prices have become a long-term phenomenon. If this happens, the cereal prices will become more vulnerable to external shocks. There is a need to monitor very closely the situation and take precautionary measures to prevent negative consequences to food prices.

Under this backdrop, the High-Level Regional Consultation was convened with the following intended outputs:

- Awareness of the global, regional and country food security and food price situation and their trends enhanced,
- Country experiences on current policies and programmes in the Asia-Pacific region, shared and knowledge exchanged,
- Key lessons from the 2007-08 and subsequent food price crises identified and their causes analysed,
- Awareness of the work of the CFS-HLPE, AMIS and the Global Initiative to Promote Agricultural and Rural Statistics and its Regional Action Plan promoted and their linkages with national and regional food security and nutrition interventions identified,
- Key priority policy options and actions at country and regional levels discussed and next steps for policy options and actions suggested.

More specifically, the participants discussed and suggested the following key priority policy options.

## COUNTRY LEVEL ACTIONS

### *Short Term (1-2 years)*

- Strengthen social safety nets, including conditional cash voucher scheme, food voucher, school meals, food subsidies, or direct nutrition interventions. When appropriate, consider providing support through non-government networks as well, like co-operatives and/or farmer's groups
- Promote credit and insurance schemes targeting small scale farmers (both men and women)
- Encourage emergency food reserves at community and national level
- Mainstream gender perspective in policies and programmes by recognising women as farmers and their central role in food production and support their rights to productive resources

### *Medium term (3-5 years)*

- Increase public and private investment in agriculture, particularly in food production, agriculture research, infrastructure (irrigation, feeder road, storage, etc)
- Improve access of smallholders to land, water, credit, public services and other productive resources
- Implement programmes to support marginal and small-scale farmers for raising productivity and linkages with markets
- Accelerate investments in climate change adaptation and resilience, including research and development of stress-tolerant crop varieties and practices, including those based on indigenous and local knowledge.
- Encourage targeted subsidies to agriculture inputs such as fertilizer and seeds, etc.
- Increase quality and capacity of food storage
- Reduce pre and post-harvest loss and food waste
- Integrate farmers into the food value chains
- Enhance market transparency
- Strengthen agricultural risk-management through improved early warning systems, information and extension support
- Review land use plans and policies to ensure lands for food production and discourage use of foodgrains for bio-fuel
- Provide government support to the organizing of and strengthening of producer organizations/cooperatives to help small holder farmers to reduce transaction costs and benefit from high value chains
- Encourage young farmers to pursue farming as an attractive and dignified source of livelihood

- Provide institutional space for meaningful participation of small-scale farmers in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating food security policies and programmes
- Encourage diversified and nutritious diet by promoting traditional food crops and indigenous foods.

## REGIONAL LEVEL ACTIONS

- Establish seed banks and other mechanisms to reduce prices of agriculture inputs at regional level.
- Strengthen cooperation with the private sector and regional economic organizations such as ASEAN and SAARC.
- Strengthen cooperation of organizations of vulnerable people and small food producers with regional bodies.
- Improve regional emergency food reserves for major food commodities.
- Increase the speed, efficiency and reach of crisis coordination with other UN agencies and governmental / non-governmental organizations by further leveraging the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.
- Strengthen regional early warning / market information / policy monitoring systems.
- Promote coordination among food import and export countries to reduce price volatility
- Promote effective linkages and regional level implementation of global initiatives such as AMIS, the Global Initiative on Agricultural and Rural Statistics, AFSIS and CFS follow up actions such as Voluntary Guidelines, and consultations on Responsible Agricultural Investment, etc.
- Organize regular regional dialogues on food policies and prices.