



COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

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Table of Contents

	Paragraphs
I. BACKGROUND	1 – 2
II. OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKSHOP.....	3 – 8
III. SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDED POLICY ACTIONS OF INTEREST TO THE CFS	9 – 32
A. REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR FOOD SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ON- GOING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TRANSITION IN THE REGION	9 – 14
B. SOCIAL PROTECTION AND FOOD SECURITY	15 – 20
C. CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD SECURITY	21 – 25
D. FOOD LOSSES AND FOOD WASTE, VALUE CHAIN AND AGRO-INDUSTRY ISSUES.....	26 – 32

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Near East is one of the driest regions in the world and many countries suffer from water shortages as well as deteriorating land quality which impacts food production. The region is also vulnerable to extreme climatic events which further degrade natural resources. A high population growth rate coupled with insufficient economic growth has increased both rural and urban unemployment, poverty and food insecurity.
2. The region is a net importer of food making it vulnerable to the effect of volatile food prices. Agricultural development and food security have also been threatened by civil strife and social tensions in the countries that are in socio-political transition. Traditional agriculture is dominant in many countries while institutions relevant to agriculture and food security are generally inefficient.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKSHOP

3. The workshop was organized by the FAO Regional Office for the Near East (RNE) in collaboration with the CFS Secretariat as a follow-up to the recommendation of the 31st Session of the FAO Near East Regional Conference (NERC 31) last May which called for the identification of food security and nutrition priorities in the region to be presented at the coming CFS Session.
4. Building on the experience of the first Regional Multi-stakeholder Workshop on Food Security and Nutrition, which took place in Cairo on 3-4 October 2011¹, the main objective of the Workshop was to strengthen linkages between regional and global dialogues around selected food security and nutrition policy issues.
5. Panelists and participants comprised a range of stakeholders with representation from governments of 13 countries, UN Agencies, regional organizations, regional financial institutions, agricultural research institutions, universities, NGOs, and civil society organisations, as well as the private sector and media.
6. Following presentations and general discussions on 'Regional priorities for food security in the context of ongoing social and political transition in the region', three policy roundtable discussions were held. Round Table 1 addressed 'Social protection and food security', while 'Climate change and food security' was the focus of Round Table 2. "Addressing food losses and food waste, value chain and agro-industry" was the theme for Round Table 3. Presentations in Round Tables 1 and 2 included two reports² prepared by the CFS High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE).
7. Participants were engaged in an interactive dialogue with the view to identify main food security challenges stemming from the selected topics at the regional level, and discuss ways to promote policy convergence, coherence and joint action among regional and country-level actors to address such challenges.
8. A detailed report on the outcomes of the stakeholder deliberations will be presented to the 32nd NERC. Section III below provides a brief summary of the key recommended policy actions that emerged from the discussions.

¹ CFS/2011/Inf.19

² "Food Security and Climate Change" and "Social Protection for food security", available at <http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe/en/>

III. SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDED POLICY ACTIONS OF INTEREST TO THE CFS

A. REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR FOOD SECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ON-GOING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TRANSITION IN THE REGION

9. Set up a permanent Near-East Multi-stakeholder Forum for Food Security and Nutrition to provide an open forum for policy dialogue, exchange of experiences and best practices and convergence of responses on issues identified both by the CFS and the region;
10. Support countries in strengthening good governance of natural resources, especially land and water, through the implementation of the “Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests” at regional and country level;
11. Promote investment in agriculture, with particular emphasis on small-scale producers, as the engine for enhanced food security and nutrition in the region. To this end, a regional meeting for investment in agriculture could be held in 2013;
12. Upgrade capacities at country and regional levels to ensure the availability of reliable data and information on food security indicators for evidence-based decision making;
13. Initiate in-depth analysis on the short, medium and long-term impacts of the social and political transition on food security and nutrition especially in transition-affected countries and derive appropriate policy responses.
14. Strengthen capacity development to advance youth employment, with particular focus on the empowerment of young women.

B. SOCIAL PROTECTION AND FOOD SECURITY

15. Advocate for the adoption, implementation and monitoring of the recommendations contained in the CFS HLPE report on social protection for food security and nutrition that are relevant to the region, particularly those addressing actions at country level.
16. Undertake in-depth country-level analysis of traditional and indigenous social protection practices and mechanisms, such as community-based saving groups, farming communities and other forms of social solidarity practices, to inform and complement social protection policies and programs;
17. Promote exchange of knowledge, coordination and dissemination of good practices and in social protection and sensitize governments, private sector and NGOs for their adoption and support; success stories such as the Egyptian Food Bank experience could be presented at CFS plenary and intersessional meetings;
18. Assess and strengthen national capacities in developing and implementing social protection frameworks with a view to synergize efforts of stakeholders: private sector, civil society, charity organizations, local communities and NGOs;
19. Promote the involvement of private sector in social protection partnerships, through the establishment of adequate national legal frameworks that ensure transparency;
20. Conduct a case study to assess the food security situation in the Occupied Palestine Territories, particularly with respect to access to land and other natural resources and device the appropriate social protection system to address the issue.

C. CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD SECURITY

21. Advocate for the adoption, implementation and monitoring of the recommendations contained in the CFS HLPE report on climate change and food security that are relevant to the region, particularly those addressing actions at country level;
22. Set up a regional smart agriculture fund to support countries in developing adaptation and mitigation strategies, policies and programs, including early-warning systems, risk management, and awareness raising, with the involvement of different stakeholders: farmers, private sector, FAO and other international organizations;
23. Enhance data collection capacity and information sharing among stakeholders on climate change parameters and their impact on food security, nutrition and agriculture in the region;
24. Strengthen capacities at regional and national levels in vulnerability assessment, monitoring, and adaptation measures;
25. Provide technical assistance at regional and national levels on suitable modalities and techniques for improved and efficient management of natural resources, with particular emphasis on land and water.

D. FOOD LOSSES AND FOOD WASTE, VALUE CHAIN AND AGRO-INDUSTRY ISSUES

26. Address food losses and food waste as part of the food security strategies of the Region, as well as in national policies and strategies;
27. Organize a consultative multi-stakeholder forum specialized in the issue of food losses and food waste to refine and consolidate recommendations based on current knowledge;
28. Assist governments to put in place and strengthen extension, education, awareness and advocacy programmes targeting all food-chain actors, together with intensification of capacity building to improve the value chain, value added, and quality and safety systems in order to cut back food losses according to available information, and to improve food consumption habits towards food-waste reduction;
29. Initiate and disseminate methodological procedures for collection, consolidation and improvement of statistics and information on food losses at all stages of the food value chain;
30. Compile, develop and disseminate cost-effective technologies and methods conducive to food loss reduction along the value chain;
31. Support governments in devising policies to support investment in post-harvest practices and value addition in close partnership with the private sector, including creating incentives for reducing food losses and waste;
32. Provide support at regional and national levels to develop measures and regulations to reduce post harvest and storage losses and to enforce the Code of Practice for commercial food processing and agro-industry with the aim of improving food quality and reducing food waste.