



FAO 41st Conference Concept Note for a Side Event

Zero Hunger in Near East and North Africa The Arab Region towards Zero Hunger: Challenges and Opportunities

Date: Thursday, 27 June 2019

Time: 13.30 – 14.30 hrs

Venue: Sheikh Zayed Center, FAO, Rome

Background

Most countries in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region enjoyed a steady improvement in their food security and nutrition situation up to the beginning of the decade. 15 NENA countries achieved the Millennium Development Goals hunger targets and their international pledge to reduce the share of their population suffering from hunger, but the region as a whole has witnessed a serious setback in its fight against hunger.

The situation has sharply deteriorated over the last five years, undermining the steady improvements achieved before 2013. Conflicts and protracted crises are the main drivers of deterioration of food insecurity and nutrition in the region.

Today, 52 million people are suffering from hunger in the region. More than two-thirds of the hungry people, approximately 34 million, live in conflict-affected countries, compared to 18 million hungry people in countries that are not impacted directly by conflict.

Stunting of children remains a serious challenge, reaching 20 percent and higher in several countries. Micronutrient deficiencies are still a major problem in many countries. The trend of childhood and adult obesity is increasing, where about 27 percent of the region's adults are obese. Thus, the Near East and North Africa region currently is affected by a triple burden of malnutrition.

The situation is even worse when the consequences of conflict are combined with the impacts of climate change on the already limited natural resources available in the region to produce food.

Stronger political commitment towards Zero Hunger

There is a growing need to implement long-term and comprehensive policies and practices in the Arab region to achieve Zero hunger by 2030.

Policies and investments aiming at promoting sustainable agricultural practices, supporting small-scale farmers and allowing equal access to land, technology and markets should be in



place to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and malnutrition and find long-lasting solutions for Zero Hunger.

Addressing Zero Hunger requires innovative approaches, integrated actions across sectors and complementary interventions in agriculture (crop, livestock and aquaculture), fisheries and forestry aiming at developing productive and sustainable food systems.

Working towards a common vision

Food security and nutrition are at the top of the political agenda to many countries of the region. Many have launched initiatives aimed at the Arab region to generate political commitment to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 2 for Zero Hunger and transform that commitment to actions that benefit all stakeholders.

In 2013, leaders from the region issued the Riyadh Declaration during the third Arab Economic and Social Development Summit that encouraged strategies to address food and water security in the region.

FAO and the League of Arab States signed a programme in 2018 and joined efforts to facilitate coordination between countries and support regional policy dialogue in the Arab region for combating hunger in the Arab region.

Earlier this year, FAO and parliamentary representatives from Africa and Arab World countries launched the “Parliamentary Network for Food Security in Africa and the Arab World”. This initiative reaffirms the political commitment of the region’s countries to ensure that everybody has access to sufficient and quality food.

Last March during the 30th Arab Summit held in Tunis, Arab leaders declared their commitment and support to the initiative of the President of the Republic of Sudan aims at achieving Arab food security.

Side event

FAO in collaboration with the League of Arab States is organizing a side event to assess the prospects for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 2 on zero hunger in the Arab region, while tackling emerging challenges such as climate change, undernourishment, rural poverty, increasing population growth, low agricultural productivity, scarce natural resources and increasing food import.

The main conclusions and recommendations emerging from this event are expected to guide the work currently being carried under the subcommittee of the League of Arab States on Ending Hunger aiming at building a Zero Hunger Framework for the region.