



AGRICULTURE



COMCEC

CCO BRIEF ON AGRICULTURE

COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE
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CCO BRIEF ON AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION

I. Introduction

The world has been undergoing a rapid economic and technological transformation in recent years. In this process, major global 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 the foremost sectors for the economies worldwide, particularly in OIC member countries. The development of this sector is also critically important for addressing hot topics such as food security, poverty, and economic development.

As one of the leading sectors in most OIC member countries, agriculture provides food, income, and employment for a large segment of societies. The importance of agriculture in national economies varies widely across OIC countries. In the least developed countries, agriculture accounts for more than 50 per cent of GDP, while in many high-income economies, agriculture accounts for less than 1.5 per cent of total economic output. OIC agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) reached USD 823 billion in 2023, accounting for 18.93 % of world agricultural production. Moreover, the number of people employed in the agricultural sector in OIC Member Countries reached 212 million in 2022, accounting for 28,97 % of the world's agricultural employment.¹

However, OIC member countries face challenges in ensuring agricultural development and food security for their populations. Therefore, the agriculture sector is critical for many OIC member countries to generate income, increase welfare, and eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Given its importance, agriculture was identified as a cooperation area in the COMCEC Strategy and the Agriculture Working Group (AWG) was established with the strategic objective of “Increasing the productivity of the 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.

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

¹ COMCEC Agriculture Outlook 2024.

II. Agricultural Cooperation under the COMCEC

Considering the essential dimensions of livestock production and fishery (such as feed, veterinary services, infrastructure, overfishing), which are among the most important elements for sustainable food security in the OIC Member Countries, the COMCEC AWG devoted its Meetings in 2024 to discuss on "Developing Livestock Production and Fishery to Foster Food Security for a Sustainable Agricultural Development in OIC Countries."

A. Developing Livestock Production and Fishery to Foster Food Security for a Sustainable Agricultural Development in OIC Countries (22nd and 23rd Meetings of the Agriculture Working Group)

The 22nd and 23rd Meetings of COMCEC Agriculture Working Group (AWG) were held on 30 April 2024 and 19-20 September 2024, respectively, with the same theme "Developing Livestock Production and Fishery to Foster Food Security for a Sustainable Agricultural Development in OIC Countries".

In this framework, a research report, which aims to examine developing livestock production and fishery to foster food security, was prepared for enriching the discussions for two consecutive COMCEC AWG Meetings (22nd and 23rd). While the preliminary findings of the report were submitted to the 22nd AWG Meeting, the final version of the report was submitted to the 23rd AWG Meeting.

The report assessed the developing livestock production and fishery at the OIC scale with dimensions such as feed availability and quality, disease management and veterinary services, infrastructure and market access, overfishing and depleting fish stocks, management and governance and came up with some policy options to provide permanent and feasible solutions to such problems.

The report examines potential for the development of livestock production and fisheries, with a view to improving food security for sustainable agricultural development in OIC Member Countries. The report also underlines that rapid population growth, urbanisation and economic changes are critical challenges for OIC countries to reshape their food systems for ensuring food security and fostering sustainable agricultural development.

To manage those problems, it is of great importance to provide animal protein, generate income and support rural livelihoods. In many OIC countries, livestock and fisheries are essential for dietary protein, employment, and export earnings. The research report highlighted total meat production in OIC member Countries realized 5,5 times more in the period of 1979-2022. In the same period total world meat production was 3,6 times more. Main challenges on the issue were identified in the report as follows:

- Water scarcity
- Climate change
- Land degradation, feed resources
- High feed costs
- Animal health
- Access to vaccines and medicines

- Infrastructure deficiencies
- Market volatility
- Low adoption of modern practices
- Overfishing,
- Depleting marine resources
- Pollution, and habitat destruction

During the 23rd Meeting, the participants elaborated on the main findings of the research report and discussed the policy options to contribute to the livestock production and fishery. 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 efficient water management practices by enhancing water storage and distribution infrastructure, adopting water-smart agricultural techniques, and supporting climate-resilient livestock breeds to ensure sustainable water use, boost livestock productivity, and enhance resilience to climate change*
- *Developing and implementing sustainable feed strategies by utilizing modern and innovative feed production techniques and advanced technologies for livestock production*
- *Mobilizing resources to essential veterinary services as well as promoting regional cooperation for the development and distribution of vaccines and medicines with a view to ensuring disease control*
- *Developing and implementing mechanisms to stabilize both inputs' and producer prices regarding livestock production and reduce volatility and promoting modern practices for sustainability*
- *Increasing strategic investments in infrastructure, modernization, and regional cooperation with a view to boosting the productivity, profitability, and sustainability of the livestock and fishery sectors*
- *Upgrading fishing ports, processing facilities, and cold storage systems to ensure that fish products are handled efficiently and preserved at optimal quality from catch to market*
- *Promoting financial support tools and mechanisms, capacity-building programs, and modern infrastructure development for small-scale, artisanal fishers and livestock producers with a view to enhancing productivity as well as alleviating poverty*
- *Developing and implementing comprehensive strategies and programs encompassing the development of robust aquaculture regulations, investment in modern aquaculture facilities, supporting for product diversification and innovation, promotion of eco-friendly practices, and rigorous environmental monitoring and compliance*

All the documents and presentations made during the 22nd and 23rd 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 cooperation among OIC Member Countries and should be designed in accordance with the objectives and the expected outcomes defined by the Strategy in the agriculture section.

Projects also play important roles in realization of the policy recommendations formulated by the member countries during the AWG meetings.

In this regard, 8 projects have been selected to be implemented in 2024. These projects are as follows:

The project titled “Experience Sharing on Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)” has been implemented by Azerbaijan with the partnership of Türkiye. The project aimed at reducing the negative impacts of global warming on agriculture and food security through climate smart agriculture practices.

Within the scope of the project, Azerbaijani experts have conducted a Peer-to-peer experience-sharing visit to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Türkiye to understand the risks raised by climate change on Türkiye's agricultural sector and to learn about actions to be taken by the relevant institutions in order to decrease those risks by using CSA. At the end of the project, a report has been prepared which reflects the current situation in those countries and proposes recommendations for enhancing CSA practices.

The project titled “Capacity Building on Enriched Organic Fertilizers Production” is being implemented by Benin with Egypt and IOFS. The project aims at increasing agricultural production through using enriched organic fertilizers. Under the project, a study visit to Egypt will be conducted. In addition, a training program on the production of enriched organic fertilizers will be organized with the participation of the experts from the partner countries.

The Gambia has implemented a project titled “Improving Human and Institutional Capacity for the Development of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the Agriculture Sector of the Gambia and OIC member Countries” with SESRIC and Türkiye. The project aimed to increase the technical capacity of the officials working in the agriculture sector by developing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Within the context of the project, a training program focusing on different steps in the development of KPIs in the agriculture sector was organized with the participation of technical experts from the partners.

The project titled “Sedentary the Ruminant Herds to Ensure Food and Nutritional Security in Niger” is being implemented by Niger. Partners of the project are Benin, Uganda and Egypt. The project aims at strengthening the capacities of producers on technical breeding in livestock based on the experiences of the partner countries. Under the project, a study visit to Uganda will be conducted. In addition, a training program will be organized with the participation of experts from the partner countries.

Nigeria is implementing a project titled “Capacity Building on Organomineral Fertilizers” in partnership with Sudan and Benin. The project aims to increase capacity of the farmers on producing organic fertilizers by using wastes. Within the scope of the project, a study visit will be conducted to Benin and a training activity will be organized.

Türkiye is implementing a project titled “Common Steps towards Climate Change: Adaptation, Mitigation and Resistance Strategies in Stone Fruits” with Azerbaijan and Morocco. The project aims at addressing technical and economical bottlenecks in stone fruits, particularly apricots, in the context of climate change impact. Under the project, study visits to the partner countries have been conducted. Additionally, a training program will be organized with the participation of technical experts from the partners.

The project titled “Promoting Food Security in OIC Member Countries through Sustainable Agricultural Inputs” has been implemented by SESRIC in partnership of 15 OIC member countries. The project aims to increase agricultural productivity and food security in the OIC member countries by promoting the use of sustainable agricultural inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. Under the project, an online training and a workshop will be organised with the participation of technical experts from 15 Member States.

The last project’s title is “Promoting Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems (AKIS) and Precision Agriculture” and the project is being implemented by COMSTECH with the partnership of Pakistan, Mauritania and Senegal. The purpose of the project is to enhance use of precision agriculture technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and AKIS to increase agriculture production in the beneficiary member states.