
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

EGM on Green Value Chains for Improving Livelihoods in the Arab Region

20-21 June 2013

UN House, Beirut, Lebanon

INFORMATION NOTE

A. INTRODUCTION

The Arab region cannot meet its continuously growing food need by relying exclusively on its internal production mostly as a result of its fast depleting natural resources. Consequently, the region is highly subject to the vagaries of the global food market with any disturbance in food supplies or sudden hike of food prices, such as the 2007/2008 food price crisis, leading to devastating social, political and economic unrests. The region is also experiencing a growing demand for sustainably produced goods and services as a result of the improving socio-economic conditions and the ensuing recognition of the negative social, economic and environmental impact due to excesses in the food sector be it in production or consumption. As a result, an increasing number of countries and stakeholders are seeking ways to leverage market forces in order to bring about positive and sustainable changes on how the food is produced, processed and distributed in the region.

The need to access sufficient food is increasingly going hand in hand with the one to access safe and nutritious food. This trend is expected to strengthen even more as the population becomes more affluent and aware of the need to maintain healthy lifestyles. Also, compliance with food rules, regulations and other requirements has been acknowledged as a necessity to access the lucrative markets of the developed world. This has led to a dichotomy in the food industry as Arab food producers and traders have had to distinguish between food destined for export and food for local/regional consumption. With evolving local preferences and demands, more and more local consumers are asking for safe and healthy food products, and as a result greater pressure is being put on the food industry to come up with higher quality products while also increasing quantity.

Therefore, it is high time for the region to start devoting more attention to the functioning of its agricultural markets in order to ensure a constant supply of food both in terms of quality and quantity. Achieving such a feat calls for a better performing food sector that increases productivity, improves efficiency and enhances quality through for example reducing waste, limiting input consumption, ensuring efficient supply network, improving infrastructure, introducing good practices and traceability and strengthening support services for an improved overall environment to name a few. Better working agricultural value chains will not only lead to improved product quality but also to lower wastage and thus higher quantities as a result of increased efficiency and effectiveness throughout the various segments of the value chain. This would help lessen shocks due to supply constraints or price hikes while also enhancing nutritional values and livelihoods.

In view of the above, ESCWA in collaboration with GIZ/BMZ and in partnership with the Arab Group for the Protection of Nature (APN)/Arab Network for Food Sovereignty (ANFS) is organizing an expert group meeting to assess the functioning of regional agricultural value chains with a view to identify ways to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness or in other words to “green” them. The EGM is expected to assess the major issues facing agricultural value chains in the region and to propose ways to enhance the way these value chains work particularly as related to improving their structure, conduct and performance, enhancing resource-use efficiency and reducing waste while also improving food availability, food quality and livelihoods.

B. OBJECTIVE

The objective of the EGM is to review and discuss policies and initiatives for developing and/or strengthening agricultural value chains in the Arab Region by identifying key challenges and opportunities and examining and proposing ways to improve efficiency in terms of higher productivity, improved resource-use, improved quality and reduced waste.

The outcome of the EGM will feed into a project proposal to be submitted to potential donors in order to push forward this agenda for the benefit of member countries.

C. MAJOR THEMES/SESSIONS

The major themes/sessions of the meeting include:

- Agricultural value chains in the region: overview, challenges and case-studies;
- Supporting agricultural value chain development in the Arab region; and
- Debating on issues of interests related to supporting the development of agricultural value chains in the Arab region.

D. PARTICIPANTS

The EGM will target agricultural experts, policy makers, development planners and other concerned stakeholders including for example experts from Arab/regional funds. Some participants will be identified by the APN/ANFS who will attend the Second Consultation of the Arab Network for Food Sovereignty (ANFS).

E. ORGANIZATION

The EGM is organized by ESCWA and GIZ and in collaboration with APN/ANFS and will be conducted in both English and Arabic. Translation will be provided.

F. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Date and venue: The EGM will be held on 20-21 June 2013 at the UN House in Beirut (MZ level), Lebanon. Registration will start at 8:30 a.m. and the opening session at 9:00 a.m.

Accommodation and transportation: A list of Beirut hotels providing UN rates will be made available to participants who will be expected to make their own arrangements with the hotel of their choice.

Visas: Participants will be responsible to secure the necessary entry visa into Lebanon through the Lebanese Embassy in their respective countries. Those without a Lebanese representation in their countries could inform ESCWA ahead of time so that proper arrangements could be made.

G. CORRESPONDENCE

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