



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS of the Virtual Consultative Conference “OIC International Conference on Food Security Reserves”

*Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, (on-line)
(6 April, 2021 – 03:00 p.m. Time Zone: ALMT)*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	2
OPENING SESSION	2
FRAMEWORK OF THE FOOD SECURITY RESERVES	3
PRE-FEASIBILITY STUDY	4
DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF THE UNDERSTANDING	4
FEEDBACK OF THE PARTICIPANTS	4
<i>Oral feedback at the Conference</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Written feedback at the Conference</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Feedback after the Conference</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Closing remarks</i>	<i>9</i>
RECOMMENDATIONS	9
CONCLUSIONS	10
ANNEX:	10

BACKGROUND

The Secretariat of the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS) in partnership with the LA International Cooperation within the Islamic Development Bank TA Grant # KAZ0078 “Preparation of Preliminary Institutional Framework Study for the Islamic Organization for Food Security» organized the International Online Conference on the establishment of OIC Food Security Reserves on 6 April, 2021.

The Conference aimed to present the pre-feasibility study on OIC Food Security Reserves prepared by the LA International Cooperation, as well as to discuss the concepts and proposals for the design of the Food Security Reserves. The outcomes of the event explore the role of Food Security Reserves in alleviating food insecurity situation and food crises as well resolving relevant challenges for building up a food reserve system within the OIC region.

The Conference was conducted in English with the simultaneous interpretation into/out Arabic, French and Russian.

89 participants attended the Conference, including the representatives of government agencies, research institutes, diplomatic corps of 35 OIC Member States, experts of the LA International Cooperation, the staff of the OIC Secretariat and OIC institutions, as well as other international organizations.

The following report provides the main messages of key speakers, the presentations of experts, the feedback of Conference participants, as well as the recommendations and conclusions based on the discussions within the Conference.

OPENING SESSION

The official opening of this Conference included speeches from the Assistant Secretary General of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for Science and Technology, H.E. Ambassador Askar Mussinov and the Director General of IOFS H.E. Mr. Yerlan Baidaulet.

H.E. Ambassador Askar Mussinov presented the appreciation for inviting to the Conference. He noted the problems of malnutrition and hunger in OIC countries, and pointed out the effects of climate change, land degradation, and other external factors influencing food security. He highlighted the role of IOFS in ensuring food security in OIC region and welcomed the given pre-feasibility study on food security reserves, as it is essential to respond the current food challenges, including alleviating hunger in emergencies. Therefore, Mr. Askar Mussinov emphasized five key aspects for consideration in tackling food security problems, that are 1) development of clear food security policies; 2) establishment of OIC food security reserves in addition to existing national reserves; 3) role of food stockpile and food relief in other emergency situations and demographic changes; 4) using smart technologies in food production, food storage, maintenance food supply chains; 5) clear strategy for OIC countries. In the end, he wished the success to the Conference and positive outcomes for Member countries.

H.E. Mr. Yerlan Bidaulet welcomed the Conference participants and outlined the high-level attendance by Member countries in the event. He underlined the importance of the program on food security reserves among approved 16 IOFS programs with the aim in achieving food security in OIC countries. He noted the food security challenges in OIC countries, including low food and agricultural productivity, increased food import, food scarcity, high rate of hunger and malnourishment. He underlined that the necessity of establishing the OIC food security reserves has been an important issue upon OIC Agenda since 1995 as per the 4th OIC Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development held in Tehran, Iran. He emphasized that IOFS, being the OIC specialized institution was authorized to implement this strategic decision. He noted the importance of creating region-wise food security reserves.

He informed that the pandemic consequences necessitate the consolidation of efforts among OIC Member countries in responding to these effects. Establishing interstate cooperation mechanisms is important to mitigate the consequences of emergencies, external and global challenges. He delivered that the Conference recommendations will be submitted in a week after the Conference and considered to be endorsed in two weeks after uploading on the website. He outlined the key role of Steering Committee in forming these food security reserves. The Conference will lead to the adoption of recommendations and better security in OIC.

The opening and other sessions of the Conference were moderated by Dr. Ismail Abdelhamid, the Director of Programmes & Projects Office, and Mr. Azamat Khamiyev, Program Manager at IOFS. The moderators thanked the keynote speakers and informed the participants on the Conference Agenda and instructions to follow the event. They encouraged the participants to get actively involved in the event, particularly in the Conference discussions. They emphasized that participant questions are important to summarize the Conference and develop the Conference recommendations. He informed that participants can ask their questions in the Conference chat, also the organizers will allow participants to ask questions verbally.

FRAMEWORK OF THE FOOD SECURITY RESERVES

Mr. Stephen Catchpole, Team Leader, Public Sector Reform Specialist of the LA International Cooperation, made an introduction to the Conference, outlined the Agenda and background on Institutional framework study for the IOFS review and overview of the food security reserves.

Mr. Stephen Catchpole presented the summary of the consultancy support provided to IOFS by LA International Cooperation. The presentation outlined the overall purpose of the food security reserves (FSR) and the benefits of cooperation between Member states in developing and formulating FSRs. He emphasized that the development of FSR requires taking into account: the need for bilateral and multilateral agreements amongst Member states to mitigate against barriers to interstate trade; the availability of food security support; access to stock and distribution in the event of crisis; the utilisation of the reserve and provision of food or financial support; and the protection of household income and food stock and market price stability.

PRE-FEASIBILITY STUDY

Mr. Pierre Van Roosbroeck, International Consultant in Food Security, made a presentation on Concepts of food security and the draft preliminary Feasibility Study of the OIC Food Security Reserves.

Mr. Pierre Van Roosbroeck in his presentation elaborated on the technical aspects of design and management of FSR. He provided comparisons of the various designs that have been used by other collaborative regional reserves (ECOWAS, APTEER, ASEAN) and the financial aspects of set up and running costs of a typical reserve. The presentation also explored how FSR is linked with food and nutritional security, focused on national policy priorities in FSR and its role in addressing food crises on national and international levels, including chronic undernourishment and malnutrition. He explained how FSR is related to food aid programs and provision of social security nets. He also provided scenarios in respect of the geographical, food security needs and logistical dimensions that need to be considered in the formulation of regional groupings of Member States to provide for effective regional collaboration and guidance on the actions required in the design of the global FSR.

Mr. Pierre Van Roosbroeck highlighted the role of FSR not only in protecting vulnerable households, but also in reducing market tensions, stabilizing national and international food markets, as well as preventing and anticipating food insecurity and other risks. He also mentioned that in a full feasibility study many aspects shall be put in place for formulating the FSR: food stocks, financial support, food types and compliance, accessibility, transport, distribution mechanisms, infrastructure, networks and operating systems. At the end of his deliberation, there were presented FSR grouping options among Member states, and the formula to calculate the food that need to be stocked in FSR.

DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF THE UNDERSTANDING

Mr. Stephen Catchpole presented the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of the FSR. He provided an overview of the draft MoU with a view to debate its content and seek opinions from Member states towards an acceptance of the MOU.

The MOU covers the policy and strategies of the FSR in meeting food security issues, the mechanisms for build-up and replenishment of earmarked reserves, the parameters and rules for the use and distribution/exchange of food grain amongst Member states, the size of the reserve in respect of physical grain and financial element, roles and responsibility of the FSR Steering Committee and Secretariat, and that individual Member states may agree on bilateral and/or multilateral agreements to form regional groupings across which the FSR will operate.

FEEDBACK OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Verbal feedback at the Conference

Following the presentations, the Conference participants thanked experts on the presentations and provided their feedback and recommendations upon further activities in establishing OIC FSR. The feedback was given during the Conference.

The representative of Sudan Ms. Khadeeja Omer Alseed noted the importance of establishing the FSR, particularly the development of international food agriculture. She also emphasized that Sudan has vast agricultural land, water and other resources to contribute to the food security not only for OIC, but also for UN Member countries. She added that the increase in the use of agricultural technologies can boost the small and medium agricultural industries, and called for using the Sudan's potential in countering food security in the OIC region.

Dr. Ismail Abdelhamid thanked Ms. Khadeeja Omer Alseed for her feedback and informed that the comments will be taken into account in implementing IOFS programs.

The representative of Iraq Mr. Adel Khudhair Abbas Almasoodi underlined the significance of FSR and other IOFS projects, including humanitarian aid to needy OIC countries, particularly in light of COVID-19 effects. He informed that officials of Iraq are keen to participate in upcoming IOFS meetings. He also stated that the cooperation of Member states in the field of food security is important, and Iraq is eager to become the official Member of IOFS. He added that his country's membership is still pending, and informed that once the financial and economic situation is improved, the government agencies would start the process of joining IOFS.

Dr. Ismail Abdelhamid thanked Mr. Adel Khudhair Abbas Almasoodi for his comments and welcomed the future membership of Iraq. He also noted that the scale of contributions takes into account the financial capacity of a country.

The representative of Turkey – Dr. Bursak Yuksel asked on the relationship of the FSR with other international organizations, such as FAO, WFP. He stressed the necessity to consider the issues of food safety, the effects of harmful organisms, and requested more information regarding the measures that Member countries should take during the provision of humanitarian aid. He also underlined the aspect of accountability in establishing FSR and suggested to consider applying sanctions or restrictions.

Mr. Stephen Catchpole informed that some Member countries have already bilateral agreements with FAO and WFP. He suggested that the full feasibility study should look in detail of these existing agreements. He noted that this relationship is to be scrutinized and correspond with the IOFS program on the FSR. In addition, he informed that the suggested MoU is to cover all aspects in detail, including the issue of quality control of food, the role of Steering Committee, the sufficient level of standards, investigation activities, and other aspects.

The representative of Turkey – Dr. Bursak Yuksel requested more information on the approval process of establishing FSR. He also noted that classification of Member countries into groups should be scrutinized and reviewed correspondingly. He also asked regarding the real-time monitoring, the data collection by Member states, and the types of data that are to be used in monitoring. He noted that the comprehensive database system should be established in that purpose. Finally, he raised a question on the capacity of Member countries in data collection and availability of information on that matter.

Mr. Stephen Catchpole answered to the questions saying that presented slides about the FSR and grouping options are only and purely provisional and does not reflect on the approval process. He added that the full feasibility study is to reflect these aspects along with the discussions at the Steering Committee where Member countries would review the grouping options and the viability of grouping divisions and whether these groups shall be

divided into other groups. He mentioned that the ECOWAS FSR consisting 15 countries include 4 sub-groups.

In terms of data collection, **Mr. Stephen Catchpole** informed that vast range of data shall be used, including population, demographic trends, food availability, the capacity of countries to sustain themselves, transportation system. He added that open FAO and WFP data can be used along with the real-time data coming from ministries of agriculture or other government agencies of Member countries. That data shall be integrated into the central system and updated accordingly. He also noted that the capacity in running database system, including the human resources management aspects, should be taken into account in a full feasibility study. He informed that providing the ECOWAS feasibility study took 3 years. Therefore, the development of OIC FSR feasibility study may take at least this period of time if not longer.

The representative of Iran Dr. Ali Kiani Rad noted that economic agreements of Member countries should be taken into account for establishing FSR, because many countries have various policies regulating food markets, protecting producers. He added FSR should be suitable with these economic circumstances.

Mr. Stephen Catchpole admitted that the economic agreements and circumstances shall be considered and reviewed in a full feasibility study.

The representative of Egypt Mr. Ashraf Kamal Abbas Nasser asked if food-importing countries must make contributions to FSR and underlined that most of OIC countries import food and are vulnerable to food deficits.

Mr. Stephen Catchpole replied that the aspect of food import dependency is the important part of establishing FSR; in case of total food import of a Member country, it has a zero contribution to FSR.

The representative of Cameroon Mr. Abakachi Minaber emphasized to pay attention on the social situation in countries while establishing FSR. Particularly, he noted that small countries and rural areas in these countries are vulnerable to food crises, and do not have sufficient food for their population. The countries that have high deficits in food should be prioritized while humanitarian aid activities are implemented by FSR.

Mr. Stephen Catchpole accepted that the vulnerability of a country shall be taken into account for establishing FSR and added that the full feasibility study should review this aspect in detail.

The representative from Tajikistan Mr Andamov Ismoil drew the attention on the devastating effects of pests, not only in transportation of food commodities to reserves, but also during the storage of food in reserves. He also emphasized the importance of phytosanitary control measures. He also underlined the potential of Tajikistan in exporting foods to neighboring countries.

Mr. Stephen Catchpole admitted that the quality assurance and phytosanitary control of transported and stored food in FSR plays a key role in sustaining FSR and the full feasibility study should review this aspect thoroughly.

The representative Turkey Dr. Bursak Yuksel request the IOFS to send latest draft MoU to Member states, incl. through the diplomatic channels.

Dr. Ismail Abdelhamid assured that the draft MoU will be provided to Member states through diplomatic channels accordingly.

Written feedback at the Conference

The following feedback, including questions and comments, of the participants was given during the Conference to the “Chat” box of the Zoom Conference.

Feedback after the Conference

The Ministry of National Food Security and Research of the Islamic Republic Pakistan provided the feedback regarding the establishment of food security reserves as it follows.

“In the prevailing conditions, establishing FSR is an excellent idea, which is highly appreciated. However, for establishing Food Security Reserves (FSR), conversations, dialogue and policies are not sufficient. For addressing future threats like, erratic weather conditions, wind, hailstorm, rainfall, flood and natural disasters, some practical steps should be taken immediately so that in the new scenario food security should be ensured. Here I want to share some suggestions:

- 1. OIC countries, having better economic conditions may come forward and to establish a “Revolving Fund”. Other participating countries may replenish that “Revolving Fund” through their assigned share.*
- 2. Revolving Fund may exclusively be used for the construction of silos and purchase of food produce and commodities, at the national and regional levels. Because storage facilities are not sufficient to maintain the strategic reserves. In Pakistan the public sector could only hold 20-25% their stock in the storage, whereas the rest of quantity remained open in the field.*
- 3. Food reserves should be replenished on annual basis and the assigned quantity of carry-forward stock may be used for the vulnerable segments of the country.”*

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Turkey provided the following feedback regarding the establishment of food security reserves:

- *“According to SOFI Report published by FAO in 2020, 690 million people are estimated to have been undernourished before the COVID 19 in 2019. By taking FAO’s estimates into consideration, in the concept note, the sentence “the endeavors of global communities to reduce worldwide hunger to zero (Sustainable Developing Goal-SDG) by the year 2030 is facing a major challenge with the numbers of malnourished people rising to more than 820 million by 2018” could be updated for further studies. Also Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries (LIFDCs) - List for 2018 published by FAO could be referred to indicate Member States undergoing food insecurity as World Food Programme (WFP) data for further studies.*
- ***For Basic Principles of the OIC Food Security Reserves***
In the concept note for the main purpose: to facilitate the access of food in the OIC Member States through coordination of national food stock policies and national food reserve for guaranteed provision to the population during the period of food shortage. Instead of national food stock policies and national food reserve remarks, regional food stock policies and regional food reserve could be better than this one. For more clarification, need assessment should be made at regular intervals throughout the region

and determine the countries in need assessment and eligible for the aids accordingly. OIC food stock policies and food reserve policies should be coordinated.

- ***For the para of “Management Mechanisms** to include: “real-time monitoring of the food security situation of Member States by being equipped with an extensive information and analytical system, that assesses and evaluates the risks, threats, and scale of problems in the food security area, and is used to regulate online the FSR activities (withdrawals and replenishment of food reserves). This monitoring mechanism requires complimentary.” For real-time monitoring of the food security situation of Member States, the content of the information to be requested from Member States should be clarified and indicators to be used for real time monitoring of food security situation of Member States should be specified. Moreover, to be able to perform real time monitoring, establishment of an ICT system with the module of extensive analysis is required, therefore capacity of statistical and data analysis should be enhanced since data availability, accuracy in collecting data and standardization would be also important for Member States.*
- *In the document of Preliminary Feasibility Structure and Principles of Food Security Reserves for the OIC-IOFS, in “Developing an FSR section”, as to “• trade controls and tariffs between countries do not prohibit exchange” sentence must be corrected as “• trade controls and tariffs between countries do not prohibit exchange by taking WTO rules and commitments into consideration. So most of the countries including Turkey are the members of WTO and have commitments. It is also considered that study on FSR should not have a disruptive effect on trade. That is, adding a necessary remark, without prejudice to WTO rules and commitments of Member States is important and it must be taken into account at the latest version of Memorandum of Understanding.*
- *With respect to “• safety standards are agreed between MS and processes ensure compliance to those standards”, Food safety standards including quality and controls are also important as well as phytosanitary controls. Some countries are free from some harmful organisms. No harmful organisms, in accordance with internationally accepted phytosanitary rules, spread risk for Member States of OIC during the physical aids, stocking and also at the entry points into the countries. Therefore, necessary standards for phytosanitary and plant health must be established, and required controls for products should be made. Products should have phytosanitary certificate. In addition, some quality controls should be made by competent authorities in accordance with internationally accepted rules. It must also be taken into account at the latest version of Memorandum of Understanding.*
- *Also logistical issues in providing assistance to the countries in need should be considered.*
- *Governance for food security reserve should be accountable as well as being independent and transparent and for the accountability, the inspection and sanction system must also be defined.*
- *Furthermore, attention should be paid to confidentiality of data shared by member countries and it must be guaranteed that it will not be shared with third parties and will not be used for any other purposes depending on type of data to be requested from Member States.*

- *In the concept note, regarding the sentence “Structure for food security, The FSR consists of grain or other principal food commodity and a financial element in a combination determined and in the form of an obligation...”, voluntary contribution system may also be considered and discussed for further meetings.*
- *To be able to implement the Food Security Reserve System properly, need for capacity building in terms of human resources and storage infrastructure might be arisen.*
- *Also, approval process for the Memorandum of Understanding on Food Security Reserve which impose on some national obligations for Member States should be explained in details. Additional approval process should be followed in accordance with national legislation and rules and the necessary national consultation process for the FSR may take some time.*

Closing remarks

Dr. Ismail Abdelhamid and Mr. Azamat Khamiyev thanked all participants for the valuable comments that were given by participants. They expressed the gratitude to the LA International Cooperation for the presentation of Pre-feasibility study. He also thanked interpreters for their contribution to the event.

Dr. Ismail Abdelhamid also read out the preliminary Conference recommendations based on the feedback of participants. They informed that the Conference report, including the recommendations and conclusions, will be available on the IOFS website by 16 April 2021 and is open for providing feedback of participants. They added that the participants feedback will be taken from 16 April until 27 April (including). After that date the report with the recommendations will be considered adopted and agreed by the participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were agreed by the Conference participants:

- To take into account the Presentation and Preliminary Feasibility Study on the establishment of OIC Food Security Reserves (hereinafter – FSR), provided by the IOFS Secretariat in cooperation with the consultant (LA International Cooperation);
- To emphasize the high vulnerability of the OIC Member countries in some regions in the production of basic foods and, consequently, to the instability of the food supply;
- To underline the importance of cooperation at the inter-governmental level for effective and coordinated actions in strengthening food security;
- To highlight the necessity to develop full-fledged feasibility studies for each regional reserves separately, considering regional specifics and national peculiarities;
- To finalize the presented preliminary feasibility study taking into account the comments and views of the Member countries provided at the conference and afterwards which was allotted for giving the feedback;
- To ensure the coordination and assistance for Member countries concerned in the establishment of food reserves on the platform of the IOFS;
- To intensify the work by Member countries concerned in the establishment of Food Reserves;

- To adopt the format of the draft Memorandum of Understanding as a framework document of the Member countries, participating in the regional reserves, to express their consent in the establishment of regional FSR.
- To finalize the draft Memorandum of Understanding, taking into account the comments and views of the Member countries expressed at this conference and afterwards which was allotted for giving the feedback, as well as to carry out the procedures of coordination with the Member countries on this matter.

CONCLUSIONS

The Conference demonstrated the relevance and necessity of the FSR. Based on the Conference recommendations, the following conclusions were made to continue the work on the establishment of OIC Food Security Reserves:

- The IOFS Secretariat, in order to implement the recommendations indicated by the respected Member countries, shall finalize the preliminary feasibility study, finalize the draft Memorandum of Understanding and carry out the procedures for its approval;
- The IOFS Secretariat shall intensify the work with Member countries through the creation and conducting Steering Committee meetings for each potential regional Food Reserve.
- The IOFS Secretariat, within the framework of the meetings of the Steering Committees, shall work with the Member countries on the development of separate and full-fledged feasibility studies for each of the regional FSR, as well as at the expense of other alternative sources.

ANNEX:

- Conference Agenda
- Presentations
- Draft Memorandum of understanding