



ECO Secretariat Staff Papers

FOOD SECURITY IN THE ECO REGION

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July 2015

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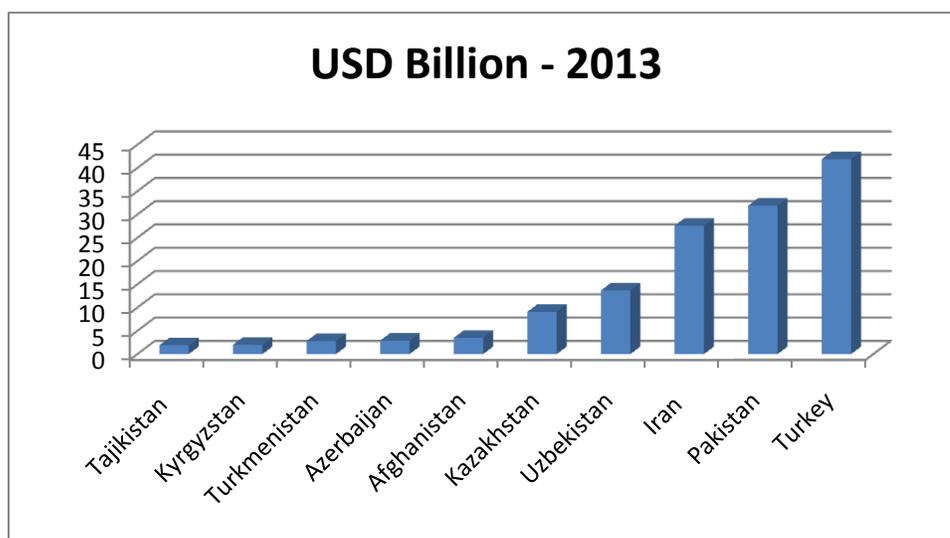
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FOOD SECURITY IN THE ECO REGION

Most of the members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) have identified food security as one of their primary concerns. This makes agriculture a key sector and essential in achieving food security for the region, as it has been for most part of the developing world.

Agricultural production and productivity growth secures the nutrition by making food available and accessible through their income generating and employment creating capabilities. This is more so for countries where agriculture occupies a considerable share in the compositions of GDP and labor force. Constituting more than 11 percent of the overall value-added and employing nearly 37 percent of total active population of the region, agriculture is one of the major source of growth and development of ECO region. The region is very rich in variety of soil, environmental and climatic conditions, suitable for crop and livestock diversification. Major farm products of the ECO member countries are wheat, barley, rice, sugar cane, sugar beet, seed cotton, potatoes, tomatoes, meats, milk and milk products. Livestock production in the ECO countries is predominately based on traditional systems, including small holdings of cattle, sheep and goats in villages and small towns for their household requirements of milk and meat.

Figure: Agricultural Production in the ECO Region



Source: FAO

Agricultural production in the ECO Region reached 137 billion USD in 2013, nearly 3.5 percent of total agricultural production of the world. However, most of ECO countries are net importers of agricultural products with total imports valued at USD 48,444 million in 2013. Total exports of agricultural products in ECO countries reached USD 35,442 million in 2004, meanwhile a net deficit of USD 13,002 million. Despite the modest increases seen in recent years there is still an untapped potential for the growth of agricultural production and trade.

As indicated in the Table, over the period 2012-2014, it is estimated that about 12.9 percent of the population in the ECO region was undernourished with marked variation among countries. According to FAO estimates, the proportion of undernourished population ranged from 32.3 percent in Tajikistan, 24.7 in Afghanistan to 21.7 percent in Pakistan. Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan decreased their undernourished population with compare with the past indicators. The most important developments that is Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Iran and Turkmenistan have reached the international rate which is <5.

Table : ECO Population, Per Capita Dietary Energy Supply, and Prevalence of Under-nourishment, 2012-14

Countries	Population (Million)	Per Capita Dietary Energy Supply (Kcal/day)	Undernourished	
			number in millions	% to total population
<i>Afghanistan</i>	33.4	2107	7.5	24.7
Azerbaijan	9.4	2952	ns*	<5
Iran	75.6	3058	ns*	<5
Kazakhstan	16.4	3107	ns*	<5
Kyrgyzstan	5.4	2828	0.3	6.0
<i>Pakistan</i>	180.0	2428	39.6	21.7
Tajikistan	7.1	2101	2.7	32.3

Turkey	74.5	3880	ns*	<5
Turkmenistan	5.2	2883	ns*	<5
Uzbekistan	28.1	2675	1.7	5.8
ECO	435.06	2643	56.3	12.9

Source: State of Food Insecurity in the World, 2012-14, FAOSTAT

ns*- Not stated.

The incidence of poverty and hunger is more prevalent in the rural areas of the ECO region, especially among women, children, nomadic populations, peasants with little or no land, and agricultural laborers in addition to refugees. Women and children are the most vulnerable groups. There is a concentration of poverty among nomadic populations with small herds and semi-arid-land shepherds. A smaller group of the extremely poor includes widows, sick and disabled older people, who depend heavily on direct state support. Malnutrition and lack of medical services, especially in rural areas remain a serious health problem in some ECO states. Under-nourishment (stunting) and micronutrient deficiencies are more prevalent in rural areas. Iron deficiency anemia is a common problem, goiter is endemic and rickets and other nutritional deficiencies, for example of zinc and other micronutrients, are also found.

ECO, as a regional organization dedicated to economic and social development of its member states accords top priority to food security and agricultural development in the region. The ECO Regional Programme for Food Security (RPFS), which was prepared with the technical assistance of FAO in 2004-05 and updated in 2008 and 2010. Comprising 9 regional components along with various national projects, the Program focuses on enhancing agricultural production and trade of agro-products in the ECO Member States. The Republic of Turkey has been elected as the coordinating country to implement the Programme. A coordination center (ECO-RCC) set up in Ankara, in 2012

The RPFS comprises 9 regional components, which are as follows:

- 1 Combating Transboundary Animal Diseases
- 2 Integrated Pest Management
- 3 Coordinated Research on Wheat Improvement
- 4 Inter-and intra Regional Trade Promotion
- 5 Support to Agricultural Advisory Services
- 6 Development and Maintenance of Pastures
- 7 Establishment of Regional Plant Genebank
- 8 Strengthening of Regional Seed Supply
- 9 Support to the Regional Centre for Risk Management of Natural Disasters

With respect to the provision of food security, a significant progress has been recorded in the field of seed. ECO has started Technical Cooperation Programs (TCP) with FAO on strengthening seed supply in the ECO region, which aims to promote the integration of the seed sector and promotion of seed trade within and beyond ECO member countries. ECO Seed Association (ECOSA) has arisen as an outcome of the First Phase of ECO-FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) signed in 2006.

In line with the 8th component of RPFS, the ECO/FAO-SEC Project on Seed Sector Development in the region, amounting to USD 400.000, which is financed by Turkey within the scope of FAO-Turkey Partnership Programme (FTPP) and ECO (USD 350.000 and USD 50.000 respectively), has started its implementation in May 2013 and will be completed in end of 2015. The Project has been implemented with the participation of seven member states namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

ECO-FAO Project on Technical assistance for the formulation of strategies *peste des petits ruminants* at global and regional level developed by FAO and its implementation has started with the participation of ECO Secretariat. The Sub-regional Workshop on PPR control for ECO Region is scheduled to be held in September/October 2015 in one of the ECO Member State. The implementation of the said project is expected to be completed in 2015.

The ECO Agricultural Bio-technology Network (ECO-ABN) is under establishment process. The main purpose of this project is to provide the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARIs) in ECO countries with an efficient tool for collaborative research in biotechnology.

ECO has started an institutionalization regarding food security in recent years. The decision making bodies of ECO have approved the establishment of various ECO affiliated bodies and institutions in the field of agriculture to facilitate the implementation of the RPFS. The Regional Coordination Center for implementation of the RPFS (ECO-RCC) was inaugurated in Ankara, Turkey (2012); the ECO Seed Association (ECOSA) was established in Ankara, Turkey (2009); and the ECO Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters (ECO-RCRM) was set up in Mashhad, Iran (2007). Institutions such as the ECO Meteorological Calibration Center (ECO-MCC) in Ankara, Turkey, the ECO Veterinary Commission (ECO-VECO) in Tehran, Iran and the ECO Center for Efficient Utilization of Water for Agriculture (ECO-CEUW) in Islamabad, Pakistan are also in the process of being established.

The mission of the ECOSA is to promote and develop the seed and plant breeding industry in the region. The Association provides a forum for cooperation and information exchange among national seed and plant breeders associations and companies and represents the interests of his members at the national, regional and international level. Six International Seed Trade Conferences have been organized by ECOSA since 2009. Experts and representatives from private sector, seed sector specialists

from ECO and OIC Member States' public and private companies and various other international organizations and institutions participated in these conferences. As an outcome of these conferences, around 900 professionals working in the seed sector were trained through technical workshops and had the opportunity to establish business contacts.

The ECO-RCRM was inaugurated on 4 September 2007 in Mashhad with MOU establishing the Regional Center for Risk Management, which was signed by nine ECO Member States. It is an affiliated body of ECO aiming to promote cooperation among member states in the fields of meteorology, climatology, hydrology and climatic disasters for effective risk management of natural disasters. ECO-RCRM has organized various Working Group Meetings and Training courses for the establishment of the Centre.

The ECO-RCC for Implementation of ECO-RPFS was inaugurated during the 5th Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture (November 2012, Antalya, Turkey) at Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock of the Republic of Turkey in Ankara, Turkey to mobilize and coordinate the implementation of the said programme in collaboration of the Member States. The concerned Turkish authorities appointed a coordinator and other staff. The ECO-RCC organized activities to coordinate and facilitate the effective implementation of the ECO-RPFS.

Although ECO-RPFS provides a well designed integrated frame for prospective regional and national projects under its relevant components, the Program has not yet been fully implemented due to lack of relevant project proposals in desired quantity and quality and also lack of necessary financial mechanisms for available projects and also failure to access the international donors are the main impediments of slow-progress on implementation of the Program.

For further achievement and development on the implementation of the ECO-RPFS, ECO in cooperation with the Member States focuses on

planning to organize training courses, projects and programmes on preventing trans-boundary animal diseases, seed sector development, food losses and waste reduction and management of post harvest waste. ECO aims at reaching the international rate of undernourished population (FAO definition) which is below 5 per cent in the ECO region, in next ten years.

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