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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Expert Group Meeting Tracking Food Security in the Arab Region

Amman, Jordan, 24-25 April 2019

Information note

1. Background

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is implementing a Sida-funded project entitled “Promoting Food and Water Security through Cooperation and Capacity Development in the Arab Region.” The project revolves around four main issues including (i) assessing the impact of changing water availability due to the effect of climate change on agricultural production, (ii) enhancing policy development in support of improved food and water security through greater institutional coordination between the agriculture and water sectors, (iii) enhancing food safety and production efficiency through the adoption of good agricultural practices, and (iv) enhancing regional capacity to assess the status of food security through a monitoring framework that allow the visualization and analysis of the status of food security.

Within the context of the fourth component on “Enhancing the assessment capacity of the status of food security in the Arab countries,” ESCWA and its partners have put forward a framework for monitoring food security with a focus on the Arab region. The framework was developed through extensive desktop researches and analyses of national and regional policies and global plans of action to describe food security through its four dimensions, namely availability, access, utilization and stability. This exercise was followed by a long consultative process that included a series of thorough consultative meetings with experts from regional and international organizations, the project national focal points, and UN organizations.

Following the development of the food security monitoring framework, consultations were held to review and discuss the framework. Notably, the “Second Consultative Meeting on Food Security Monitoring in the Arab Region,” which took place 1-2 February 2018 at the UN House in Beirut and brought together experts from FAO, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, and academia, discussed the proposed framework, including its set of indicators and underlying methodology.

The “Third Consultative Meeting on Food Security Monitoring in the Arab Region” was held 27-28 March 2018 at the UN House, in Beirut, Lebanon, and it reviewed and finalized the proposed framework, including its dashboard and indicators, in preparation for its submission and possible adoption/endorsement by the General Assembly of AOAD. It is anticipated that the Executive Committee of AOAD will approve the methodological framework in its meeting in coming months.

To further support the adoption of the food security methodological framework, ESCWA is preparing the first monitoring report, which attempts to monitor food security between the years 2010 and 2015 while

providing an overview on the likely trend to 2020. This Expert Group Meeting (EGM) being organized by ESCWA is expected to conduct an in-depth review of the report. The EGM will be convened in Amman, Jordan, from 24 to 25 April 2019. It is expected to put into context progress and challenges related to the monitoring food security using the proposed methodological framework, highlight improvements made to better ensure that the framework provides the necessary information through its dashboard and reaffirm how the results of the monitoring exercise should be presented in subsequent editions of the report.

2. Objectives

The objective of the EGM is to review the results of the first comprehensive food security monitoring exercise using the framework developed by ESCWA and its partners, notably AOAD and FAO, and contributors. The expert group meeting will aim as well to reaffirm the methodological framework and improvements introduced since the last consultative meeting building on the various comments received from member countries. The specific objectives of the meeting are to:

- Review and discuss the first food security monitoring framework notably as related to overall observed trends and achievements and considering prevailing conditions in the Arab region;
- Exchange views and experiences on how to further improve the methodological framework in light of the results obtained, i.e. how to ensure it is more accurate in identifying overall trends; and
- Consider the policy implications emanating from the results of the methodological framework and how countries could best build on these to enhance their food security.

3. Agenda

The EGM is expected to be a mix of presentations and discussions in plenaries only and should feature:

- Presentations on progress made during the food security project implementation with a focus on achievements under Component 4;
- Overview, rationale and overall methodology of the monitoring framework (a recap) and changes introduced following the comments and views from countries;
- Presentations of results at country, sub-regional and regional levels;
- Data availability and collection at country and regional levels; and
- Way-forward and institutionalization of the framework at country-level.

Breaks for coffee and lunch will be arranged during the day and half of the meeting. The draft agenda will be circulated to registered participants.

4. Participants

The EGM is expected to bring together selected national focal points of the project, representatives of from relevant regional and international organizations, members of the academia and individual experts. All will be invited to contribute to the discussions.

5. Date and venue

The Expert Group Meeting will be held from 24 to 25 April 2019 at the Kempiski Hotel in Amman, Jordan. Registration will commence at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, 24 April 2019. The meeting will conclude at 16:00 on Thursday, 25 April 2019.

Participants are kindly asked to bring identification and travel documents (passports, boarding passes, etc.) on the first day of the meeting.

6. Language of the session

The meeting will be conducted in the Arabic and English languages. Simultaneous interpretation from and into the Arabic and English languages will be provided.

7. Registration

Participants are kindly invited to submit their completed registration form to ESCWA secretariat by Monday, 1 April 2019. A colour, scanned passport-like photograph should be submitted with the registration form.

ESCWA, in accordance with prevailing United Nations Financial Rules and Regulations, will provide roundtrip travel to Amman in economy class on the least expensive route, a daily subsistence allowance to cover hotel, meals and incidental expenses for up to three nights in Amman (upon presentation of ticket stub), and a terminal allowance to facilitate ground transportation to and from the airport to all eligible participants. Confirmation and registration forms must be received by ESCWA no later than Monday, 1 April 2019.

8. Entry visas

Participants are required to secure their own visas for travel to Jordan, as may be necessary. A personalized letter of invitation can be provided by ESCWA for nominated participants to facilitate the visa request process.

9. Accommodation and transportation

The meeting will be held at the Kempiski Hotel, which offers preferential room rates to meeting participants.

10. Correspondence

Inquiries and completed registration forms should be submitted to the following officials:

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