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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

The First Meeting of Arab-GAP Stakeholders for Jordan
Amman, 13-14 February 2017

INFORMATION NOTE

I. BACKGROUND

Good Agricultural Practices or GAPs are "practices that address environmental, economic and social sustainability for on-farm processes, and result in safe and quality food and non-food agricultural products."¹ GAPs and other good practices are used to enhance safety and quality in the production, handling, packaging, and storage of fresh food produces. Increasingly, consumers at the global level are requiring farms to be GAP certified, usually through voluntary schemes, with a view to ensure the minimization of contamination risks along the food supply chain while also promoting workers safety and environmental sustainability². Application of GAP revolves around four pillars: economic viability, environmental sustainability, social acceptability and food safety and quality³. In other terms, GAP is applied to ensure that safe and quality fresh food such as fruits and vegetables are produced and moved throughout the food chain, which could also lead to new market opportunities at regional and international level.

The civil society (e.g., NGOs, consumer or retailers groups, etc...) can be drivers of GAP, which is the case of GLOBALG.A.P, one of the most renowned schemes. It was initiated as an association of European retailers in order to unify their practices to cater to consumers' concerns about product safety while also reducing burdens on suppliers (i.e., farmers and farm groups) through a harmonization and simplification of requirements⁴. However, in some cases governmental bodies, such as the Department of Agriculture in the case of the United States of America, have also been scheme owners while emphasizing on its voluntary nature while at regional level, associations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) launching their own regional schemes. In the Arab region, an Arab-GAP framework was also developed by the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) in 2007 though not much was done since.

ESCWA is currently implementing a project entitled "Promoting Food and Water Security through Cooperation and Capacity Development in the Arab Region", financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). Among its many objectives, the project aims to enhance capacity for efficient, safe and quality food production through the adoption and use of Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) for a responsible, effective and efficient food value chain in the Arab region or in other words it is seeking ways to assist countries and stakeholders of the region to adopt and implement an Arab-GAP certification scheme based on the framework of the AOAD. To date, ESCWA has held a number of consultations including on the scope and modalities for taking the Arab-GAP forward, a process which was informed by an initial review of existing national, regional and international GAP experiences. During the

¹ FAO/COAG (2003). GAP paper. (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/006/y8704e.htm>)

² United States Department of Agriculture website (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/gap-ghp>)

³ FAO. Good Agricultural Practices. (<http://www.fao.org/prods/gap/>)

⁴ GLOBALG.A.P. Website (http://www.globalgap.org/uk_en/who-we-are/about-us/history/)

⁶ FAO. (TCP/RAS/3501). (<http://www.fao.org/nepal/programmes-and-projects/project-list/en/>)

consultations, views were exchanged with experts and government representatives on the possible structural setup and operational modality of the Arab-GAP, including governance structure options.⁵ Next steps were identified, including the need to undertake further consultations to validate and finalize the Arab-GAP process, and motivate national stakeholders to take up the initiative. The possibility of having national pilot GAP programmes was also put forward as a way to take the regional scheme from the bottom-up and guarantee ownership of the Arab-GAP.

Based on achievements so far, additional work and consultations are needed to: a) finalize the updated Arab-GAP framework with a revision and simplification of the critical control points to constitute the basis of the certification and outlining of a governance structure, b) prepare a number of Arab-GAP related information materials, tailored to the specificities of the region, that would help to promote the Arab-GAP to different stakeholders and advance its implementation; and c) implement groundwork and raise-awareness to support the implementation of a pilot GAP programme in Lebanon and Jordan and other interested Arab countries. The following steps will be taken within the next 6 months:

- Refining the Arab-GAP framework for national adoption;
- Preparation of tailored GAP information material; and
- Launching groundwork for pilot GAP programme in Lebanon, Jordan, and other interested Arab countries.

II. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this first meeting of stakeholders of the Arab-GAP framework is to learn from related global and regional GAPs schemes and the existing/proposed Arab-GAP framework, to assess modalities for initiating a Jordan/Lebanese GAP based on the Arab-GAP framework and to outline and commit on a path forward.

Specifically, the meeting will aim to:

- Present the available global and regional experiences and provide a comprehensive GAP framework adapted to the Arab region and in accordance with the AOAD issued Arab-GAP framework;
- Consult with stakeholders on the proposed Arab-GAP framework, governance structure and implementation timeline;
- Assess other implementation modalities that might include ensuring commitment, selecting a stakeholders' task-force to manage the scheme, agreeing on a timeline for implementation and determining who and how to conduct stakeholders initial audits and/or assessments; and
- Formulate any other recommendations on a way forward for adopting and implementing the Arab-GAP framework.

III. PARTICIPANTS

The meeting will bring together representatives of the three main players in the food supply chain, i.e. farmers, retailers, and governments. A few farmers and representatives of major retailers will be invited together with government representatives, i.e., Ministries of Agriculture, Trade, Health and Economy and other governmental institutions that might be interested in food safety, members of the academia and individual experts and stakeholders. Most participants will be from Lebanon and Jordan together with representatives from GlobalG.A.P. and FAO to share their experience.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

⁵ Notable consultation events include the Expert Group Meeting on the Scope and Setting up of an Arab – GAP Framework (Cairo, 31 May – 1 June 2016) and a dedicated session within the Meeting of the National Focal Points for the Project on Promoting Food and Water Security in the Arab Region (Beirut, 5-6 October 2016).

The meeting is organized by ESCWA in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture of Jordan and supported by Sida.

The meeting will be held at the Kempinski Hotel in Amman, Jordan, 13-14 February 2017. Participants are kindly requested to arrive at 9:00 am on 13 February 2017 to register for the meeting, which will promptly start at 9:30 am.

V. LOGISTICAL INFORMATION

Participants are kindly requested to return completed registration form to ESCWA together with a scanned passport photograph. Outside participants should submit their registration form to ESCWA no later than Tuesday, 10 January 2017 to allow time to make the necessary arrangements for their travel. Sponsorship cannot be assured for registration forms received beyond that date. Participants are responsible for securing their own visa for travel to Jordan.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence and inquiries concerning the meeting should be addressed to:

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