**The way forward towards coherent policies for food security and nutrition in Tajikistan**

# About this consultation

This document summarizes the online consultation *The way forward towards coherent policies for food security and nutrition in Tajikistan*, which was held on the FAO Forum on Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia (FSN Forum in ECA) from 2 April to 24 May 2019. The event saw the participation of experts from Belarus, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Portugal and Tajikistan.

The consultation was initiated by the FAO project “Developing Capacity for Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Selected Countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia”, funded by the Russian Federation and led by the FAO Agricultural Development Economics Division. The facilitators were as follows:

* **Viorel Gutu** – Subregional Coordinator for Central Asia and FAO Representative in Turkey, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
* **Sajamol Saidzoda** – Vice-President, Tajik Academy of Agricultural Sciences
* **Sherali Rahmatulloev** – Sectoral Chief Specialist on childhood diseases / Coordinator for nutrition, Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Tajikistan
* **Mavzuna Karimova** – Head of the Department of Foreign Economic Relations and Integration Processes, Institute of Economics and Demography of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan

# Introduction

The launch of the “Programme for Reforming the Agriculture Sector of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2012–2020” has been an important step in addressing Tajikistan’s low agricultural production and productivity as well as for improving its food security and nutritional outcomes. In fact, one of the priorities that have been identified is “enhancing national food and nutrition security and safety”. In order to achieve this goal, coherent policies need to be developed that recognize the multiple dimensions of food security and nutrition issues and the diversity of stakeholders involved.

During this online consultation, participants shared their views on how coherent policies for food security and nutrition could be designed and implemented, and discussed which actors should be involved and which technical capacities would be needed in these processes. Furthermore, ideas were shared on the support to be provided to food system actors in order to enable them to contribute to the development of healthy food systems, and suggestions were provided on how agricultural value chains could be made more nutrition-sensitive. Participants’ contributions will feed into the recommendations on policy development for improved food security and nutrition, which will be prepared for the Government of Tajikistan in the context of the FAO project “Developing Capacity for Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Selected Countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia”.

# Actors to be involved in the development of coherent food security and nutrition policies

Consultation participants agreed that improving food security and nutrition requires a multisectoral approach. In general, they stressed the need to involve multiple stakeholders in policymaking processes related to food security and nutrition, although one participant suggested to involve only a limited number of actors, as engaging all stakeholders with an impact on food security would slow down the process due to conflicting interests (Mahmadsharif Atoev). Other participants, however, listed a large number of actors that should be engaged in the process, including representatives from public and private authorities and organizations, and civil society (Mavzuna Karimova, Gabriela de Albuquerque, Yrysbek Abdurasulov, Tamanna Ferdous, Rahmad Supriyanto, Sajamol Saidzoda); furthermore, it was argued that the process should be aided through substantial scientific and legislative support (Sajamol Saidzoda). Other actors to be included are the country’s youth – who constitute a large and increasing share of the population (Rahmad Supriyanto) – and the media, the latter for advocacy purposes (Tamanna Ferdous).

Participants suggested that the following specific organizations and authorities be included in the policymaking process:

* Action Against Hunger (Rahmad Supriyanto);
* Agency for Land Reclamation and Irrigation (Tamanna Ferdous, Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Agency for Standardization, Metrology, Certification and Trade Inspection (Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Agency for State Material Reserves (Mavzuna Karimova);
* Agency on Public Procurement of Goods, Works and Services (Mavzuna Karimova);
* Agroinvestbank (Mahmadsharif Atoev);
* Asian Development Bank (Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Avicenna Tajik State Medical University Dushanbe (Sherali Rahmatulloev, Mahmadsharif Atoev);
* Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (Tamanna Ferdous);
* European Union (Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (Yrysbek Abdurasulov, Tamanna Ferdous, Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Farming Research Institute under the Tajik Academy of Agricultural Sciences (Rahmad Surpriyanto);
* Food Security Committee of the Republic of Tajikistan (Sherali Rahmatulloev, Yrysbek Abdurasulov);
* GUP "KMK" – State Unitary Enterprise "Hochagii Manzil Commune" (Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Institute of Nutrition (Mahmadsharif Atoev);
* International Fund for Agricultural Development (Parviz Juraev);
* Japan International Cooperation Agency (Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Local Development Committee (Mavzuna Karimova, Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Mercy Corps (Rahmad Supriyanto);
* Ministry of Agriculture(Mavzuna Karimova, Natalia Kireenko, Yrysbek Abdurasulov, Tamanna Ferdous, Mahmadsharif Atoev, Parviz Juraev, Sajamol Saidzoda, Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Ministry of Amelioration and Water Management (Mahmadsharif Atoev);
* Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (Mavzuna Karimova, Tamanna Ferdous, Mahmadsharif Atoev, Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Ministry of Education and Science (Yrysbek Abdurasulov, Tamanna Ferdous, Mahmadsharif Atoev, Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Ministry of Energy and Water Resources (Tamanna Ferdous);
* Ministry of Finance (Mavzuna Karimova, Yrysbek Abdurasulov, Tamanna Ferdous, Mahmadsharif Atoev, Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Yrysbek Abdurasulov);
* Ministry of Health and Social Protection (Yrysbek Abdurasulov, Tamanna Ferdous, Mahmadsharif Atoev, Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Ministry of Industry and New Technologies (Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Ministry of Justice (Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment (Mahmadsharif Atoev);
* National Association of Dehkan Farms (Tamanna Ferdous, Mavzuna Karimova, Rahmad Supriyanto);
* National Committee for Women and Family Affairs (Tamanna Ferdous);
* Oxfam (Rahmad Supriyanto);
* Save the Children (Rahmad Supriyanto);
* Statistical Agency (Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Tajik Academy of Agriculture (Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Tajik Academy of Pedagogical Sciences (Mahmadsharif Atoev);
* Tajik Academy of Sciences (Mahmadsharif Atoev, Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Tajikpotrebsoyuz - Tajik Consumer Union (Mavzuna Karimova);
* Tajikmatlubot – Republican Union of Consumer Societies of Tajikistan (Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Tax Committee (Mavzuna Karimova);
* Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* United Nations Children’s Fund (Tamanna Ferdous, Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* Welthungerhilfe (Rahmad Supriyanto);
* World Bank (Yrysbek Abdurasulov, Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* World Food Programme (Parviz Juraev, Sherali Rahmatulloev);
* World Health Organization (Tamanna Ferdous);
* Youth Group on Protection of Environment (Rahmad Supriyanto).

Some comments suggested that UN agencies such as FAO, UNICEF or WHO, working under the guidance of Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Agriculture, should take the lead in the policymaking process to ensure full involvement of all stakeholders (Tamanna Ferdous). Another participant suggested to establish an interdepartmental working group operating at two levels and including representatives from all relevant ministries, the private sector, and UN agencies and other international institutions (in particular, FAO, IFAD, WFP and the World Bank). The first level would be a working council chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, the second level a working group chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture. The working groups would determine the priority areas for improving food security and develop a strategy and respective indicators. The UN organizations and the World Bank could provide support by establishing a secretariat for coordinating the work of these working groups, monitoring and assessing situations, providing technical advice, and facilitating exchange of knowledge and experience (Parviz Juraev).

# Development capacity for comprehensive food security and nutrition policies

Consultation participants stressed that a good technical understanding of food security, nutrition, and agriculture, as well as their interlinkages, is essential for developing coherent and mutually reinforcing food security and nutrition policies. In this regard, some comments argued that there should be a focus on the concept of nutrition security rather than food (Tamanna Ferdous). In any case, specialists with expertise covering all stages of the value chain are needed (Sajamol Saidzoda); context-specific knowledge is crucial, especially concerning the needs of farmers and consumers (Tamanna Ferdous).

Some comments referred to specific actors that could help facilitate the design and implementation of coherent food security and nutrition policies:

* The Statistical Agency could develop relevant indicators and monitor the country’s food security situation (Mahmadsharif Atoev);
* The Tajik Academies of Sciences, Medical Sciences and Pedagogical Sciences, and the Institute of Nutrition could develop a concept of public health – based on the consumption of a balanced diet – for various target groups (Mahmadsharif Atoev);
* The Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the Ministry of Education and Science could develop a nutrition strategy for various target groups (Mahmadsharif Atoev);
* Tajikistan’s Commission on Food Security should be strengthened, and criteria for determining its activities should be established (Yrysbek Abdurasulov).

Furthermore, some comments pointed out that those leading the policymaking process need to be equipped with adequate coordination skills. For example, following a multiactor partnership approach would bring all stakeholders together, and thus require a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the different actors throughout the process. Furthermore, leaders of the process should have the required negotiation skills to reach a consensus in the context of a technical debate, integrating social, economic and ecological aspects into policies (Tamanna Ferdous) that can help achieve tangible results while taking into account the country’s capacities (Sherali Rahmatulloev).

Some comments stressed that there is a need to look beyond national policies, and that a sound understanding of and strong commitment to global initiatives addressing food insecurity and malnutrition are needed. In this context, the UN has a key role in pushing the agenda forward and ensuring coordination among the different stakeholders (Tamanna Ferdous).

# Creating an enabling environment for sustainable and healthy food systems

Some participants provided general suggestions that would help enable food system actors to contribute effectively to the development of healthy food systems, with such examples as improvement of physical and social infrastructure in rural areas (Rahmad Supriyanto, Mavzuna Karimova) and the creation of a fair judicial system (Mahmadsharif Atoev). In addition, participants suggested that the following actions should be undertaken to support farmers, food processors and food distributors, which, in turn, would foster the development of sustainable food systems:

* **Improve rural infrastructure** (Rahmad Supriyanto). This includes, *inter alia*, electricity, roads, bridges and communication systems (Mavzuna Karimova).
* **Promote access to land.** Implementing a transparent and efficient land reform process would provide low-income communities with access to land for food production (Mavzuna Karimova).
* **Boost women’s empowerment.** Women farmers should be empowered to participate in all levels of decision-making (Tamanna Ferdous).
* **Enhance access to inputs, information and knowledge.** Farmers should be given access to quality seeds, fertilizers (Rahmad Supriyanto) and market information (Yrysbek Abdurasulov). Furthermore, a central agricultural research institute should be established to transfer knowledge on low-cost agricultural production technologies to the field (Mavzuna Karimova); recommendations on land and water use, crop cultivation and seed production should be developed as well (Mahmadsharif Atoev).
* **Provide agricultural training.** Topics to be included are agroecology and the production of healthier food by reducing or eliminating the use of synthetic pesticides and chemical fertilizers (Tamanna Ferdous).
* **Facilitate access to local and regional markets for ecological food items** (Tamanna Ferdous).
* **Create strong linkages between farmers and first buyers.** In this regard, attention should be given not only to the quantity but also to the quality of agricultural produce (Tamanna Ferdous).
* **Encourage product development and transformation at the farm level** (Tamanna Ferdous).Small farms should gain access to modern, small equipment for processing, drying, sorting and packaging products (Sajamol Saidzoda).
* **Define standards for healthy food** (Tamanna Ferdous).
* **Enhance capacity of inclusive business models** (Tamanna Ferdous).
* **Construct modern processing plants and laboratories for food certification** (Yrysbek Abdurasulov).

# Making agricultural value chains nutrition-sensitive

During the consultation, participants also discussed how value chains could be made more nutrition-sensitive; many of their suggestions related directly to agricultural production, as seen below:

* **Promote behaviour change among farmers to increase the supply of diverse, high-quality food products** (Sherali Rahmatulloev). For example, agroecology is a sustainable approach that ensures crop diversification, which is central to nutrition-sensitive agriculture (Tamanna Ferdous). Regarding diversifying production, there is a need to review the share of land used for cotton production as compared to share of land used for other crops (Mavzuna Karimova).
* **Address gender inequalities.** In particular the workload of women, who are often engaged in agriculture while also being responsible for caregiving, needs to be addressed (Tamanna Ferdous).
* **Develop regional agricultural specialization.** The following sectors should be developed: meat and dairy (Khovaling, Baljuan, Muminabad, Sh. Shokhin, Yavan and Khuroson districts of Khatlon region), poultry (Faizabad district), fisheries (fish farms in Kayrakkum town of the Sughd region, A. Jomi and Dusty districts of the Khatlon region), potatoes (mountainous Mastcha, Shahriston, Ghonchi region, Sughd region, Rasht, Lyakhsh districts), and grain (Dangara, Rudaki) (Mahmadsharif Atoev).
* **Promote local varieties.** Nutritious “alien” crops should only be introduced for diversifying production if they can adapt to local conditions (Tamanna Ferdous).
* **Introduce biofortification and therapeutic foods.** This is particularly important as approximately 30 percent of Tajik children are stunted (Rahmad Supriyanto). Farmers need to be trained on the specifics of cultivating crops for these products (Sajamol Saidzoda).
* **Review food industry technologies.** It is necessary to adopt technologies that prevent food manufacturing companies from bypassing the norms and standards for a particular product (Sajamol Saidzoda).

**Better nutritional outcomes through healthier street food**

In the context of the FEEDCities study project, WHO/Europe and the University of Porto carried out research in Dushanbe to shed light on the city’s street food environment. The results of the study underline the need to include street food vendors and customers in the development of food security and nutrition policies, as improving the nutritional value of street food will be essential for the transition to a healthier urban food environment. Based on the study’s findings a number of actions were proposed, including the following: 1) encourage manufacturers and vendors to use healthier fats by increasing their affordability; 2) encourage manufacturers and vendors to reduce the amount of salt by implementing quantified targets and mandatory maximum limits; 3) monitor the fat, sugar and salt content in common food items; 4) provide incentives for farmers to sell their products at local markets to increase the availability of fresh foods at accessible prices, and 5) increase vendors’ and consumer’s nutrition knowledge and awareness (Gabriela de Albuquerque).

# Resources shared by participants

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