

Donors Meeting on
**“Components and Requirements of Implementing The National
Programme for Food Security (NPFS) of Syria”**

Damascus 24-11-2010

Under the patronage of H.E. Dr. Adel Safar, the Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, and in collaboration with the State Planning Commission (SPC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the National Agricultural Policy Center (NAPC) organized the Donors Meeting on “Components and Requirements of Implementing The National Programme for Food Security (NPFS) of Syria” at the Cham Palace in Damascus, on 24 November 2010.

The Workshop was opened by Dr. Adel Safar, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, and Dr. Saad AL Otaibi, FAO Assistant Director General, with the presence of Dr. A. Bin Yahia, FAO Syria Representative, Mr. Ismail CH. Ahmed, UNDP Resident Representative, Dr. Mohammed Hamza, Deputy Chief of SPC, Mr. Mouhanad Hadi Representative of World Food Program.

Dr. Safar stressed the importance of NPFS for enhancing food security, which is a paramount objective for the Government, pointing out that Syria has achieved self-sufficiency from basic foodstuffs and implemented several relevant development projects. However, the recurrent drought hit the region hindered development efforts; it transformed the Northeastern area from a main source of food into food-insecure and impoverished areas.

He also stated that NPFS of Syria is a comprehensive program that targets the food-insecure population with special focus on the poor, smallholder farmers and other most vulnerable groups. It includes activities that boost productivity, diversify income sources and build capacity of food-insecure people in order to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable food security.

Dr. AL Otaibi praised the formulation methodology of NPFS Syria that was carried out by a multidisciplinary National Team under the coordination of the National Agricultural Policy Center (NAPC) and funded by the FAO during 2009-2010. It based on systematic process to identify the neediest geographical areas and targeted poor and vulnerable groups. Dr. AL Otaibi confirmed FAO's commitment to provide technical assistance for the implementation of NPFS in Syria. He also called for the contribution of donors, international, regional and local organization, and development partners in supporting and funding the implementation of NPFS projects.

The next session, chaired by Dr. Fathi Hadhri the FAO Food Security Officer, was scheduled as two presentations. The first delivered by Dr. Nasredin Hag Elamin, FAO Regional Office for the Near East in Cairo. He shed lights on FAO efforts in supporting development and implementation of NPFSs. He briefly reviewed the evolution of FAO initiatives on food security by shifting from Special Programme

(SPFS) to National Programme for Food Security (NPFS). He stressed that success of NAPFS is essentially based on strong political commitment, as well as to be designed, implemented and partially or fully financed by the countries. The NPFS uses the twin-track approach that aims to improving livelihood of the poor, through improved sustainable supply of food and household income, as well as improving access to adequate, safe, and quality food with a focus on the most vulnerable groups.

The second presentation was delivered by Mr. Atieh El Hindi, NAFD Director and NPFS Formulation Coordinator, to highlight "Components and Requirements of Implementing the NPFS in Syria". He clarified the major 5 components of the coherent NPFS including improve the sustainable management of natural resources; enhance agricultural production and productivity; promote agricultural policies, institutional capacities and supporting services; enhance food stability and risk management capabilities; and improve food access, quality and safety. These components, representing the main NPFS objectives, will be achieved through 54 specific priority projects with a total cost of 200 billion SP (4.07% billion USD). The expected contribution from development partners is about 10%. The total number of beneficiaries reaches about 2.24 million households in all over the country. Mr. El Hindi indicated that the State Planning Commission (SPC) is responsible for NPFS management and coordination among ministries for the implementation of the defined projects. In addition, the program is included in the Eleventh Five Year National Plan 2011-2015.

During the discussion session, the two lecturers gave further details in response to questions raised by the participants. Mr. El Hindi addressed that the major risk factors may obstruct implementation of NPFS' programmes and projects are the limited institutional and technical capacities in some ministries, possible delays in funding, and possible lack of commitment from partners in development. Dr. Elamin assured on the importance of "Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System" as an integrated part of the Programme's design and formulation. This system will greatly enhance the capacity to measure progress towards achieving the listed NPFS objectives.

Attendance to the workshop comprised of policy makers and public officers from main departments of Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, other ministries and various public establishments, and scholars from various universities; in addition to stakeholders from the private sector, and representatives of the United Nations agencies, international organizations (French Development Agency, ICARDA and ACSAD), financial funds, EU Delegation, and embassies (Canada, Germany, Czech, Indonesia, France, Italy, Spain, Nigeria, Ukraine, and South Africa).