

Statement of the Arab Initiative to End Hunger on the Urgent Need to Address Food Security Challenges in the Arab Region

We, members of the working group of the Arab Initiative to End Hunger, the League of Arab States (LAS); the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA); the Food and Agriculture Organization Regional Office for North Africa and the Near East (FAO-RNE); the World Food Programme (WFP) Regional Bureau Cairo; the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Regional Office in Egypt; the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD); the Arab Center for the studies of Arid zones and Dry lands (ACSAD); the Arab Water council (AWC); the ARAB Federations for Food Industries (ARABFFI); the Food Bank Regional Network (FBRN); and the Arab Group for the Protection of Nature (APN), meeting at the League of Arab States, issue the below statement.

Recognizing the food security challenges facing countries in the Arab region which are largely driven by protracted conflicts, occupation, dwindling natural resources for food production, a fragile food system dependent on imports, crippling economic downturns, and high unemployment.

Recognizing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing Ukraine crisis further worsening the food security situation in the region as a result of an unprecedented disruption of national, regional, and global food supply systems leading to food price volatility.

Noting the challenge of increasing prices of food, fertilizers, and fuel and resulting stress on fiscal capabilities of governments to subsidize basic food supplies and on the consumers for their access to food.

Highlighting the exacerbating impact of climate change on the already stressed agricultural resources, particularly water; which are negatively affecting lives and livelihoods.

Noting also the significant number of people affected by undernourishment reaching over 54 million people, in 2021, and the rising trends of moderate or severe food insecurity is estimated to affect over 154 million people in 2021 according to the latest estimates by the UN system.

Recalling “The Arab Regional Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Zero Hunger” prepared by the League of Arab States and its partners in the Subcommittee for Ending Hunger in the Region and approved by Member States. The framework provides strategic guidance to member countries and concerned stakeholders on opportunities and policies, legislations, and plans that could usher in a more sustainable and resilient Arab food system.


Recalling the launch of the “Arab Initiative to End Hunger” in February 2022.

Calls upon Member States to take the following short-term measures:

- Strengthen social protection and safety nets to provide food and other assistance to the most vulnerable and closely monitor the functioning of local food markets.
- Maintain open and predictable agricultural markets and trade to mitigate multifaceted short and long-term risks and achieving global food security.
- Provide direct support to boost food production for critical staple commodities.
- Call upon the international community to support vulnerable Arab countries through direct humanitarian assistance and financing in particular for Arab LDCs, conflict affected countries, and those housing refugees.
- Establish a funding mechanism by development banks, ODA, and other sources to accelerate and scale up support for food security in vulnerable countries.
- Engage with different stakeholders in the design and implementation of shock response measures, including farmers’ groups, women, young people and other communities.
- Provide rapid targeted support to women in the agricultural and informal sectors so they can contribute to maintaining food supply chains.

Calls upon Member States to adopt “The Arab Regional Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Zero Hunger,” which emphasizes on the following actions for the medium to long-term:

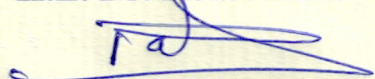
- Enhance agriculture and water productivity to at least double yields by 2030 by providing support to smallholders, improving resource-use efficiency, combating land degradation and desertification, and reducing food loss and waste from farm to fork.
- Promote integrated rural development to close the urban-rural gap by developing rural infrastructure and promoting rural food processing, and facilitating access to markets.
- Strengthen social protection programmes to provide targeted and untargeted as well as conditional and unconditional assistance, allowances, food-based programs, basic services, and subsidies to safeguard the welfare of the most vulnerable while responding to temporary shocks.
- Promote a strategic shift towards healthier, affordable, and more sustainable diets by developing dietary guidelines linked to social safety nets, promoting, promoting nutrition labeling and food fortification, and regulating food-related advertisement and marketing.
- Build resilience to shocks and pressures by strengthening governance to manage disaster risk, enhancing the resilience of the agricultural sector through climate-smart technologies and farming methods, setting early warning systems, and enhancing preparedness.
- Achieve lasting peace and mitigating the effects of conflicts by upholding humanitarian principles, working along the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN), developing a hazard early warning system, and promoting sustainable livelihood.
- Promote trade and investment for enhanced food security by ensuring trade facilitation and functioning of agriculture-related markets, removing export restrictions to minimize supply disruptions and price volatility, and promoting greater regional economic integration.


League of Arab States
General Secretariat


H.E. Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit

Secretary General of the League of Arab States

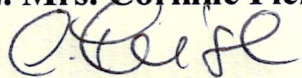
H.E. Dr. Rola Dashti


Under-Secretary-General and
Executive Secretary, United Nation
Economic and Social Commission for
Western Asia (ESCWA)

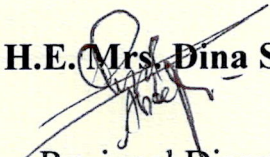
H.E. Mr. Abdul Hakim Elwaer


Assistant Director- General and
Regional Representative, FAO
Regional Office for North Africa and
Near East

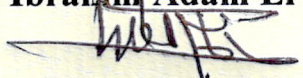
H.E. Mrs. Corinne Fleischer


Regional Director, WFP Regional
Bureau for Middle East, Northern
Africa, and Eastern Europe

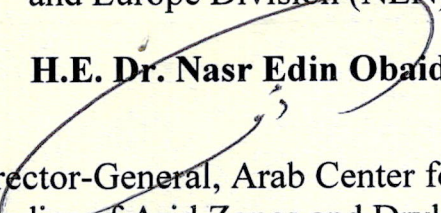
H.E. Mrs. Dina Saleh


Regional Director
IFAD, The Near East, North Africa
and Europe Division (NEN)

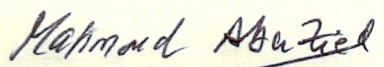
H.E. Prof. Ibrahim Adam El Dukheiri


General Director, Arab Organization for
Agricultural Development (AOAD)

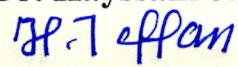
H.E. Dr. Nasr Edin Obaid


Director-General, Arab Center for the
Studies of Arid Zones and Drylands
(ACSAD)

H.E. Dr. Mahmoud AbuZeid


President, Arab Water Council

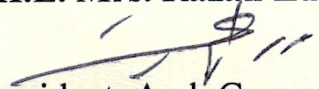
H.E. Dr. Hayssam Jaffan


President, Arab Federation of Food
Industries (ARABFFI)

H.E. Dr. Moez El Shohdi


President, Food Bank Regional Network
(FBRN), (A Better Life)

H.E. Mrs. Razan Zuayter


President, Arab Group for the
Protection of Nature (APN)