



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



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## Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Virtual Expert Meeting on Trade to Support Food Security and Nutrition in the Arab Region  
Thursday, 8 December 2022, 13:00-14:30 (Beirut Time)

### Information Note and Agenda

#### Background

Food security is a concern in the Arab region largely due to its low agricultural production potential given the scarcity of natural resources, notably water and arable land, which are increasingly pressured by climatic shifts. As a result, the Arab region relies heavily on global food trade to meet its food need and this dependence is only likely to rise further given the continued growth rate of the population and the expected increase in affluence. The recent impact of COVID-19 and the on-going war in Ukraine have shown the dire situation facing the Arab region as the events led to substantial disruptions of national and global food supply systems and led to high price volatility for crucial food commodities. The pressures from those events were adding to other existing stresses prevailing in the region including conflicts, economic slowdowns and downturns and a rapid nutritional shift towards food items that are more reliant on commodity imports. As such, it is expected that by mid-century the region will need to import 55% more cereals than currently being imported, which will drastically increase its import bill and put it further at the mercy of the vagaries prevailing on global markets.<sup>1</sup>

Recently, ESCWA conducted an in-depth review on some aspects of the food trade in the Arab region to assess how it could support the achievement of food security and nutrition. The review highlighted the nutritional challenge facing the region by assessing food availability for major food groups and the importance that trade plays. The analysis delved into other aspects of food trade including the impact of rising food prices and the importance of trade agreements and assessed how trade could be used to support the on-going nutritional transition. The report aims to enhance debates and promote comprehensive trade policy-making to allow countries to become more responsive to changing global food systems environment.

During the meeting, aspects and key data and information will be presented to encourage discussions on how the region could ensure that food trade continues to support food security and good nutrition as the region moves to transform its food systems. Participants will include government officials and experts to ensure that the discussions are far reaching and allow countries to build on the key recommendations emanating from the report and the meeting.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en/>

## Organization

The meeting will be held virtually on Thursday, 8 December 2022, from 13:00 to 14:30 (Beirut time). Interested experts are invited to [register](#) on this [form](#). The link to the actual meeting will be sent to registered participants only.

The meeting will be conducted primarily in English. No interpretation will be provided.

## Agenda

<b>13:00-13:05</b>	<b>Opening Remarks</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Ms. Reem Nejdawi, Chief, Food and Environment Policies, Climate Change and Natural Resources Sustainability Cluster, ESCWA</li></ul>
<b>13:05-13:45</b>	<b>Key messages on Food trade for food security and nutrition</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Mr. Fidele Byiringiro, Food and Environment Policies, Climate Change and Natural Resources Sustainability Cluster, ESCWA</li><li>- Dr. Martin Keulertz, Consultant, Climate Change and Natural Resources Sustainability Cluster, ESCWA</li><li>- Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad, FAO-RNE</li><li>- AOAD (tbc)</li></ul>
<b>13:45-14:30</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Discussions</li><li>- Closing remarks</li></ul>

## Correspondence

All meeting-related correspondence should be sent to:

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