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

Second Consultative Meeting on Food Security Monitoring in the Arab Region: Proposed Framework for Monitoring Food Security in the Arab Region  
Beirut, 1-2 February 2018

### INFORMATION NOTE

#### I. BACKGROUND

In light of the wide array of economic, political, and security challenges facing the Arab region, and the resulting natural and environmental changes, on top of the dietary transitions, Food Security remains a major developmental challenge facing the Arab region. In fact, the concept of food security has evolved over the past decades, and its scope has widened. The multi-dimensional definition of food security has become widely accepted and in use today. It states that food security “exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” Applicable at all levels or scales (individual, household, national, regional and global levels), the definition conceptualizes food security across the four main dimensions, namely: **availability, access, utilization and stability** over time.

However, this broad acceptance of the concept has not translated into a consensus on how to measure food security; a plethora of metrics has been globally proposed, each prioritizes certain food security aspects, applies at specific scales, or serves a certain purpose. Moreover, the Arab region presents an even bigger challenge for measuring food security at the regional level, due to the large disparities between Arab countries in terms of socio-economic characteristics and natural endowments.

In response to such challenges, ESCWA, under the work plan of the project entitled “Promoting Food and Water Security through Cooperation and Capacity Development in the Arab Region”, in particular, component four on “Enhancing the assessment capacity of the status of food security in the Arab countries”, the “First Consultative Meeting on Food Security Assessment and Monitoring in the Arab Region” was held in Beirut from 11 to 12 April 2017. The meeting brought together the project’s national focal points, along with food security experts and ESCWA staff and consultant. During the meeting, participants reviewed the results of the mapping of national food security policies and strategies in some Arab countries, and discussed the requirements for a regional monitoring framework. It was also agreed that the framework be further developed with inputs from the national focal points, and further discussed in a second review meeting.

Meanwhile, a framework was developed in accordance with said recommendations, and the following methodology was adopted in doing so:

Regional strategies were scanned, and a number of indicators related to food security was recognized. These indicators were then compared against the SDGs’ targets and indicators, and those that intersected were selected as being considered of high priority to the region vis-à-vis the SDGs, resulting in a new set included 36 indicators. Desk research and data collection followed, and the list was subsequently reduced to 28 indicators, eliminating those that did not have any data – or metadata – for the region. This list was further reduced by also eliminating indicators that did not have data that covers 50% or more of the Arab countries (i.e. **at least** 11 out of 22) **and** 50% or more of the total population of the Arab region. The remaining 21 indicators were not necessarily consistent with the wording of those of the SDGs, but they had the same directions and representation. Based on that, they were scanned against the FAO’s suite of food security indicators, they were categorized according to the four dimensions of food security, and the list was eventually further edited either by merging some of the overlapping indicators, or by eliminating the ones that were not relevant to the context of the Arab region, and replacing them with ones that were more adequate. The exercise

resulted in a set of indicators that monitor the status of food security in the Arab region, covering the four dimensions of food security (availability, access, stability, and utilization) within the context of the region.

On that note, ESCWA is organizing an expert meeting under the title “Second Consultative Meeting on Food Security Monitoring in the Arab Region: Proposed Framework for Monitoring Food Security in the Arab Region” on 12 January 2018 at the UN House, in downtown Beirut, Lebanon, to further discuss the methodology and the final set of indicators, in preparation for the dissemination of the said proposed framework to Arab countries and its discussion and adoption at the level of the League of Arab States through ESCWA’s strategic partner; the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development.

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

The objective of this “Second Consultative Meeting on Food Security Monitoring in the Arab Region: Proposed Framework for Monitoring Food Security in the Arab Region” is to review the proposed framework and the proposed indicators for monitoring food security at the regional levels.

Specifically, the meeting will aim to:

- Present the progress made in the general framework for food security monitoring at the national and the regional levels;
- Link the proposed regional food security monitoring system with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at national and the regional levels.

## **III. PARTICIPANTS**

The meeting will bring together experts in the fields of food security and statistics, members of the academia, individual experts, and representatives of regional and international organizations.

## **IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING**

The meeting will be held at the UN House in downtown Beirut, Lebanon, during 1-2 February 2018, and will promptly start at 09:30 am on Thursday 1 February 2018.

## **V. LOGISTICAL INFORMATION**

Participants are requested to return completed registration form to ESCWA together with a scanned passport sized photograph, so an access ID could be issued well ahead of time. Registration forms should be submitted to ESCWA no later than Monday 15 January 2018 to allow time to make the necessary administrative arrangements.

## **VI. CORRESPONDENCE**

Correspondence and inquiries concerning the meeting should be addressed to:

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