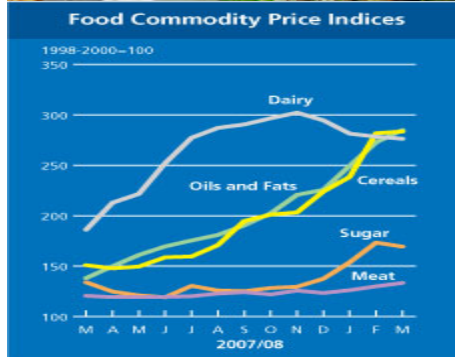




INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FOOD SECURITY IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES: NEW CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF PRICE VOLATILITY



2-4th of March 2010

Venue: Sultan Qaboos University
College of Agricultural and Marine
Sciences

Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

BACKGROUND

All Arab countries rely heavily on world markets to meet their food needs. The experience of this year and last year was quite dramatic for many Arab countries as food import prices quadrupled for some commodities and domestic inflation reached double digit rates. At the macro level the effect was reflected in huge food trade deficits and a jump in budget expenditure on food subsidies. At the micro level, the purchasing power of low income populations was significantly affected and the proportion of persons below the poverty line increased.

Countries mitigated these negative effects by adjusting their trade policies, mainly by reducing tariff rates, increasing export duties and controlling the prices of staple foods. However, trade policies, along with domestic policies addressing the domestic supply chains of food, are needed to respond to the long term food security challenge facing Arab countries.

Countries which are constrained by limited agricultural resources (GCC) have also responded to the recent food crisis by seeking solutions to food security issues through investment in agricultural production in land-abundant countries within the Arab region and elsewhere. The complementarities between land abundant and capital abundant countries in the Arab region are potentially capable of ensuring regional food security but require the revitalization of regional trade agreements to overcome intra-trade and investment barriers that have hindered cooperation in the past.

In addition, regional food security is affected by global food security and Arab countries have a stake in playing a major role in reforming the world food trading system toward a system driven by efficient international markets but in which food security is at the heart of its agenda.

The objective of this conference is to bring together researchers, experts, policy makers and other practitioners from the Arab region and the world to present and discuss food security in its domestic and international dimensions and in the light of the recent global food crisis. The organizing committee welcomes conceptual and empirical research papers as well as case studies on food policies of particular Arab countries to alleviate the effects of the global price surge. We particularly encourage submissions that highlight the following topics:

1. Global food price drivers and future trends
2. The new food price environment and implications for trade
3. The role of local production systems in ensuring food security
4. Poverty analysis, impact assessment and nutrition
5. Qualitative and quantitative assessment of national food policies in the Arab region
6. Supply chain management and strategic food reserves
7. Macroeconomic policies, food inflation and the exchange rate factor (particularly for GCC countries)
8. Agriculture and food security and the Doha development agenda
9. Food consumption patterns in the Arab region
10. Strategies for reducing food losses

11. Strategies to overcome water scarcity in the Arab region
12. The virtual water hypothesis and international trade.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

An abstract of 300 words must be submitted via E-mail no later than October 15th 2009. E mails should be addressed to **Dr. Houcine Boughanmi** at boughanh@squ.edu.om. The full paper in MS word format must be submitted no later than December 1st 2009. Selected papers presented at this Conference will be published in a special issue of a refereed scientific journal or an edited book.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Chairperson:
Houcine Boughanmi

Co-chairs:
Silm Zekri
Mbaga Msafiri

Secretary:
Sabra Al Rujaibi

Sponsorship:
Andrew Palfreman
Yaseen Al Mulla

Treasurer:
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Omar Al Jabri
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Mbaga Msafiri
Nejib Guizani
Shafuir Rahman
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Jumaa Al Musalami
Amani Al Alawi

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Steve Buccola, University of Oregon, USA
Hemesiri Kotagama, Sultan Qaboos University
Mbaga Msafiri, Sultan Qaboos University
Andrew Palfreman, Sultan Qaboos University

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

SQU will assist in issuing visas to all participants coming from abroad to participate in the Conference.

ABOUT SQU AND OMAN

The Conference will be held at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), the premier university in the Sultanate of Oman. The university is situated on a modern campus, located about 15 km from the International Airport. The architecture and beautiful landscape, in an otherwise stony desert environment, contribute to the unique characteristics of this special environment. The Sultanate of Oman lies at the crossroads of Africa, Europe and Asia. The capital city, Muscat, provides a captivating blend of the old and new characteristics of this ancient civilization. Increasing numbers of tourists are taking advantage of the desert and coastal scenery, the spectacular mountains and marine eco-tourism. The temperature in March is pleasant, ranging around 28-32 degree Celsius)

CONTACT

*Dr Houcine Boughanmi
Department of Natural Resource Economics
College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences
Sultan Qaboos University
PO Box 34, Al-Khod 123, Sultanate of Oman
E.mail: boughanh@squ.edu.om
Fax: + 968-244-13418
Tel: + 968-2414 1243 / 968-24141244*

COSTS

The registration fee will be US\$ 100 or 40 Omani Rials. The registration fee covers a symposium pack, admission to all sessions, a book of extended abstracts, a digital copy of the conference proceedings, lunches, coffee and tea, the Conference dinner and conference tour.

ACCOMMODATION

Special rates for conference participants have been negotiated with a range of hotels in all price categories. Transport will be provided from the hotels to the Conference venues.