



JOINT DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

1- We, the Ministers of Agriculture of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), met in İstanbul on 17 May 2017, within the framework of the Turkish BSEC Chairmanship-in office to evaluate the cooperation in the field of agriculture and aquaculture of the Member States, to consider sustainable food systems and to identify the potential mechanisms of further strengthening the cooperation in these areas;

2- Bearing in mind that, throughout its twenty five years of existence, BSEC has endeavored to bring its Members together, guided by common ideas, goals and principles;

Taking into account that the BSEC Region, with its unique geographical location, possesses a strategic importance in connecting Europe and Asia;

Determined to make every effort for achieving in cooperation among our relevant national institutions and to create a favorable environment for initiating joint projects, programmes and investments of common interest;

3- We acknowledge that global trade and investment continue to be important engines of economic growth and development, generating employment and contributing to agricultural growth. We are aware of the potential of the BSEC Region in the field of agriculture, agro-industry and development of the intra- regional trade, and collaboration among the Member States with a view to increasing the production, ensuring poverty mitigation and food security in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. We emphasize the BSEC's potential to enhance the quality and quantity of intra-regional trade and to improve business opportunities in the BSEC Region for agriculture.



4- We commit to intensify our efforts for the facilitation of movement of agricultural products within the BSEC Region by simplifying customs procedures and reducing waiting times for agricultural products at the border crossing points, particularly fresh fruit and vegetables which are vulnerable during food value chain. We will undertake a review of the opportunities for simplification of export and import procedures for agricultural products among the BSEC Member States, particularly fresh fruit and vegetables. We remain committed to a strong and efficient intra- regional trade system and reiterate our determination to work together to this end. We will continue our efforts to develop our bilateral and, regional trade cooperation among the Member States, using support mechanisms such as trade cooperation and agreements.

5- We recognize that strengthening agricultural trade is crucial for progress towards sustainable development, food security and nutrition and agricultural economic growth. Additionally, we support having an open, rule-based, transparent, non-discriminatory and inclusive agricultural trading system. We commit to work constructively for increasing the agricultural trade by ensuring a correct balance between trade facilitation of agricultural products and protection of the population of the Member States against the non-qualitative products. We encourage efforts by the private sector and other stakeholders to engage in dialogue and exchanges in this regard.

6- We underline that a well-organized marketing system can contribute to reducing food price volatility and enhance food security. Investment at all stages of food value chains is fundamental to raising productivity, generating employment and incomes and reducing food loss and waste. Improving agricultural productivity sustainably is fundamental for the achievement of sustainable food systems and food security. We note with the great concern the significant extent of food loss and waste throughout food value chains and their negative consequences for food security, malnutrition, excessive use of natural resources and damage to the environment. We highlight that this is a global problem of enormous economic, environmental and societal development and encourage all BSEC Member States to strengthen their efforts to address it.



7- We are confident that agriculture and agro-industry are major assets for the sustainable social and economic development of the BSEC Member States. Based on our rich and long-lasting tradition, we are willing to devote particular attention for the further development of these fields, both at national and international levels. Based on its twenty five years of experience, the BSEC has the capacity to take concrete steps and achieve tangible results in the areas of agriculture and agro-industry. We have agreed intensify our joint efforts in order to promote cooperation among the Ministries of Agriculture of the BSEC Member States, with the purpose of reducing regional disparities and to give an impetus to the regional trade with agricultural products.

8- We emphasize that aquaculture and fishery are valuable production resources for BSEC Region. We underline the importance of enhanced cooperation on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture. Aquaculture is an increasingly important industry for the BSEC Region, helping the economic growth and the development of sustainable food systems in the rural and coastal communities of the BSEC Member States. Therefore, we are committed to policy approaches, which will contribute to the exchange and gathering of relevant scientific data on aquaculture industry.

9- We note with great concern that price volatility has negative impact on food security and nutrition, and more generally on the regional and global trade. We believe that price stability is a very important objective for the BSEC Region. We propose that an Action Plan on Food Price Volatility should be established by the BSEC Member States in order to address challenge.

10- We emphasize that sustainable food systems contribute to the BSEC Region's ecological balance and biodiversity. The Black Sea is a unique marine environment which is home to many species, habitats and organisms. We underline that economic investment in processing and packaging of aquaculture products is very important for development of the sector in the BSEC Region. We stress, on the other hand, aquaculture as well as rural tourism, development of local products and



micro enterprise is the basis of the diversification and development of rural economic activities in the BSEC region.

11- We affirm that joint efforts the Ministries of Agriculture of the BSEC Member States towards diversification of non-farm activities and raising the quality of farm and agro-industry products through;-improved processing and marketing are needed as well as the,- cooperation with relevant international organizations in order to improve the income of farmers and rural Small Medium-sized Enterprises (SME); - and consultations on the issue of harmonizing the labelling standards for food products, as an important part of food quality and food safety in the Member States.

12- We will promote the increase cooperation among the Member States for the protection, efficient use and governance of the water resources and, will make effort to decrease pollution load of the water resources in the Member States and the BSEC Region, in order to attain healthy agriculture and aquaculture production. We will, on the scientific basis, raise the cooperation on protection and sustainable production of the genetic resources in the field of fisheries. We will cooperate to implement co-management programs for aquaculture among the Member States.

13- Taking into consideration of the sustainable food security, nutrition and increasing the farmers' income and strengthening the local economy of the Member States, make an effort to conduct joint studies so as to commercialize local products and give a special importance of the geographical indications for the local food products across the BSEC.

14- We will consider developing a joint program on entrepreneurship capacity in the Member States, in the field of agriculture and agro-business sector and on establishing the BSEC-Regional Cooperation Centre in cooperation with the FAO. In this context, we will attach special importance to development of R&D and implementation of the joint research programs, and to special training activities, exchange of information and knowledge among the Member States for sustainable food systems and development of the aquaculture policy.



15- We will make an effort to develop common standard on food quality, diagnosis methods and the other analysis methods, and will discuss the opportunity for implementation of the preferred foreign trade regime and for facilitating trade for food products among the Member States, without prejudice to the existing commitments of the Member States.

16- We will attach importance to improvement of agricultural environment, public health, food quality and hygiene, animal welfare, animal health, plant health, waste management and good practices in agricultural and aquaculture production of the Member States.

17- We will try to establish practical network among the public and private institutions, NGOs, agricultural associations, agro-business sector actors in the Member States, and to discuss clustering opportunities in the agricultural sector in order to contribute to the reduction of poverty and to increase the competitiveness of agriculture sector throughout the BSEC Region.

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