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Newsletter Team  
Usama Saadi - Nawal Nehme

### Dear Reader,

Throughout the last six months, the most prominent event conducted by the NAPC was the organization of the International Workshop on "The Role of Agriculture in the Process of Economic Reform in Syria", on the completion of the FAO project GCP/SYR/006/ITA, during 1-2 July 2008 at the NAPC premises. Many international and national experts participated in the Workshop.

Dr Adel Safar, the Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform in the Workshop opening emphasized the importance of the meeting given the diversity of topics dealing with many essential and vital hubs for the Syrian agriculture aiming to benefit from international and national expertise to promote economic and social trends of the country and increase openness to the international community. Accordingly, keep along with the progresses attained at regional and international levels to enhance the march of development and modernization led by Dr. Bashar Al-Assad President of the Republic.

The Italian Ambassador addressed that the NAPC establishment is an example of fruitful cooperation among the Syrian government represented by the MAAR, Italian government, and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in the field of agricultural development.

The FAO Representative stated that the NAPC is now a functional Center having distinguished human resources and administrative and institutional capabilities appropriate for its sustainability and for carrying its activities in a high level of quality and professional competency. He also stressed that the Organization is proud to cooperate with the Center as a national counterpart in the implementation of the FAO programmes and functions in Syria and the Region.

Another important activity carried out by the NAPC was the training workshop on "Food Security Policies in the Arab Countries in Light of the Global Food Crisis" organized by the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development in collaboration with the Center. The officials of the Organization addressed that the workshop was a good start of a permanent cooperation between the two institutions in carrying out specialized training courses and resorting to the national expertise of the Center.

Through the Center endeavor to securing sources of support for continuity in its work and functions, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development approved to fund a project to support the NAPC capabilities and establish a system of risk management for the next two years.

*Your comments and suggestions are always highly welcomed and appreciated.*



## International Workshop on “The Contribution of Agriculture to the Process of Economic Reforms in Syria”

1-2 July 2008

In the opening ceremony of the Workshop, Dr Adel Safar, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, highlighted the importance of agricultural sector and its effective role in providing food, contribution to substantial increase in the gross national product, promoting trade, and absorbing the labor force. The Syrian government focused therefore on the adoption of modern methods to achieve the desired agricultural development. Thus, the necessary macroeconomic and agricultural policy adjustments were gradually taken to keep up with the development at all levels and to avoid the negative impacts on the national economy in general and on the living standards of citizens in particular.

The Italian Ambassador to Syria, Mr Achille Amerio, addressed that the challenges facing Syria in its endeavor to shift to a positive social market economy requires benefiting from the NAPC services to investigate crucial issues to agricultural development and to help taking the right decisions for the interest of the agriculture sector and the national food security. He also emphasized the importance of the remarkable meeting, with the participation of a number of national and international experts to study important agricultural issues aiming to trigger the debate to come out with appropriate recommendations.

The FAO Representative Dr. Abdullah Taher Ben Yehia appraised the effective contribution of the Organization to the NAPC establishment through the Project GCP/SYR/006/ITA funded by the Italian Government. The Project mainly focused on institutional development, formulation and analysis of agricultural policies, training, information and

communications.

The two-day Workshop was scheduled to discuss variety of issues relating to Syrian agriculture. It targeted in depth look the strategies that the agricultural sector should pursue to contribute positively to Syrian economic growth in the forthcoming years. The meeting included the following working papers:

- Orientations of Tenth Five-Year Plan (Mr. Atieh El Hindi, NAPC Director): The Plan considerably focuses on the development of agricultural production



and increasing the economic growth rate to attain rural development, improve producers' income, alleviate poverty and achieve food security through adoption of structural changes capable of meeting the requirements of modernization and development, as well as improvement of production means by adopting modern technology; and human resources skills.

- The Strategic Role of Agriculture and Social Sustainability of Reformed Syrian Agriculture & Risk Dimension (Dr C. Cafiero, University of Naples- Federico

II, Italy): it stresses on including risk dimension in agricultural policy analyses and assessing its impact on the living standards of Syrian households. with respect to the absence of effective agricultural insurance markets and the high cost of accessing to agricultural credit, , except of in-kind credit of the strategic crops, the foreseeable effects of any agricultural policy reform in Syria will depend on the way of addressing the problems of credit and the insurance mechanism for Syrian farmers.

The State of Food & Agriculture in Syria (Mr S. Grad, NAPC): The report assures that some restrictions at the national and agricultural level still negatively affect the sector, and they should be removed through improving the macro economic environment, encouraging agricultural investments, directing the indicative planning to more flexible policies of production compatible with the market economy, and promotion of internal and external economic efficiency of the market integration.

- The Impact of Syrian Trade Policies on Agricultural Trade Performance (Mr B. Hamwi, NAPC): it demonstrates the effect of development policies on the Syrian economy and investment that help promoting trade in general and agricultural trade in particular. Moreover, increasing Syrian economy competitiveness and achieving higher rates of economic growth are the most important positive points of the process of openness to the global economy.

- Organic Agriculture in Syria: Option or Necessity (Dr F. Santucci, University of Perugia, Italy): it clarifies that Syria is still at the early stage of development for several organic commodities, particularly cotton and olive oil, which are



already produced and marketed to the EU. However, production and markets diversification of these organic products is increasingly needed. The organic farming would reduce the environmental risks and the loss of fertile topsoil, which characterizes present agriculture in Syria. Therefore, a coherent policy framework is required to direct the Syrian agro-food chains towards a more sustainable

irrigated areas was not compatible with the available water resources and mostly exceeding them. This crucial issue is of particular importance to the agricultural sector, which often uses up to 85% of the water resources.

- Approach and Policies against Drought (Mr L. Cavestro, MAI Bari): introduces the MAI-Bari Project "Rationalization of Ras El Ain Irrigation Systems", which was

basic factors of export success include comparative advantages, access to foreign markets; and adaptation to global supply chains coupled with competitive advantages.

- Soaring International Food Prices (Dr N. El-Amin, FAO RNE): presents the recent trends, reasons and implications of increasing international food prices focusing on the Near East Region. It also addresses the short, medium, and long terms of international measures useful for confronting this phenomenon.

- Food Security and High International Market Prices (Mr. El-Hindi, NAPC Director) the Syrian policies aimed to increase self-sufficiency of main food staples coupled with providing inputs and outputs subsidy and agricultural services. The Syrian food security, mainly of vulnerable social segments, is negatively affected by the global increasing prices, whereas Syrians spend on average 42% of their income on food, and with the lack of their flexibility in changing other living expenditures (housing, education, health care, communications and other services) their accessibility to food has been greatly affected.

- FAO Approaches and Initiatives in Support to Member Countries (Dr V. Cistulli, FAO TCAS): The FAO has recently launched the National Programmes for Food Security aiming to eradicating hunger within the local population in the country members. Principally, FAO helps in the execution, management, and following up such programmes. The role of FAO therefore is to facilitate a multi-disciplinary formulation process and provides technical support as required; assists in resource mobilization within the donor community; and reports on progress of 2015 targets.

*The proceedings of the workshop are available on the NAPC website at the following link:*

[www.napcsyr.org/pubs/proc/oceedings.htm](http://www.napcsyr.org/pubs/proc/oceedings.htm)



development.

- Quality Improvement of Value Chain Products (Dr. A. Dragotta, MAI Bari): it presents the Project "Improvement of Syrian Olive Oil Quality" that focused on integrated approach to improve the Syrian olive oil production chain. The key outcome of the Project was the convergence of the integrated related activities into a Strategic National Plan for OQQ improvement realizing the main problems and needs of the sector. The Project promoted also the creation of the first Syrian local Action Group involving private and public institutions.

- Agriculture and Economic Reforms in Syria: Impacts on Poverty and Inequality (Dr B. Rocchi and Dr D. Romano, University of Florence/ Italy): it stressed on the need to carefully study the elimination of government support to some agricultural activities; as well as to study the influence of overall strategies of the Government budget on the outcomes of sectoral policies; the fundamental importance of output growth for poverty reduction; the structural asymmetries in income distribution; and that the rural households seem less affected by positive multiplier effects on incomes and more exposed to poverty.

- Sustainability of the Exploitation of Water Resources in Syria (Mr J. A. Sagardoy, FAO Consultant): it delineates the development of irrigated agriculture in Syria. Whereas, in 2000 the Syrian government implemented important policies to conserve water resources, but the considerable expansion of the

implemented in response to the status of the declining capacity of water resources in the North-Eastern of Syria.

-WTO and the Challenges & Opportunities for Syrian Agriculture (Dr N. El-Amin, FAO RNE): it presents the most relevant policies, rules and related procedural preparations that concerning Syria' accession negotiations to WTO. The main issues for Syria are well preparation for effective participation in the negotiations and benefiting from trading opportunities by raising quality standards and focusing on products for which such opportunities are relatively high, e.g. olive oil, sheep meat, fruit and vegetables.

- Agriculture and Euro-Med Association (Dr J.M. Alvarez Coque, Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain): it assures that tending to market and product diversification are the key options to enhance Syrian agro-food exports. The



## Training Workshop on “Food Security Policies in the Arab Countries under the World Food Crisis”

3 - 7 August 2008

Under the patronage of the Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, the National Agricultural Policy Center (NAPC) in cooperation with the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) organized a Training Workshop on “Food Security Policies in the Arab Countries under the World Food Crisis” on 3 - 7 August 2008, at the NAPC premises in Damascus.

Dr Nabi Rashid Mohammed, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform; Dr Abbas Abou-Owf, Technical Advisor of the AOAD; and the NAPC Director Mr Ateih El Hindi opened the Workshop with the presence of the Director of Administrative and Finance Affairs of the Organization Mr. Sami Abed Al-Razzak, Chief of Trade and Agricultural Marketing Division Mr. Raed Fayez Hatter, and Director of the Organization Office in Syria Dr. Abdullah Yacoub.

Representatives from sixteen Arab states attended the Workshop. They were Senior/Middle level officers responsible for agricultural policy and agricultural economy & planning at the ministries of agriculture of these countries including Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.

The Workshop aimed at examining an issue of serious concern the impact of global soaring food prices on the Arab world, especially low-income and food-importing countries. Therefore, exploring the present situation of food security is needed to ensure food



availability and accessibility, and then to provide recommendations to the Arab governments on relevant policy measures to be adopted for confronting this crisis. With this perspective, the Workshop focused on the concept, indicators, and status of food security in the Arab world. In addition, it discussed recent developments in the world food prices and the resulted economic crisis tracing its causes and repercussions on the Arab food security. As well as, it explored the international exerted efforts to solve the global food crisis. Furthermore, it analyzed the effects of the use of food crops to produce biofuels on the Arab and world food security. Additionally, the Workshop discussed the Arab agricultural development strategy for the next two decades, and policies should be adopted by governments in order to participate effectively in achieving sustainable food security in the Arab world for the coming next years. The Workshop also included practical training sessions on the indicators of food security, application of supply and demand, and policy analysis matrix.

The Workshop presentations:

-World Food Crisis and its Repercussions on the Arab-food security ( Dr. Jamal Siam, Professor at Cairo University): The expert clarified the reasons for the high world prices of food; the state of food in the Arab world; the effects of the crisis on Arab food security and economies. He stressed on the disastrous effects on low-income population, as the consumers' expenditure is averagely about 50% of their income on food. Therefore, when the rate of the increase in food prices is 40%, the real income of families fell by 20%. While as the poor spend about 80% of their income on food, it means that their real income falls by 32%. He also discussed the policy response to the crisis in terms of agricultural and food production, agricultural foreign trade, support, self-sufficiency, consumption and food safety.

- Conditions and Indicators of Arab Food Security (Mr. Raed Hattar, Chief of trade and agricultural marketing division in the AOAD): The lecturer referred to the food commodity groups that have achieved high self-sufficiency for the Arab citizen in 2007: fish 102.8%, potatoes 101.5%, vegetables 100.2%, fruits 96.1%; And groups that achieved average rates of self-sufficiency including red meat 84.5%, poultry 74.2%, meat and dairy products 71.8%. While, the groups that achieved low rates of self-sufficiency are grain 56.1%, legumes group 58.5%, sugar 36.3%, and vegetable oils 25.2%.

- Food Chain and Policies Related (Dr Jamal Siam): It included the definition of food chain and the relationship connecting the policies of food, agricultural, and others. The expert discussed the impact of liberalization of agriculture





important producing countries and Arab countries initiatives in this field.

-Arab Agricultural Sustainable Development Strategy for the Next Two Decades (Dr Abbas Abou-Owf, Technical Adviser in the AOAD) : at the beginning, The expert addressed Al-Riad Declaration of April 2008 to strengthen Arab cooperation to meet global food crisis. It stresses on Arab cooperation and commitment of Arab governments hosting the joint agricultural Arab projects to provide facilities, concessions and guarantees encouraging and stimulating Arab investment in food security; it also identifies measures agreed to be taken to address the global food crisis. The lecturer then clarified the basic pillars of the Arab sustainable agricultural development strategy and its long-term objectives . He also revised the seven proposed development programs and their distribution on the country and nationalistic levels. These programs are centralized on the development of agriculture technologies, investment promotion, agricultural industrialization, enhance the competitiveness of agricultural products, development of appropriate policies to activate and enhance the performance of the Arab economic collaboration, human and institutional capacity building, contributing to the prosperity of rural development, and Environmental resources management systems.

- International Efforts to Resolve the Global Food Crisis / Mr. Atieh El Hindi director of the NAPC: He reviewed the most important international conferences and activities concerning food security, including World Food Summit in 1996, Millennium Development Goals, special program for food security, recent conference on World Food security in 2008.

The Practical training focused on policy analysis matrix (PAM) as a tool to assess the comparative advantage and explain its indicators, construction plan, and utilization in building the overall budget. In addition to training on the supply and demand estimation of food, by assessing elasticities and policies impact; supply and demand expectations of food with comparison between the balanced amount and requirements; and other applications. The Center AFD staff provides the training activities.

for more details go to the following link:  
[www.napcsyr.org/events/ws/nat/aoad\\_f\\_sec/aoad\\_f\\_security\\_en.htm](http://www.napcsyr.org/events/ws/nat/aoad_f_sec/aoad_f_security_en.htm)

and agricultural trade on national food security, particularly in net import food countries. In addition, he highlighted some concepts associated with the analysis of food policies and factors affecting domestic food production and access to food; as well as policy analysis matrix PAM to measure the distortions in the food markets arising from the food policies .

about the global food crisis; the future of food supply; the Arab perspective of this crisis and the vulnerability of the Arab world. Moreover, he analyzed the factors affecting the main pivots of food security and the policies impacting food stability.

- The Effects of the Use of Food Crops to Produce Biofuels on Food Security and the Arab World (Mr. Raed Hatter): He



- Food Security from the Perspective of Accessibility to Food (Dr. Wahid Mojahed, Professor at the University of Ein Shams in Cairo: The expert spoke

discussed motives and reasons behind the huge development in production and utilization of biofuels, mainly of ethanol and biodiesel oil, in addition to the most



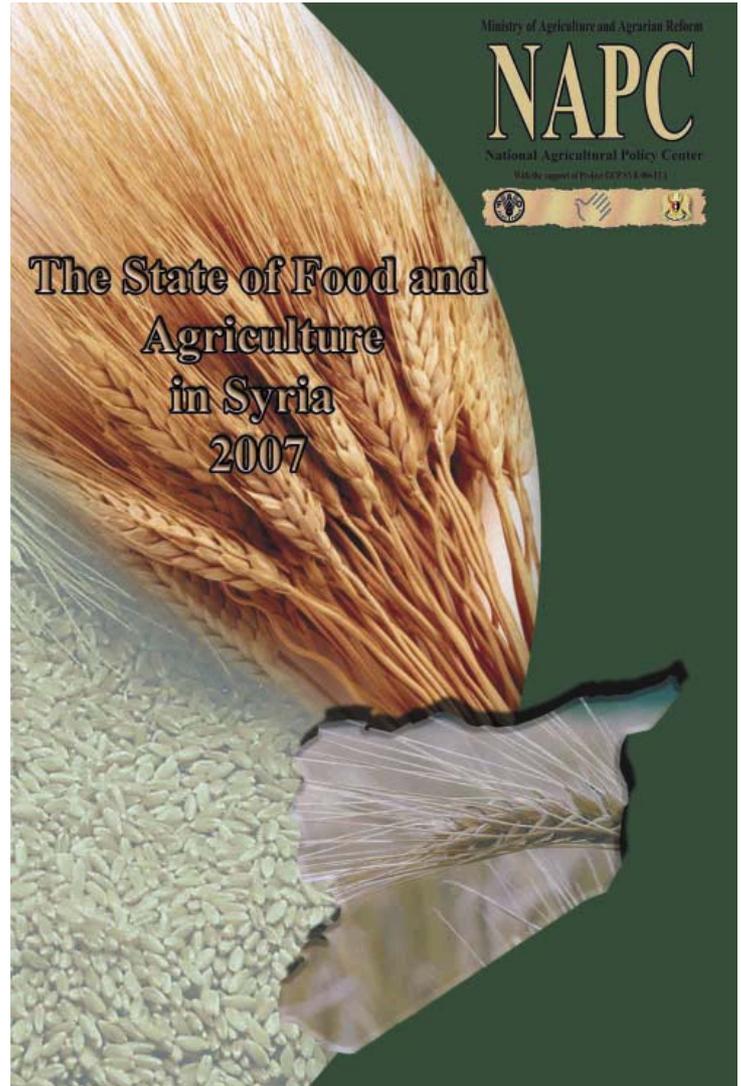
## SOFAS 2007

SOFAS 2007 presents the state of food and agriculture in Syria and its development highlighting the period 2000-2006. It is designed to contribute to the social and economic development process in Syria, to document the information related to food and agricultural issues and to raise debate about agricultural policies with the aim of facilitating the involvement of all interested parties and stakeholders in the process of policy adjustment to a better level.

The report investigates the current situation of food and agriculture and its development from various perspectives like the geographical location and its classification, climatic conditions, agricultural resources, contribution of agriculture to the national economy, requirements of agricultural production and the related supporting services, development of agricultural production comprising both crop and animal productions, selected commodity chains, value of agricultural production, value of agricultural inputs, agricultural value added, performance of food industry, selected food industrial sectors, and food security issues and dimensions of food security comprising availability, stability and access. Obviously, the related policies are also presented.

The aforementioned subjects are sustained with a statistical and economic analysis in both the short-run and the long-run. Annual gross rates and changes during 2000-2006 are assessed accompanied with a descriptive analysis of agricultural phenomena for the period 1997-2006. The index numbers (Laspyres and Paasche) are used to decompose these evidences into their causes to quantify the impact of policies from 2000 to 2006. This short term analysis is enriched with a long term one considering the period 1982-2005 to evaluate the impact of economic factors like prices and income on the level of supply and demand for selected food groups and to estimate the price and income elasticity.

The full report is available at : [www.napcsyr.org/pubs/periodical/reports.htm](http://www.napcsyr.org/pubs/periodical/reports.htm)



### Working Paper

#### *Demand Analysis for Selected Food Groups in Syria*

A growing attention to ensure the sustainability of national food security is currently taking place at the forefront of the responsibilities of world States. Giving priority to assess the demand on foodstuff in Syria is urgently needed therefore to cover the increasing need for both food and agro-industry products resulting primarily from the population growth. Besides, it is an essential step to ensure national food security of the country. The analysis of food demand is necessary as well to comply with the new conditions of international trade, Syria joining to GAFTA, likely partnership with the EU, and accession to the WTO;



in addition to tackle the current economic crisis emerged from global food prices increasing.

The paper is considered an initiative for a series of studies focusing on the estimation of foodstuff demand. It presents the evolution of major factors and policies affecting food demand comprising macroeconomics, food and trade policies. In addition, it introduces descriptive analysis of selected six groups of food: cereals & legumes, vegetables, fruits, meats & eggs, dairy products and vegetable oils & fats to illustrate their development, availability and share in total expenditure. This analysis also aims to explore the consumption rationality and to give an idea about the quantitative availability of foodstuff for consumption.

The full working paper, prepared by Mr S. Grad and Mr M. Karkut (NAPC Researchers), is available at:

[www.napcsyr.org/pubs/wp/working\\_papers.htm](http://www.napcsyr.org/pubs/wp/working_papers.htm)

## Agricultural Commodity Outlook

### *Syrian Potato*

Potato is one of the main vegetable crops in Syria in terms of production and productivity. It is considered as a main staple food in many countries. The importance of potato is refer to its high content of calorie supply; as well as its economic and industrial aspects, whereas it contributes with a significant share in food exports across the world and in many agro-food industries as a raw material.

The outlook discusses the following topics: the importance of the potato, with its different species of spring, summer and autumn, in the Syrian agriculture as a resource of income for a large segment of society and its increasing role in foreign trade. It reviews also potato seeds and production policies including pricing, marketing, and financing; as well as procedures and facilities for exports and imports. In addition, it clarifies the environmental needs including soil and climatic factors and methods of farming.

The study focuses on the description of potato commodity chain



starting from the farmland flows then passing through mediators and traders up to processing and marketing stages. Moreover, it analyses the economic aspects of potatoes including costs of production, inputs and farming operations, prices, revenues and others.

*The full working paper, prepared by Mr N. Ammouri (NAPC Researcher), is available at:*

[www.napcsyr.org/divisions/afd/afd\\_pub.htm](http://www.napcsyr.org/divisions/afd/afd_pub.htm)

## *The Recent NAPC Publications*

### 1. Periodical Reports

- The State of Food and Agriculture SOFAS of 2007

- The Syrian Aricultural Trade 2006

[www.napcsyr.org/pubs/periodical/reports.htm](http://www.napcsyr.org/pubs/periodical/reports.htm)

### 2. Agricultural Commodity Outlooks

- Syrian Potato, September 2008

[www.napcsyr.org/divisions/afd/afd\\_pub.htm](http://www.napcsyr.org/divisions/afd/afd_pub.htm)

### 3. Policy Briefs

- Agricultural Support Indicators, August 2008

- Regional Trade Agreements , April 2008

- European System Related to Good Agricultural Practice (EUREPGAP), April 2008

- Sectoral Initiatives in the WTO, March 2008

[www.napcsyr.org/divisions/tpd/tpd.htm](http://www.napcsyr.org/divisions/tpd/tpd.htm)

### 4. Agricultural Policy Studies

- Comparative Advantages of Selected Commodities, June 2008

[www.napcsyr.org/divisions/rdd/rdd.htm](http://www.napcsyr.org/divisions/rdd/rdd.htm)

- Non-Agricultural Activities in Rural Areas and Their Impacts on Agriculture in Selected Syrian Areas, June 2008

- Technical Report, Income Distribution and Poverty: Impacts of Selected Policies in Syria, June 2008

[www.napcsyr.org/divisions/rdd/rdd.htm](http://www.napcsyr.org/divisions/rdd/rdd.htm)

### 5. Working Papers

- Demand Analysis of Selected Food Groups in Syria, July 2008

- The Impact of GAFTA on Syrian Trade After Its Full Implementation, July 2008

- Comparative Advantages of Syrian Barley , April 2008

- Analysis of Index Numbers Applied to Agricultural Inputs in Syria, April 2008

- Analysis of Supply Response for Selected Food Groups in Syria, March 2008

- Analysis of Index Numbers Applied to Agricultural Output in Syria, March 2008

- Women Empowerment in Syria: Policies & Related Institutions, March 2008

- Supply and Demand of Nutrients, March 2008

- The Environmental Valuation Methods and its Applications, March 2008

*All working papers are available at:*

[www.napcsyr.org/pubs/wp/working\\_papers.htm](http://www.napcsyr.org/pubs/wp/working_papers.htm)

### *12th Scientific Committee Meeting*

The twelfth Scientific Committee Meeting took place at the NAPC premises on 3 July 2008. The Scientific Committee was composed of two international members, Mr. H. De Haen and Mr. D. Romano, and two national members, Mr. M. Yassin and Mr. M. Khazma.

The Committee reviewed the NAPC Progress Report for the first half of 2008, and the quality assessment report of NAPC's outputs for 2007 in the context of sustainability Monitoring System. In addition, it evaluated the recent activities in 2008 and the progress attained.



### **Training In-House**

#### **Supply and Demand Concepts**

The Chief of AFD conducted a training course for selected staff of the NAPC and other MAAR directorates on "Supply and Demand Concepts; and Multiple Regressions" during 22-26 June 2008, at the NAPC.

#### **Projects Monitoring and Evaluation**

A training course on "Development Project Monitoring and Evaluation" conducted by an RDD staff member on 8-12 June 2008 at the Center. Fifteen of NAPC staff and selected members from other MAAR departments participated in this course.

### **International Participations**

#### **Food Security and Challenges of Climate Change, and Biofuel**

The NAPC Director Mr. Atieh El-Hindi as a member of the Syrian formal delegation participated in the FAO Conference on "Food Security and Challenges of Climate Change, and Bio Fuel" held on 3- 5 June 2008, and took place at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy.

The conference discussed the sharp rise in food prices and the need for international action; climate change adaptation and mitigation, food security and bio-energy, and water security.

#### **Rationales and Evolutions of Cotton Policies**

Mr. Haitham Al Ashkar, the NAPC Deputy Director for studies, participated in the ISSCRI conference on "Rationales and Evolutions of Cotton Policies" held in Montpellier- France, on



May 13-17 2008. The conference was dedicated to analyze the related international policy issues, coping with the various effects, and assessing the impacts of the world market price.

#### **Workshop on WTO**

Mr. Atieh El-Hindi the NAPC Director participated in a workshop on WTO during 3-5 March 2008, in Egypt. The workshop



discussed the WTO procedures, regulations and conventions of agricultural trade and recent changes.

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