

**FAO 36. Yakın Dođu Bölge Konferansı Konuşma Notları
(7-8 Şubat 2020, Saat 10:00-13.00)
Royal Tulip Hotel (Al Rasheed Hotel)/ Bağdat-IRAK**

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure to address this honourable audience on the occasion of **Thirty-Sixth Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Near East.**

And I would like to thank to **Iraq Minister of Agriculture**, HE Muhammed Kerim Al-KAFACI for inviting me for this Conference.

As our key partner on food, agriculture and forestry, FAO has an essential role to achieve **sustainable agricultural development and food security** in the world.

Therefore, I would like to express **my appreciation to the FAO** for their excellent work and contributions.

Türkiye and FAO have a long-lasting partnership and Türkiye is hosting **FAO's Sub Regional Office for Central Asia** since 2007.

We strengthened this collaboration through projects in different parts of the world. With these projects, as strong partners, we have the chance to transfer **our technical knowledge and know-how with other countries from Central Asia to Africa.**

Distinguished guests,

We have experienced extraordinary times **caused by Covid 19 pandemic** and we are still feeling its negative effects.

On the other hand, **the pandemic revealed the importance of food security, agriculture and sustainable use of natural resources** once more.

Unfortunately, the risk of hunger has increased greatly because of pandemic and **additional 132 million people face to chronic hunger.**

This shows us the urgent need **to improve food security in a sustainable manner at the worldwide.**

One of the most important ways to achieve this is **enhancing rural development.**

The sustainable development in agricultural sector could provide positive effects on **poverty reduction as well as food security.**

Esteemed Ministers,

We believe that **every investment made in the rural areas** will increase wealth and prosperity of the whole society.

As Türkiye, we are promoting agricultural investments targeting **small-scale producers**.

Because **increasing the production capacity of family farmers and producer unions** is our one of main rural development policies.

As well as, Türkiye has been giving great importance to improve **gender equality and support women** involved in the supply chain.

Various programmes and projects are implemented **to strengthen the women especially in the rural areas**.

We primarily target **to promote women cooperatives and encourage the establishment of Farmer Unions** within these programmes.

We **provide grants to the cooperatives** for machinery, equipment and infrastructure.

Besides, we are **giving extensive trainings** including entrepreneurship, access to markets, financial tools and technology.

Another focus group is **young people** living in the rural areas. We have been trying to keep them in their places.

For this purpose, we implemented “**Expert Hands**” project to bring and keep young people in the agricultural sector.

With the project, it is aimed to contribute to the **employment of the young population who are graduated from agriculture departments by supporting to establish their own businesses.**

Distinguished guests,

To implement these rural development policies, **both national budget facilities and international sources** have been utilized in Türkiye.

I can say that one of the biggest international source is **IPARD Programme** funded by the European Union.

Within the framework of IPARD programme, **1.54 billion Euros** have been paid to **over 20,000 projects** and **84,000 new jobs** have been created since 2011.

More importantly, every kind of support has created **multiplier positive effects** for farmers, local suppliers and cooperatives.

We are aware that **prosperous small farms are the engine of rural development**. They are boosting local economic growth.

Therefore, to support small farms, we focused on **smart agriculture, digitalisation and innovation** to increase agricultural productivity.

For instance, **a web based digital platform** which includes a wide range of members from small farmers to big players in retail sector is provided.

With the help of this digital platform, small farmers can find **markets for their products through direct marketing channels**. The system also allows **contract farming**.

Honorable Guests,

It seems that we should make **more investments** on sustainable agriculture and rural development to achieve the goal of “zero hunger” by 2030

As we all know, all around the world most of the people living in rural areas are under the threat of facing hunger.

On the other hand, each year, **one third of the food produced in the world is lost or wasted**. And, this situation negatively affects food systems from local to the global.

Therefore, **reduction of food loss and waste** becomes very important.

All of the actors at all stages of food supply chain should take necessary steps **before reaching the point of no return.**

During Turkey's **G20 presidency in 2015**, together with FAO, we had brought the issue of **food losses and waste** to the world agenda as one of the tools to ensure food security.

In order to achieve this, again together with the FAO, we initiated a project which covers a **national campaign called "Save Your Food"** and launched in 2020.

After a year of the implementation of the campaign, through the social and visual media, **the awareness regarding especially for food waste has increased by 20%** and **the total saving was around 100 million dollars.**

Besides, we broke **two Guinness Records** for the most promised campaign in the field of environmental sustainability on reduction of food loss and waste.

Dear Participants,

The pandemic pointed out our responsibilities regarding **food security, agriculture and as well as sustainable use of water.**

Climate change is another big challenge that the world is facing.

Türkiye is one of the countries that feels the negative effects of **climate change seriously, such as; droughts, degradation of ecosystems, forest fires and excessive floods.**

In the last **39 years, there have been 11 years of drought, 7 of which are severe.** In the future, it seems likely that we will face water scarcity.

Like the whole world, to take concrete actions for green transformation, Türkiye ratified **Paris Agreement and set his 2053 vision as net zero carbon.**

On the other hand, it is not possible to achieve **rural development without combating desertification, land degradation and drought.**

They cause irreversible harms together with socio-economic impacts.

Honourable Guests

There are lots of words to say, but the **time is limited** as well.

So, before concluding my remarks, I would like to highlight that Türkiye is always open to share its experience with **FAO Near East and North Africa Members** to develop a common basis for strengthening cooperation.

We all need to work together to ensure sustainable, balanced and more resilient food systems which **is essential to achieve 2030 Sustainable Development Goals** in the region and all over the world.

Thank you.