



Talking Points for the Minister of State for Food and Water Security – Committee on World Food Security's 47th Session

- Background:** Her Excellency Mariam Almheiri, Minister of State for Food and Water Security, is participating in the 47th Committee on World Food Security (CFS 47). Her Excellency will deliver a speech to discuss the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN).
- Date of event:** February 09, 2021
- Time:** 5:30 pm
- Title:** 'Making a Difference in Food Security and Nutrition'
- Brief:** Her Excellency will be participating in a session during the virtual event where she will be discussing the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition, and how the UAE is working and will work to adopt them.



“Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It’s a pleasure to be able to address you today. The Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition provides a strong foundation to tackle the current status of our food systems and transition towards a more sustainable one.
- With levels of hunger and malnutrition around the world continuing to rise, as well as obesity, the publication of the document is extremely timely.
- Lack of food and malnutrition continue to be one of the world’s most pressing concerns, despite the global community’s concerted drive to meet SDG 2 and ensure Zero Hunger by 2030. **The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has only served to set back our efforts.**
- Despite the huge challenges we face here in the UAE, we have successfully managed to avoid ‘Malnutrition caused by a lack of access to food’, mainly due to our strong purchasing power. However, this has also resulted in diets changing significantly, similarly with other developed nations, we are now experiencing high levels of obesity and other lifestyle conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes.
- The National Food Security Strategy has specific targets, **one of its key directions is to elevate food safety and improve nutritional intake, with a target of reducing unhealthy food element consumption by 15%.**
- To support this, the UAE has launched a number of initiatives designed to help consumers understand more about the foods they should be eating for a healthy lifestyle.
- **In August 2019, we introduced the Nutritional Labelling Policy.** Aligned with World Health Organisation practice, the policy uses a traffic light system to provide consumers with comprehensive information to help them make better food choices when shopping.



- **Later that year in November 2019, the Food Security Office launched the National Nutrition Guidelines in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and Prevention.** Developed in coordination with the World Health Organisation, the Gulf Nutrition Committee, and other organisations, the new guidelines have been formulated to improve the nutritional status of the UAE community for a more sustainable and healthier future.
- We are also currently in the works of developing a plan to support a shift towards more sustainable diets, to encourage our community on the benefits of a more flexitarian diet.
- Biodiversity (**page 5 no.14**) is highlighted in the voluntary guidelines as vital for ensuring food security and the UAE is committed to pursuing this objective. Leading the way in this area is the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture which is promoting biodiversity through its research into crops that can thrive in marginal environments.
 - Over the years, the centre's work has benefited not only our smallerholder farmers, thousands of small holder farmers in the MENA region, as well as Africa and Central Asia, by helping them save freshwater resources, utilise saline soils, and improve their livelihoods.¹
- The empowerment of women and girls forms a significant part of the guidelines (**3.6.1**). The UAE is extremely forward thinking in this area of social integration, with women occupying the highest level of government.
 - As the Minister of State for Food and Water Security, an important aspect of my role sees me visiting girls and young women in schools and colleges, encouraging them to work hard in their STEM studies. In fact, yesterday we celebrated the successful arrival of the Hope Probe, Emirates Mars Mission to the orbit of Mars. 80% of the science team in this project are women.

¹ <https://www.biosaline.org/news/2018-05-22-6496>



- As a final point – among the many - the guidelines reiterate the interconnectivity between climate change, agriculture, diets and nutrition, highlighting that the world’s inefficient food systems both contribute to and are impacted by the planet’s rising temperature levels **(page 5 no.13)**.
 - The UAE is committed to transforming its food ecosystem not only to increase domestic yield with fewer resources, but also to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases its agricultural sector releases into the atmosphere. By incorporating Closed Environment Agriculture systems, we are cutting down on the use of water from energy-intensive desalination methods, with the reduction of fertilizers and manure used in these systems minimising the levels of nitrogen released from soil. Our policies in the National Food Security Strategy, as well as our National Water Strategy 2036, will further our aim to keep our greenhouse gas emissions to an absolute minimum as we transform our food systems to more sustainable one.

Ladies and Gentlemen...

- The UAE is committed to developing a productive and sustainable food system in the country, ensuring our food policies create a healthy population, and using its expertise to assist others in their food security agendas.
- As an active and responsible citizen, the UAE is also committed to supporting the uptake of the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition and is keen to collaborate with relevant international and local stakeholders to continue to ensure a nutrition secure population.
- Thank you all for your kind attention.”

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