

FOOD SECURE ARAB WORLD

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Food security, in all its dimensions, has long been a development challenge in the Arab world.

In countries with already high food import bills, recent food price volatility in the global market has heightened instability. Relatively high child undernutrition and poverty levels also pose a serious threat to economic development in Arab countries. In fact, while the historic changes of the past year's Arab Awakening have unfolded in drastically different ways—from uprisings and government transformations to quieter constitutional reforms—the deep-rooted political, sociological, and economic causes of the overall unrest are often shared. New research findings suggest that levels of food insecurity, poverty, and income inequality are higher than official numbers suggest, and that standard-of-living satisfaction rates plummeted throughout the region in the years leading up to the Arab Awakening.

To achieve long-term prosperity and stability, Arab countries urgently need to foster food security. A comprehensive roadmap for development and poverty reduction requires a broad food security program for the region accompanied by country-specific strategies. Governments, civil society, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector should use participatory, transparent decisionmaking processes to design strategies and investment plans. Policy research can ensure that those plans—and the actions that follow—are based on solid evidence. The February 2012 Food-Secure Arab World Conference in Beirut, Lebanon, is a forum to discuss that evidence and use it to set priorities for a better future.

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A Roadmap for Policy & Research

What: International conference

Where: UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Beirut, Lebanon

When: 6–7 February 2012

The conference will feature presentations by leading thinkers in the fields that comprise food security—including economics, agriculture, water, trade, health, and nutrition—in addition to sessions on lessons learned from existing country development strategies. There will be a priority-setting session using digital voting technology, public discussion, and opportunities for participants to connect with people who are similarly committed to sustainably ending food insecurity and poverty in the Arab world. Expected outcomes include a declaration on the principles for food security in the Arab world and a roadmap of ways to implement the recommended actions.

For more information please visit <http://fsaw2012.ifpri.info>.

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