

## **New Perspectives for Arab Food Security**

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How do we ensure that this Conference does not end with broad results ("there is a serious problem of food security in the region") that should have been our starting point? This presentation will provide a framework for use in the review and design of strategic interventions for advancing food security in the Arab countries. It will be based on the results of an inter-agency collaboration that spans over three years. This collaboration produced a three-pronged strategic framework for the region focusing on: (i) social nets; (ii) sustainable increases in agricultural productivity where possible in the Region; and (iii) improved infrastructure and financial instruments. Within these three strategic thrusts, further studies have shown the power and limitation of specific policy instruments as they are applied in the Region. In particular, the 2007/2008 food price crisis is used to study coping mechanisms and smallholder responsiveness. Other policy-related questions include: the subsidies vs. cash transfer debate; the costs of self-sufficiency; the importance of grain storage; the large-scale foreign investments. Findings from this and other research point to areas where policy definition is needed to guide actions on the ground at two levels: (i) support of fledgling Arab democracies where food security is a primary concern; and (ii) support to food security regional initiatives based on overall economic complementarity.