



Concept of the round table "Food security - an essential factor in the sustainable development of Uzbekistan"

The round table provides a forum for discussion of national food security policy in Uzbekistan against the backdrop of the volatility of global food prices, the challenge to make agriculture sustainable and the need to ensure that the population has access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food.

Definition of food security:

"Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

The availability of and accessibility to sufficient food is the basis of human society. The global food crisis of 2007, which led to sharp increases in food prices in global markets, not only served as a reminder of this simple truth, but also as an impetus to take a fresh look at the problems of agricultural development and the use of agricultural products. Many analysts believe that a deepening food crisis was only avoided because it was followed by an even more powerful global financial and economic crisis, which sharply reduced the purchasing power of the population. However, it is very likely that at the first sign of recovery from the global financial crisis, the danger of a food crisis would reemerge and it would be very difficult to deal with it in the short term.

The challenge of sustainable agriculture arises from global climate change, the degradation of agricultural lands and the increasing scarcity of water resources. Around this issue there is a great amount of international experience, the world-wide dissemination of which would solve the problem of food shortages by means of the introduction of new cultivation technologies that would increase capacity and the adaptation of crops to new agro-climatic and soil conditions.

The level of health, intellectual development, and the preservation and strengthening of the nation's gene pool is largely dependent on balanced nutrition and access to clean drinking water. Balanced nutrition also helps solve the problems of anemia among women and children, low birth weight in children and various other diseases caused by deficiencies in valuable nutrients, especially iron, iodine, and vitamins. It is proven that the intellectual development of the nation, its gene pool, the length of productive human activity and the productivity of labor are closely related to a balanced diet that supplies the body with all the necessary nutrients. Numerous studies demonstrate that imbalanced diets are the cause of many countries' slow economic growth. FAO studies in the field of nutrition and growth suggest that increasing protein intake by one percent leads to a 0.49% growth in gross national product (GNP). It is therefore difficult to underestimate the importance of nutrition in economic and social development.

During the Soviet period, Uzbekistan imported most of its grain and flour (up to 85% of total consumption), as well as much of its meat and dairy products (20%). Since independence, Uzbekistan has succeeded in achieving grain self-sufficiency and independence from imports of meat and dairy products. Currently Uzbekistan possesses food independence in the consumption of basic food products such as bread, meat and dairy products, fruits and vegetables, vegetable oils and soft drinks.

The draft concept on a "National policy for sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition", CER

Although Uzbekistan is self-sufficient in terms of food, there remains a vitally important problem of supplying food to a growing population and especially ensuring balanced and safe nutrition. The challenge relates to the trends of the global food crisis and climate change, and other internal objective and subjective factors, the most important of which are:

adaptation to climate change is a relatively new concept for Uzbekistan, and the country requires assistance in developing the knowledge and skills of the local population to prevent its negative impacts or benefit from the positive effects of climate change;

the high transport costs of food imports in Uzbekistan, due to the necessity of passing through two other countries in order to access the sea, which demand increased attention to the development of agriculture;

the lack of public understanding of the importance of balanced, sustainable and safe food as a basis for the development of intellectual and public health along with strengthening and improving the nation's gene pool;

the lack of effective mechanisms to implement public policies promoting a more rational balance of nutrition thus leading to more healthy lifestyles;

uncertainties around maintaining food independence in the medium and long term due to demographics and the limited amount and deteriorating quality of land suitable for agricultural use;

uncertainties around the long term supply of clean drinking water, as well as limited water resources for irrigated agriculture, due to the natural shrinkage of glaciers and, consequently, river flows, and the irrational use of available water resources;

low levels of use of innovative agricultural technologies and, consequently, low crop yields and agricultural productivity;

lack of incentives and financial capabilities of agricultural producers to improve the quality of land resources and increase agricultural production through the introduction of innovative technologies;

relatively low income level of approximately one third of the population, resulting in a very high demand for flour, bread and bakery products, and insufficient purchasing power to purchase food enriched with valuable nutrients;

absence or weakness of institutions responsible for ensuring nutritious and safe food for the population, including the development, implementation and monitoring of food quality standards.