



JOINT DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

1- We, the Ministers of Agriculture of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), met in İstanbul on 17 May 2017, within the framework of the Turkish BSEC Chairmanship-in office to evaluate the cooperation in the field of agriculture and aquaculture of the Member States, to consider sustainable food systems and to identify the potential mechanisms of further strengthening the cooperation in these areas;

2- Bearing in mind that, throughout its twenty five years of existence, BSEC has endeavored to bring its Members together, guided by common ideas, goals and principles;

Taking into account that the BSEC Region, with its unique geographical location, possesses a strategic importance in connecting Europe and Asia;

Taking into account the obligations of the Member States stemming from their membership in other regional, bilateral and international organizations and agreements;

Determined to make every effort for achieving in cooperation among our relevant national institutions and to create a favorable environment for initiating joint projects, programmes and investments of common interest;

3- We acknowledge that global trade and investment continue to be important engines of economic growth and development, generating employment and contributing to agricultural growth. We are aware of the potential of the BSEC Region in the field of agriculture, agro-industry and development of the intra- regional trade, and collaboration among the Member States with a view to increasing the production, ensuring poverty mitigation and food security in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. We emphasize the BSEC's potential to enhance the quality and quantity of intra-regional trade and



to improve business opportunities promoting a level playing field for all operators, in the BSEC Region for agriculture.

4. We agree on the need to intensify our efforts, in close collaboration with other authorized governmental institutions without prejudice to their own tasks, for the facilitation of movement of agricultural products within the BSEC region. We advise the competent authorities of the Member States to review the ways of simplification of export and import procedures for agricultural products among the Member States, particularly fresh fruit and vegetables. We remain committed to a strong and efficient intra-regional trade system and reiterate our determinations to work together to this end. We will continue our efforts to develop our regional trade cooperation among Member States, using support mechanism such as trade cooperation and agreements.

5. We recognize that strengthening agricultural trade is crucial for progress towards sustainable development, food security and nutrition and agricultural economic growth. Additionally, we support having an open, rule-based, transparent, non-discriminatory and inclusive agricultural trading system. We desire to work constructively for increasing the agricultural trade by ensuring a correct balance between trade facilitation of agricultural products and protection of the population of the Member States against the non-qualitative products. We encourage all relevant stakeholders to engage actively in the process.

6- We underline that a well-organized trading system can contribute to reducing food price volatility and enhance food security. Coordinated investment at all stages of food value chains is fundamental to raising productivity, generating employment and incomes and reducing food loss and waste. We underline the importance of developing sustainable food value chains. We note with great concern the significant extent of food loss and waste throughout food value chains resulting in diminishing food security, malnutrition, excessive use of natural resources and damage to the environment. We highlight that this is a global problem of enormous economic, environmental and social development and encourage all BSEC Member States to strengthen their efforts to address it.



- 7- We are confident that agriculture and agro-industry are major assets for the sustainable social and economic development of the BSEC Member States. Based on our rich and long-lasting tradition, we are willing to devote particular attention to the further development of these fields, both at national level and in the Organization as a whole. Based on its twenty five years of experience, the BSEC has the capacity to take concrete steps and achieve tangible results in the areas of agriculture and agro-industry. We have agreed to intensify our joint efforts in order to promote cooperation among the Ministries of Agriculture of the BSEC Member States, for helping to reduce regional disparities and giving an impetus to the regional trade in agricultural products.
- 8- We emphasize that aquaculture and fisheries are valuable production resources for BSEC Region. We underline the importance of enhancing the cooperation on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture. Aquaculture is an increasingly important industry for the BSEC Region, helping the economic growth and the development of sustainable food systems in the rural and coastal communities of the BSEC Member States. Therefore, we support policy approaches, which will contribute to the exchange and gathering of relevant scientific data on aquaculture industry.
- 9- We note with great concern that price volatility has negative impact on food security and nutrition, and more generally on the regional and global trade. We believe that price stability is a very important objective for the BSEC Region.
- 10- We emphasize that sustainable food systems contribute to the BSEC Region's ecological balance and biodiversity. The Black Sea is a unique marine environment which hosts many species, habitats and organisms. We underline that economic investment in processing and packaging of aquaculture products is very important for development of the sector in the BSEC Region. We stress that aquaculture, rural tourism and development of local products, as well as micro enterprise constitute significant aspects of diversification and development of rural economic activities in the BSEC region.
- 11- We agree to promote joint efforts of the Ministries of Agriculture of the BSEC Member States on: - the diversification of non-farm activities; -



improving the quality, processing standards and marketing of farm and agro-industry products; - the cooperation with relevant international organizations in order to improve the income of farmers and rural Small Medium-sized Enterprises (SME).

12. We welcome increased cooperation among the Member States for the protection, efficient use and governance of the water resources and welcome efforts to decrease pollution load of the water resources in the Member States and the BSEC Region, in order to attain healthy food and aquaculture production. We will, on the scientific basis, raise the cooperation on protection and sustainable production of the genetic resources in the field of fisheries. We will cooperate to implement co-management programs for aquaculture among the Member States.

13. Taking into consideration the sustainable food systems and nutrition, as well as increasing the farmers' income and strengthening the local economy of the Member States, we agree to make every effort to conduct joint programs so as to commercialize local products and give a special importance to geographical indications for the local food products across the BSEC region.

14. We agree to consider developing entrepreneurship capacity in the Member States in the field of agriculture and agro-business sector and the possibility of establishing the BSEC - Regional Cooperation Centre for Sustainable Food Systems in partnership with the FAO. In this context, we will attach special importance to the development of R&D and the implementation of relevant joint research programs, and to special training activities, exchange of information and knowledge among the Member States for sustainable food systems and development of the aquaculture policy.

15. We attach special importance to improvement of agricultural environment, food safety, animal welfare, animal health, plant health, waste management and good practices in agricultural and aquaculture production of the Member States,

16. We consider establishing a practical network among the public public and private institutions, NGOs, agricultural associations,

agro-business sector actors in the Member States and identifying clustering opportunities in the agricultural sector in order to contribute to the reduction of poverty and to increase the competitiveness of agriculture sector throughout the BSEC Region.