



Turkey

**Thematic Group on
Rural Development
and Food Security**
Established: 1998

UN: FAO; ILO; UNDP;
UNICEF; UNIDO; UNFPA;
WHO; World Bank
Donors: European
Commission (EC); Japanese
International Cooperation
Agency (JICA)
Government: State Ministry;
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Affairs; Ministry of
Environment; Ministry of
Foreign Affairs; Ministry of
Health; Ministry of Interior
Affairs; Ministry of National
Education; Ministry of Trade
NGOs and Private Sector:
Agriculturists Association of
Turkey; Central Union of
Forest Village Development
Cooperatives; COMART;
Development Foundation of
Turkey; Mother and Child
Education Foundation; Union
of Agricultural Chambers of
Turkey; Chamber of Food
Engineers; Union of Dairy and
Meat Producers; Union of
Poultry Producers;
Academic and Research
Institutions: Hacettepe
University; Middle East
University
Past activities: Support in the
formulation of an integrated
rural development project for
the Eastern Anatolia;
awareness-raising of food
insecurity and rural
development issues.



FAO/19186/R.F.AUDUITI

Mobilizing political will for food and nutrition

Dynamic partnerships to improve food and nutrition are being fostered by the Thematic Group in Turkey. Its landmark meeting in Ankara in October 2000 not only helped create a political system for collaboration amongst development partners. It also turned the Thematic Group from a forum for information exchange to being the first coordination mechanism for food and nutrition issues in Turkey.

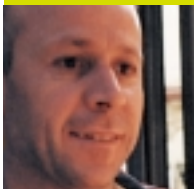
The meeting was chaired by the FAO Representative and the UNDP Representative/UN Resident Coordinator and succeeded in bringing together 70 participants from the UN, government, NGOs/CSOs, donors, media, and the private sector to discuss general food and nutrition issues in the country. The principal item on the agenda was a presentation by WHO on its 'Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plan for the European Region 2000-2005'.

The presentation stressed the need to develop food and nutrition policies that protect and promote

health and reduce the burden of food-related diseases, while contributing to socio-economic development and a sustainable environment. Importantly, it also emphasized the complementary roles played by different sectors, mainly the producers, processors and consumers, in the formulation and implementation of such policies. The WHO policy provides a framework, consisting of three inter-related strategies: a food safety strategy, vis-à-vis growing concerns about the impact of unsafe food on human health; a nutrition strategy geared to ensure optimal health, especially in low-income groups

// Turkey is self sufficient in food production. Yet, there are estimates of around 12-13 million people, who constitute vulnerable groups in terms of food insecurity. Other estimates indicate that the number of people living below the poverty line has increased during the last ten years from 15% to 22%. Therefore, urgent measures have to be taken first to stop the increase in the number of vulnerable people and then to strive to reduce it.

STATEMENT OF
THE THEMATIC GROUP ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD SECURITY //



and during critical periods throughout life; and a sustainable food supply (food security) strategy to ensure enough food of good quality, while helping to stimulate rural economies and promote the social and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

The salient message of the presentation, that stand-alone efforts for health, nutrition and population can only have limited impact and that a holistic approach was needed, spurred debate among meeting participants. They agreed that an intersectoral and interdisciplinary national team should be created to work towards improving nutritional status in the country. This would require all relevant ministries and relevant institutions –those dealing with rural development, food security and safety, processing, distribution, marketing, health and nutrition – to engage with key stakeholders from civil society and NGOs, in order to stimulate networking.

It was felt that creating such an environment for collaboration would help fulfil the meeting's recommendations, namely:

- Turkey should have a food and nutrition policy, which covers the nutrition, food safety and sustainable food supply strategies outlined in the WHO presentation.
- A national plan of action for nutrition should be prepared by planners and other relevant public and civil organizations.
- A coordination mechanism should be established to monitor food security and safety at the national, regional and local levels.
- Producers should take responsibility in training the public and creating awareness, especially among children and youth.
- City farming, especially fruit and vegetable production, should be encouraged and promoted. Local markets, where producers market their crops, should be supported.

- Agro-industry in rural areas should be developed for income generation and support to small producers.
- Producers and processors should attend future Thematic Group meetings to voice their concerns and interests.

The Thematic Group continues to play an effective role in coordinating food and nutrition issues in the country among development partners, as well as providing a forum for NGOs to voice their opinions on Government policies. The group is now preparing a National Food and Nutrition Strategy Paper, outlining policies and strategies for the future, which is to lead to a National Plan of Action for Food and Nutrition in Turkey. The content of the national position paper to be presented at the World Food Summit: five years later (10-13 June 2002, Rome) and the participation of Turkish NGOs in the Summit were topics of debates in more recent meetings of the Thematic Group.

