



منتدى دراسات  
Derasat Forum



مركز البحرين للدراسات الاستراتيجية والدولية والطاقة  
Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies

# Fourth Derasat Forum

## Strategies to Attain Food Security: Challenges and Opportunities

21-23 June 2021

Concept Note





## Fourth Derasat Forum

### Strategies to Attain Food Security: Challenges and Opportunities

#### 1. Main Theme

Food security plays a significant role in all national security strategies. Despite the Arab Gulf States', including the Kingdom of Bahrain, concern to meeting food security requirements, the challenges posed by the pandemic, most prominently the breakdown in food import chains from exporting countries in lockdown, have revealed the importance of alternative options, not only to maintain food security but as a national priority and part of a comprehensive national security policy.

The Arab Gulf States have employed several policies to meet food security requirements such as utilizing technology to grow crops, expanding the construction of food factories, and investing in land abroad, for instance, agricultural investments in Sudan. However, there remains a set of challenges, be these related to the natural condition of the Arabian Gulf such as water scarcity and climate change; or imposed by the pandemic with its unique challenges, as well as economic challenges, for example, the rising costs of food imports and the resulting impact on GCC budgets. Some reports indicate importing food to the Arab Gulf States had risen from USD 25.8 billion in 2010 to USD 53.1 billion in 2020. Given the fast-paced population growth in these countries, an increase in the food supply gap is anticipated posing a monumental challenge in face of additional security threats such as those to strategic maritime corridors, (e.g., the Straits of Hormuz and Bab-al-Mandab), on which the Gulf's international commerce relies.

The pandemic and additional crises, like the Beirut Port explosion that threatened critical food stores, raise important questions: What are the best means to achieve food security in Bahrain and the GCC? How can countries mitigate and build resilience to crises for the future? Is there a need for more coordinated strategies, organizations, or legislations?



Taking the above into account, the need to shed further light on the issues can be viewed at the national, regional and international levels:

### **A. The National Level**

Inaugurating the third convention of the fifth legislative term in October 2020, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, the King of Bahrain said, "We invite investment establishments – public and private – to direct their capital towards value-added developmental areas; ones proven by the health crisis as crucial and feasible to develop; such as digital transformation, healthcare investments, ensuring food security; and these are priorities that require the highest degree of cooperation and coordination between the legislative and executive authorities." Those words included a comprehensive methodology to achieve food security in the Kingdom of Bahrain; a goal that falls within Bahrain's Vision 2030.

### **B. The Gulf Level**

Countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council accepted Kuwait's proposal, presented during the GCC Ministerial meeting for Commerce in April 2020, to establish a unified food security network for the Arab Gulf States; it is notable that the GCC's Supreme Council had already tasked the Consultative Committee in 2008 to prepare its visions regarding food and water security which were approved at the 2009 GCC Summit.

### **C. The Regional Level**

The challenge posed by the Coronavirus pandemic sounded the alarm regarding meeting food security needs. An example is the announcement by the Egyptian Minister of Supply and Internal Trade in April 2020, to build 7 silos for staple commodities – including wheat – in 7 governorates, at a cost of USD 1.3 billion; sufficient to meet the basic needs for 9 months instead of 6, as part of a comprehensive strategy to deal with implications of the pandemic. Moreover, the Beirut Port explosion raised questions regarding how food security can be achieved when similar disasters occur.

### **D. The International Level**

There is an international concern regarding this issue, as seen in the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) annual celebration of World Food Day that draws global attention to the issue of food security. There is also a 2017 report published by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), titled, "The Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition", in which four pillars were assigned to achieve food security: (availability, access, utilization and stability).



As such, and based on the importance of food security as being integral to national security – proven by the pandemic; several questions appear in this regard: What are the best means to achieve food security in Bahrain and the Arab Gulf States in general? Is there a need for strategies, organizations, or legislations? Have all these requirements become necessary and urgent to fulfill GCC food security, along with potential additional requirements?

To answer these questions, the Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (Derasat) devotes its fourth annual forum to this issue, titled, "Strategies to Attain Food Security: Challenges and Opportunities".

## 2. Forum Sessions

The Forum's proceedings will take place over the course of 3 days, by videoconferencing, as follows:

### Day 1: Food Security in the Kingdom of Bahrain – Concept and Mechanisms

Two 90-minute sessions

*Session 1: The Concept and Reality of Food Security in the Kingdom of Bahrain.*

*Session 2: Enhancing Food Security Through Local Entrepreneurship.*

### Day 2: Food Security: Gulf and Regional Experiences

Two 90-minute sessions

*Session 1: Food Security Mechanisms in the Gulf.*

*Session 2: Regional Experiences to Counter the Food Security Challenge.*

### Day 3: Towards Integrated Strategies to Meet Global and Comprehensive Food Security

Two 90-minute sessions

*Session 1: Food Security as a Sustainable Development Requisite.*

*Session 2: The Role of International Organizations in Achieving Food Security.*





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