

High Level Seminar Indigenous Food System

7-9 November 2018

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

By 2050 the world population is estimated to have grown to around 9.7 billion people. The global challenge is not only how to fight hunger and feed the growing population, but also how to provide a balanced nutritious diet for healthy living that can be sustained for generations. Present food systems do not ensure nutritious diets, reflected in the high levels of malnutrition and growing number of obesity in the world. Food systems need to be transformed to sustainably address the societal challenges and move from just supplying sufficient food to providing sufficient high quality diets for all.

As we all experienced the trend of Globalization and homogenization have replaced diverse local food cultures; high-yield crops and monoculture agriculture have taken the place of diverse indigenous food systems; industrial and high-input farming methods have degraded ecosystems and intensive agriculture harmed agro-ecological native food systems; and modern food industries have led to diet related chronic diseases, accelerated AMR and other new forms of malnutrition.

During last two decades wide range of studies in different continents have shown how local and native food systems have been functioning in balanced manner not only with nature but also with nutrition of humankind in any given time and

geographic locations. Long historical coexistence of human being with its natural environment resulted a very efficient food system which not only feed the local people for centuries but also keep their balance with their fragile environment. Consequently in such a rapid transforming situation some international organizations and countries realized the very important role of indigenous nutrition systems and try to rebuild it or if not possible reinvent it with current lifestyle to achieve sustainable food systems, balanced diet and healthy nutrition.

In the same line, in Iran, the awareness toward native foods and indigenous diet systems is growing rapidly during last several decades. So many nutritionists have confidence in native and local knowledge of Iranian indigenous people as a reliable source of nutritional and agricultural science for food and agriculture systems. One of the major groups of indigenous people in Iran called “pastoralist nomads” who live in Iran for thousands of years with harmony with nature and their population just century ago was more than 30% of total population. During last several decades not only their population degraded to almost 2% but also their culture, social system along with nutritional knowledge and skills was vanishing. Their healthy nutrition diet and foods was the best possible examples for urban and rural people for decades, their strong immune system and healthy long life was symbol of their balanced food system before changes happened in last several decades. Wide range of dairy products along with seasonal nuts and fresh natural vegetables with cereals and meat products are major elements of their food system. Their style of food preparations also is so fascinating particularly in milk processing which ends up with variety of long life dairy products for different consumptions and seasons. The food processing style is

unique and involves three major elements in their food and nutrition systems including; diversity, freshness and seasonal body demands.

Considering these elements, the nutritionists and later government of Iran tried to merge some of the indigenous food system to the contemporary food systems and encouraged food processing industries to adopt some positive elements or products to the daily food system to include healthy food in urban food systems.

One of the unhealthiest elements of modern food system which is dominated on contemporary lifestyle of Iranian is sugar based beverage which contains lots of calorie with no nutrition elements. To change this unhealthy elements the nutritionists searched for any possible alternative and they end up with regular healthy beverage in local and indigenous communities in Iran which known as “Dough”(diluted yogurt). This product made of fragmented yogurt with some natural and herbal additives. There are different styles of production which suit to variety of preferences and different taste for healthy diet. The food industries started to produce this product in different flavor and different type like steal DOUGH and now after almost two decades it is a dominated beverage in IRAN which replaced to high percentage of sugar based beverage in daily diet of Iranian families and most of restaurant’s food recipes.

This positive change not only decrease sugar and artificial additives but also improved the level of protein, minerals and vitamins. The dairy industry developed widely based on the enhanced demand on this product to such a degree that this product exported to most neighboring countries of Iran in last two decade. This example could be considered as a success story and an example of amalgamation of modern and traditional food systems which can help together

in the line of healthy diet and show us how the indigenous food systems can contribute to achieve for safe and security food for all people in the world.

Distinguished attendance,

The dimensions of nature and culture that define a food system of an indigenous culture contribute to the whole health picture of the individual and the community – not only physical health but also the emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of health, healing and protection from disease. However, these food systems which are intricately related to the complexities of social and economic circumstances are becoming increasingly more affected by the forces of globalization

We hope this seminar accelerate our knowledge and experience regarding the potential of Indigenous food system to enhance contemporary food systems through merging both knowledge as a new horizon for healthy and safe food for every one and future of human being.

Thank you for the attention.