

Thank you Mr Chair,

I am pleased to take the floor to share some of the progress and achievements being made through the Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-food Value Chain and Improving Trade Policy in Iraq (SAAVI) project, which is being implemented by ITC with EU funding.

A five-year project is working to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of Iraqi agri-food sectors to supply domestic markets while supporting reforms to trade policy and WTO accession. SAAVI's support towards job creation, especially for youth, as well as economic growth and diversification in Iraq, is well in line with Iraqi Government's priorities and economic white paper.

The project has started strongly, despite the significant obstacles posed by the complex challenges facing Iraq, which have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.

ITC has proven itself to be highly adaptable in establishing an effective local presence in a short time period and in earning the attention and involvement of the relevant stakeholders.

During SAAVI's inception phase, ITC has begun work on designing sector strategies for high-potential products, establishing value chain alliances, and increasing capacities in the business environment. This has been supported by large farm, firm, and market surveys; focus group discussions and regional and national consultations; and analytical work on sustainability and the estimation of demand in domestic markets.

Through improving farm and firm efficiency, building capacities for sustainable production, developing skills and fostering entrepreneurship, improving organisation, and expanding trade prospects, as the project continues over the next four years, significant and lasting benefits can be expected from SAAVI's activities towards the agri-food sectors.

Under its trade policy component, SAAVI project has already achieved good progress towards WTO accession.

The component has undertaken capacity building for both public and private sector stakeholders on various topics such as WTO and Agriculture, Trade in Services and Agriculture Domestic Support. Moreover, conducting technical virtual and physical workshops and activities to enhance the technical work for the committees in charge of the accession.

I thank you...