

## UAE Ministry of Climate Change organises first meeting of Farmers' Council

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The Ministry of Climate Change and Environment (MOCCA) hosted the first meeting of the Farmers' Council, presided over by Mariam bint Mohammed Almhiri, Minister of Climate Change and the Environment.

The meeting highlighted the government's directions to promote sustainable modern farming systems across the UAE to increase the agricultural sector's productivity and commercial value and enhance food security.

The Minister said: "Food security is a strategic priority of the UAE that we seek to achieve through strengthening our agricultural sector and mainstreaming advanced agricultural practices with the support of concerned stakeholders in the country."

She added: "Establishing the Farmers' Council will drive this priority, as it will highlight the challenges faced by the sector and the best approaches to overcoming them. Through its membership, representing all regions of the country, the Council aims to ensure that farmers' voices are heard, and raise awareness about relevant government plans and ways to support them among the farming community."

She applauded local farmers for the important role they play in developing the sector through their compliance with related laws and regulations and their shift to modern agriculture that reduces the sector's impacts on the environment and climate.

The meeting agenda featured an overview of the Council's mandates. These include promoting the adoption of state-of-the-art cultivation practices, developing an annual agricultural plan, identifying applicable agricultural systems, authorising applied agricultural research programmes to be executed at selected farms, organising capacity-building and experience-sharing activities for farmers, and approving annual agricultural production programs and produce marketing plans.

Members outlined the Council's work processes for identifying priority challenges and projects, developing action plans, and assigning tasks and timeframes.

They also discussed the pledge signed by government entities at the UAE Annual Government Meeting on November 22, 2023, where they commit to securing 50 per cent of their food-related purchases from local farms by 2023 by boosting local farms' production capacities and encouraging and increasing investment in food sectors to 100 per cent by 2030.

Moreover, the Council explored the finance solutions offered by Emirates Development Bank to modern agricultural SMEs and start-ups and highlighted the next steps in developing targeted extension services for farmers.

In this context, MOCCA will update farmers' databases over the next few weeks.