



EU – GCC DIALOGUE ON ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION PHASE II

A Project funded by the European Union

6. ACTIVITY REPORT

EU–Kuwait Online Dialogue on Safe and Resilient Food Trade

A project implemented by DAI
in consortium with AHK and
ICCS



German Emirati Joint Council
for Industry and Commerce
المجلس الألماني الإماراتي
المشترك للصناعة و التجارة

Activity Report

EU–Kuwait Online Dialogue on Safe and Resilient Food Trade 1st July 2026, Online

I. Summary

	Description
Theme	EU–Kuwait Online Dialogue on Safe and Resilient Food Trade under the EU–GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification II
Purpose	Strengthen EU–Kuwait cooperation on food security, food safety, resilient supply chains and sustainable bilateral trade.
Date and time	1 July 2026, 9:50 AM – 12:00 PM Kuwait Time
Venue	Online (idloom, MS Teams)
Organized by	- DAI - AHK – German Emirati Joint Council for Industry and Commerce (Kuwait Representation)
Supported by	Delegation of the European Union to the State of Kuwait
Format	Online (fully virtual)
Language	English
Main Target Audience	Kuwaiti government authorities, EU and Kuwaiti institutions and regulatory bodies, food industry representatives from the EU and Kuwait, business community, and experts.
Number of Participants	75

II. Performance Reporting

1. Forum Delivery

1.1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Time	10:00 AM - 10:10 AM
Speaker	Welcome Remarks – H.E. Anne Koistinen, EU Ambassador to the State of Kuwait

H.E. Anne Koistinen opened the dialogue by highlighting the strategic importance of food security in the current global context, noting that supply chains face growing pressure from geopolitical instability, climate change, transport disruptions and shifting international markets. She emphasized that the European Union sees Kuwait as a valued partner in agri-food trade and that the dialogue was an opportunity to deepen practical cooperation. H.E. Koistinen underlined the

EU's commitment to safe, predictable and transparent food trade, stressing that resilient food systems require strong regulatory frameworks, trusted international partnerships and user-friendly market access conditions. She noted that 2026 marks the 40th anniversary of EU–Kuwait diplomatic relations, making the dialogue a timely contribution to the bilateral relationship. H.E. Koistinen welcomed the participation of both Kuwaiti authorities and private sector representatives, emphasizing that their experience is essential for understanding what works well in trade and what can be further improved.

1.2. Remarks by the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Time	10:10 AM – 10:25 AM
Speaker	Mr. Mohammad Abdullah Bin Youssef, Director of International Organisations and Chambers, Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI)

Mr. Bin Youssef delivered remarks on behalf of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, stressing that food security and food safety have become fundamental pillars of economic resilience, sustainable development and social well-being. He acknowledged that ensuring reliable food supplies requires international cooperation, resilient supply chains, and active public-private partnerships – not national policies alone. He outlined the Chamber's key role in helping Kuwaiti businesses identify new markets and reliable suppliers, coordinating with counterpart chambers in neighboring GCC countries to explore alternative logistics routes, and serving as a bridge between the private sector and government authorities on trade-related challenges. Mr. Bin Youssef also highlighted the Chamber's use of regular business surveys to monitor market sentiment and communicate findings to support evidence-based policymaking. He welcomed the dialogue as an opportunity to exchange experience, strengthen EU–Kuwait cooperation, and identify practical solutions for more resilient and sustainable food systems.

1.3. Online Presentation on EU Food Control System and Cooperation Points

Time	10:25 AM - 10:40 AM
Speaker	Mr. Jan Bloemendal, European Commission, DG SANTE

Mr. Bloemendal presented the EU's food safety architecture, including the history and mandate of DG SANTE, which was established in the 1990s in response to major food crises such as BSE and dioxin contamination. He outlined the harmonized EU food safety framework – including the General Food Law, HACCP, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), and the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) – and explained how the EU's single market means that products cleared at one border control post have access to all 27 member states and 450 million consumers. He described the authorization procedures for animal products from third countries wishing to export to the EU, including residue control plan approval and on-site system audits, and flagged new antimicrobial resistance requirements entering into force in September 2026. Mr. Bloemendal introduced the TRACES platform as a digital tool for certification, tracking and traceability, and expressed strong interest in establishing harmonized export certificates with Kuwait – an arrangement that would replace bilateral negotiations with individual member states. He also noted that Kuwait is already part of the RASFF network and highlighted the 'Better Training for Safe Food' program as a mechanism for capacity building and regulatory cooperation.

1.4. EU Perspective on Food Security and Trade

Time	10:40 AM - 11:00 AM
Speakers	• Mr. Bartosz Hackbart, European Commission, DG AGRI • Mr. Damian Gadzinowski, European Commission, DG AGRI

The two presentations from DG AGRI addressed both the bilateral EU–Kuwait agri-food trade relationship and the broader global food security context. Mr. Gadzinowski opened with a snapshot of bilateral trade, noting that EU agri-food exports to Kuwait reached approximately €800 million (USD 900 million) in 2025, growing at an average annual rate of 2.5% over the past decade. He highlighted the EU’s role as a reliable supplier of dairy products, cereal preparations, milling products and processed food to Kuwait’s retail, hospitality and food service sectors, and underscored the need for trade systems to remain open, predictable and user-friendly in order to realize further growth.

Mr. Hackbart then provided a broader assessment of global food security pressures, noting that around 295 million people in 53 countries are currently affected by food crises, exacerbated by a cascade of disruptions including COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and instability in critical trade choke points such as the Strait of Hormuz. He presented the EU’s internal response – centered on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the European Food Security Crisis Preparedness and Response Mechanism, and a long-term Vision for Agriculture and Food – as well as the external Team Europe approach, which combines humanitarian assistance, investment in sustainable food value chains, multilateral cooperation and trade facilitation. He stressed that open, transparent and rules-based trade is not merely an economic priority but a food security imperative, and that the EU’s network of 45 preferential trade agreements with approximately 80 partners worldwide supports resilience through diversification and predictability.

1.5. Fireside Chat: Resilient Supply Chains, Food Security, Food Safety, and EU–Kuwait Trade Opportunities

Time	11:00 AM - 11:40 AM
Moderator	Mr. Omar Naim, Senior Consultant, Roland Berger Qatar
Speakers	• Ms. Bahia Jaafar, Deputy Chairman, Deputy CEO and CFO, The Kuwaiti Danish Dairy Company (KDD) • Mr. Philipp-Andreas Schmidt, Head of Public Affairs, Science and Sustainability – Middle East, Bayer

The fireside chat was the centerpiece of the dialogue, bringing together a Kuwaiti private sector voice and a European industry perspective for a frank and practical discussion on EU–Kuwait food trade. Moderated by Mr. Omar Naim of Roland Berger Qatar, the conversation addressed four thematic areas: bilateral cooperation opportunities, market access and regulatory transparency, the potential for Kuwaiti exports to the EU, and lessons from recent supply chain disruptions.

On cooperation, Ms. Jaafar called for a shift from transactional trade to structured, long-term partnerships, noting that KDD – a company with 63 years of operational history and deep roots in the Danish dairy sector – depends heavily on European technology, machinery and raw materials. She expressed strong interest in aligning this dependence within Kuwait Vision 2035 and building a genuinely two-way trade relationship. Mr. Schmidt explained Bayer’s position as an upstream agricultural input company focused on seeds, crop protection and digitalization tools, highlighting the company’s work on next-generation heat- and drought-tolerant varieties, as well as controlled-environment agriculture and vertical farming solutions relevant to Kuwait’s climate constraints.

On market access and regulatory clarity, both speakers emphasized the need for predictable, digitally accessible, and product-specific regulatory information. Ms. Jaafar noted that Kuwait and the GCC follow CODEX standards – which closely align with EU regulations – and called for the digitization of these frameworks to facilitate smoother access for both importers and exporters. Mr. Schmidt highlighted the importance of regulatory clarity from an exporter’s perspective, particularly for seed import licensing in the GCC, and stressed that predictability is essential for managing international supply chains at scale.

The discussion of Kuwaiti exports to the EU was one of the most candid exchanges of the dialogue. Ms. Jaafar noted that KDD – which is HACCP-certified, Halal-certified and FDA-approved for exports to North America – has been unable to export dairy products to the EU despite meeting comparable standards. She expressed that clear guidance on what is specifically required, and why access is restricted, has not been forthcoming. In response to the presentations from the European Commission earlier in the session, she publicly offered an open invitation for EU regulatory bodies to visit and inspect KDD’s production facilities without prior appointment, proposing to serve as a pilot case for Kuwaiti food companies seeking EU market access. This call was met with genuine interest and was identified as a concrete follow-up action.

On supply chain resilience, Ms. Jaafar drew on KDD’s experience managing disruptions from the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent tensions in the Strait of Hormuz region. She highlighted supplier and route diversification, real-time AI-based shipment tracking, joint contingency planning with key suppliers, and the use of alternative logistics corridors through Jeddah and Oman as essential tools of preparedness. Mr. Schmidt noted that Bayer has similarly invested in regional distribution centers in the Gulf to ensure continuity of supply and pointed to geographic diversification into African supply chains as an emerging area of strategic investment for the company.

1.6. EU Perspective on Food Security and Trade

Time	11:40 AM - 11:50 AM
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The audience Q&A session opened with a clarification on EU import rules: in response to a participant question on whether all EU member states apply the same restrictions for products such as flour-based goods, the European Commission representatives confirmed that EU import rules are harmonized across all member states, and that any amendments to standards must be raised at EU level rather than addressed bilaterally. Ms. Jaafar also addressed how KDD is using AI to track shipments and manage supply chain disruptions in real time, explaining that access to 63 years of historical import data has enabled the company to deploy AI tools for container tracking and logistics optimization. She recommended that other companies ensure their data is properly secured before implementing similar tools. The session concluded with an exchange on practical next steps, with participants identifying two priority areas: the importance of a potential EU–GCC free trade agreement as a structural framework for two-way trade, and the need for clearer and more accessible communication of regulatory processes for private sector companies on both sides.

2. Key Outcomes

- The dialogue confirmed a strong alignment between European and Kuwaiti priorities on food security, food safety and supply chain resilience. Both sides recognized that resilient food systems require a balanced combination of reliable international trade partnerships, transparent regulatory frameworks, and long-term strategic planning.
- The European Union’s role as Kuwait’s largest and most reliable agri-food trade partner was reaffirmed. With exports to Kuwait of approximately €800 million in 2025, growing at an average of 2.5% per year, the dialogue reinforced the depth and durability of the commercial relationship, and identified significant further potential as Kuwait continues to invest in economic diversification and food security.
- A central theme of the dialogue was the importance of moving beyond a transactional trade dynamic towards structured, long-term cooperation. Participants on both sides called for more predictable, digitally accessible and product-specific regulatory information, and for regulatory frameworks to be treated as enablers of trade rather than barriers – without compromising on food safety standards.
- The fireside chat generated a significant and actionable outcome: the Kuwaiti Danish Dairy Company (KDD) publicly extended an open invitation to EU regulatory bodies to visit and



inspect its production facilities, proposing to serve as a pilot case for establishing a practical pathway for Kuwaiti food companies to access the EU market. This offer was the most concrete operational outcome of the dialogue and represents a clear next step for follow-up between the EU Delegation, DG SANTE and KDD.

- The dialogue highlighted the alignment between Kuwaiti and GCC food standards (which follow CODEX, closely mirroring EU regulations) and the EU regulatory framework as a solid foundation for deeper cooperation. Participants called for these shared standards to be made more visible and accessible through digitalization, with advanced regulatory change notification identified as a key practical improvement for companies on both sides.
- Resilience and diversification emerged as the defining practical themes. Lessons from the 1990 Gulf War, COVID-19 and the recent disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz were drawn upon by both speakers to argue that multi-supplier strategies, alternative logistics routes, real-time AI-based shipment tracking and joint contingency planning with key partners are no longer optional but essential elements of food supply chain management.
- A potential EU–GCC free trade agreement was identified as a key structural enabler for deepening the bilateral trade relationship, removing the need for separate negotiations with 27 individual member states. Participants noted that a comprehensive trade framework would provide the predictability and market access clarity that private sector companies on both sides require to plan and invest with confidence.
- The dialogue reinforced the importance of EU technological contributions to food security in the Gulf, particularly in areas such as climate-resilient seed development, controlled-environment agriculture, AI-driven supply chain tools and food safety systems. Participants agreed that knowledge sharing and technology transfer are as important as product trade in building a genuinely sustainable and resilient EU–Kuwait food partnership.

Annexes

Annex 1: Final Agenda

EU–Kuwait Online Dialogue on Safe and Resilient Food Trade

1 July 2026 | 9:50 AM – 12:00 PM Kuwait Time | Online

09:50 – 10:00	Login
10:00 – 10:10	Welcoming Remarks H.E. Anne Koistinen, EU Ambassador to the State of Kuwait
10:10 – 10:25	Remarks by the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mr. Mohammad Abdullah Bin Youssef, Director of International Organizations and Chambers, KCCI
10:25 – 10:40	EU Food Control System & Cooperation Points Mr. Jan Bloemendal, European Commission, DG SANTE
10:40 – 10:55	EU Agricultural Policy & Stable Food Supply Mr. Bartosz Hackbart, European Commission, DG AGRI
10:55 – 11:10	EU Trade Policy & Market Access Mr. Damian Gadzinowski, European Commission, DG AGRI
11:10 – 11:40	Fireside Chat: Resilient Supply Chains, Food Security, Food Safety, and EU–Kuwait Trade Opportunities Moderator: Mr. Omar Naim, Senior Consultant, Roland Berger Qatar Ms. Bahja Jaafar, Deputy Chairman, Deputy CEO and CFO, The Kuwaiti Danish Dairy Company (KDD) Mr. Philipp-Andreas Schmidt, Head of Public Affairs, Science and Sustainability – Middle East, Bayer
11:40 – 11:55	Audience Q&A
11:55 – 12:00	Closing Remarks