

Remarks by Ambassador Joan A. Polaschik
U.S.-Algeria Agricultural Cooperation
Workshop on Chemical Security and Food Defense Systems in Algeria
February 1, 2016

Good morning, it is a pleasure to be here today. I am pleased to see representatives from so many of Algeria's ministries that have a significant role in ensuring food, chemical, and public safety here. This workshop builds on previous cooperation in this area, including a similar workshop in April 2015, that many of you participated in. Agricultural cooperation is an important element of the US-Algeria relationship, particularly as the Algerian government focuses on diversification and expansion of the economy especially through increased food production and food security is very important to achieving this goal.

The US has a great deal of technical experience to share, and this workshop is just one example of the many ways we are working together to advance our shared goals. In this increasingly inter-connected world, the international community must develop mitigation strategies to reduce vulnerabilities identified in our global food system including chemical threats.

During this three-day workshop, the trainers will lead case studies and provide an overview of how to develop a national action plan for chemical security in Algeria. This is critical to ensuring greater access and availability of safe and nutritious food. The costs of effective chemical security measures are minimal compared to the costs of emergency response and recovery. An incident of intentional contamination, a chemical spill, or missing agricultural pesticides could have a huge impact on the local economy, public health, security, and consumer confidence as well as substantially erode confidence in trade relations.

In partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Embassy's Agricultural Service has organized several workshops over the past year and a half to share best practices and encourage continued dialogue among technical experts. The Agriculture Service also sponsors training programs, such as the Cochran Fellowship Program and the Borlaug Fellowship Program, that provide professional development and research opportunities focused on a wide range of areas, including biotechnology, food safety, irrigation and water management, agriculture marketing and policy, and risk management.

In order to have a sustainable chemical security system, it is important to address risk and highlight tangible incentives across several key institutions and stakeholders concurrently – which is the goal of this workshop.

I wish you a successful workshop.