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## Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia

### Background Document to the Online Consultation

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## Food security and nutrition programme for Kyrgyzstan in action. How to implement policy in the most efficient way?

### Background Document to the Online Consultation

#### 1. Overview

The transition from the Soviet-era centralized command economy to a market economy exacerbated the food security challenges in Kyrgyzstan. During the early 1990s, there was a sharp decline in food absorption in the economy along with a drop in incomes; accordingly, the use of grains as feed for livestock production was severely curtailed. There has been a partial recovery since 1995 driven by the expansion of domestic grain production up until 2002, mainly led by wheat. While energy intake has recovered, protein and other micronutrient intake continue to remain deficient for the population. The ability of the country to maintain food security at the national level does not always translate into better nutrition outcomes at the household level. In 2015, six percent of the country population was undernourished, while 7.9 percent of children suffered from weight deficit.<sup>1</sup>

Poverty rates decreased from 64 percent in 1999 to 32 percent in 2008, thanks to a number of reforms and policy interventions such as land distribution, social security measures, lower tariffs leading to cheaper food imports, and labour migration to neighbouring oil economies. With a higher import-dependence of domestic food consumption, the global food crisis from 2008 onwards has adversely affected non-surplus agricultural producers and urban residents,

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<sup>1</sup> National Statistical Committee. 2016. *Information bulletin of the Kyrgyz Republic on food security and poverty* (available at <http://stat.kg/media/publicationarchive/a088fb17-45ea-4cf2-9e70-e253d44ea998.pdf>).

thereby arresting any further decline in poverty. The poverty estimate increased to 38 percent in 2012 before dropping to 32.1 percent in 2015.<sup>2</sup>

Following the high food inflation of 2008 and 2009, the Government of Kyrgyzstan adopted the Food Safety Law (No. 183, 4 August 2008) to provide basic directions for food security in the country in accordance with minimum standards of food consumption, including: domestic wheat procurement and distribution of wheat flour to the food-insecure population; building strategic food stocks; providing credit subsidies to farmers; introducing seasonal duties on wheat and wheat flour exports; supporting the use of agricultural machinery; and improving seed production (for more information, see *Macro-economic Food Situation Analysis for Kyrgyzstan*).

To enable timely responses to food price volatility, the Government (with assistance from FAO) developed a price monitoring system.

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development for 2013–2017 (approved by the Kyrgyz Republic President's Decree No. 11, dated 21 January 2013) included directives for agricultural development and food security as a primary challenge for the further economic development of Kyrgyzstan. Under the Food Safety Law, the Food Security Council began its activities in addressing food insecurity policy in the country. Deliberations among food policy experts, ministries and other state agencies, led by the Food Security Council and supported by FAO, helped in developing the Food Security and Nutrition Programme (FSNP) and the Action Plan for the period 2015–2017, which was adopted by the Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 618 on 4 September 2015.

## 2. Food Security and Nutrition Programme

Because of the coordinated consultation process and participatory approach among various stakeholders, the FSNP is a unique document with regard to clear goals and priorities, analysis of financing requirements, and accountability, including monitoring and evaluation of programme implementation. Food security and nutrition issues are inseparably linked with the sustainable development policy of the country. Transition to sustainable development offers considerable economic growth in the light of human values and rational use of natural resources.

The FSNP development goals are as follows: a departure from the traditional tools for managing food security and nutrition issues in the country; expanding food security, with targets aimed at improving nutritional quality and the health of the population; and harmonizing food security and nutrition issues in the country with the global concept, which is based on the four components of food availability, accessibility, utilization and stability.

Based on the country's interests, specificity of agrarian sector development, and high dependence on external markets for food security, as well as taking into account conceptual approaches used in global practice, the programme sets four targets:

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<sup>2</sup> National Statistical Committee. 2016. *Poverty level in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2015* (available at <http://stat.kg/en/publications/uroven-bednosti-v-kyrgyzskoj-respublike/>).

1. Ensure food availability in the country.
2. Ensure physical and economic access to food.
3. Ensure dietary quality, diversity and caloric intake.
4. Ensure control and supervision of food safety.

An assessment of **Food Availability**, which included natural resources, climate fluctuations and production limits, revealed a significant deficit among certain core products such as wheat, wheat flour and meat products. The production of sugar and vegetable fat is at critical levels with respect to sufficiency while potatoes, vegetables and melons, milk and milk products, and eggs exhibit sufficient production. A structural deficit with declining yields is discernible in the case of wheat, implying an unavoidable reliance on imports in the future.

Proposed solutions for increasing food availability are: sustaining arable land through irrigation and infrastructure development; supporting agro-industrial complex and value chain development; prudent regulation of exports and imports; and building modern storage facilities for agricultural commodities.

An assessment of **Food Accessibility** included analysis of sufficiency or inadequacy of access to food due to high prices. With regard to physiological standards, the consumption of bread alone shows a comfortable sufficiency, while for potato the consumption is just about sufficient. For other food items, actual consumption is inadequate, varying from 22 to 90 percent (e.g. the production deficit for meat products is 35.4 percent, and for milk and dairy products 25.3 percent). The consumption data also indicate that the expenditure on food is less than sufficient for the bottom three quintiles of the population, rendering them vulnerable in terms of food access. The share of food in total expenditure for the lowest-income 20 percent population is alarmingly high at 63 percent, while the average for the entire population is 38 percent.

These challenges can be addressed through better price monitoring, enhancing employment opportunities for the vulnerable population, raising the income of the rural population, and expanding coverage of social security measures.

An assessment of **Balanced Nutrition** reveals that energy intakes are above the minimum standard in the country, except in Batken Oblast. However, protein and fat intakes are inadequate across all regions, except for a high-income group of the population. There is a serious proportion of micronutrient deficiency among both children and adults, causing significantly high incidences of anaemia, latent iron deficiency, folate deficiency among women, and iodine deficiency and stunting among children.

Balanced nutrition can be ensured through a diversified and balanced diet, through nutrition programmes for school children, and by tackling micronutrient deficiencies through fortified food intake.

The **Food Safety** target aims to develop a system of control, monitoring and management of food production, import, processing and marketing with regard to pesticides, animal drugs, hygiene control, fodder production, animal health and catering control. Proper infrastructure, institutions and legislation are required for this purpose. Inspections of veterinary systems and

food control mechanisms by veterinary bodies of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation in 2014 and 2015 respectively revealed unsatisfactory situations.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Action Plan and stakeholders

The Action Plan engages with the implementation issues of the FNSP, and is comprised of three important components:

- Formulation of state policy on food security, safety and nutrition issues;
- Financing from various sources;
- Programme monitoring and evaluation.

As part of the Action Plan, the existence of clearly defined targets on a range of issues, from macroeconomic variables like food inflation rates to the distribution of micronutrients like Gulazyk<sup>4</sup> to the vulnerable population, is expected to be advantageous for programme implementation. To ensure its effective implementation, the Action Plan was developed with a participatory and synergetic involvement of various state agencies. The key government bodies and ministries for the programme implementation are:

- (i) Food Security Council (under the Vice-Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Government);
- (ii) Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Melioration;
- (iii) Ministry of Economy;
- (iv) Ministry of Health;
- (v) Ministry of Finance (funding decision-maker).

The designation of these leading players is expected to clarify bottlenecks, like lack of finance or inadequate capacity, at the level of each participating agency and to ensure accountability at various levels. The Action Plan is also expected to make the process more manageable through regular assessments of the impact of actions by state agencies, the participation status of private agencies, and by defining funding sources for the FNSP.

### 4. Implementation status of the FSNP

The current status of the implementation of the FSNP is far from satisfactory. Some of the actions planned for 2015 and the first half of 2016 remain incomplete. For example, the

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<sup>3</sup> Committee of veterinary control and supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan. 2014. *Final report of the mission of experts of veterinary services from the CU member states to Kyrgyzstan*;

The Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation. 2015. *Final report on inspection by EEU experts of enterprises involved in the production of animal products in KR*.

<sup>4</sup> Gulazyk is a powder containing iron, folic acid, vitamins A and C and zinc, administered to children for fighting micronutrient deficiency. The distribution of Gulazyk is mandated by the Food Security and Nutrition Programme in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2015–17, Decree No. 618.

introduction of Gulazyk micronutrients has not met targets due to issues of funding shortages, as revealed in the mid-term evaluation by the Ministry of Health.<sup>5</sup>

First, significant gaps between required and available funding have impaired the implementation of the programme as per the planned schedule. The total financial requirement for the programme is 2.3 billion som, of which the confirmed supply is 1.3 billion som. The unconfirmed portion of the estimated financial requirements stands at nearly 45 percent. Within the confirmed finances, the share of government budgeted funds is only 33.6 million som or less than 3 percent of the total requirements;<sup>6</sup> the donor community has to finance the balance.

Second, the Action Plan does not clearly define the role of the private sector and civil society organizations. It creates barriers to or gaps in translating the policies into action on the ground in a realistic manner. It is necessary to include non-governmental stakeholders like national universities or food producer associations in order to translate the policies into action.

Third, regarding the development of analytical capacities that were to accompany the implementation of the FSNP, there has been less than satisfactory progress. While regular monitoring of food prices is functional, several other analytical actions like surveys and needs assessments have not been undertaken. These gaps pose crucial challenges to the policy-making and implementation process. It should be noted that the implemented tasks in 2015–2016 (e.g. information systems, monitoring of food balance, food reserves, etc.) originate from the urgent actions established by the government during the response to the 2008–2009 food crisis.

Finally, the established timelines and targets, in an environment of funding constraints, seem unrealistic and may require revisions. A timeline of 6 to 24 months for several actions to be completed seems unrealistic. In fact, such actions have been absent for a long time or were never attempted. For example, purchasing sugar beet, developing a series of analytical products, storage construction, information campaigns, updates in curriculum development, and establishing laboratories require more time than has been allocated.

## 5. Developing a road map for implementation of the Action Plan

In this light, a road map for the Action Plan may help to put the implementation on a clearly defined timeline while at the same time increasing the transparency and accountability to the public. The Road Map can constructively readjust the deliverables by priorities; highlight the involvement of private sector and non-governmental organizations in the process and help revise targets, funding sources and capacity gaps.

Introducing a road map can help in visualizing the additional involvement of donors that is required for the programme. The road map can constructively readjust the goals through better-formulated minigoals to speed up the implementation process (e.g. developing

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Health Mid-Term Review Report National Health Reform Program of the Kyrgyz Republic “Den Sooluk” for 2012–2016, 12 June 2016 (available at <http://densooluk.med.kg/en/>).

<sup>6</sup> All figures related to funding requirements and availability have been taken from Decree No. 618.

investment feasibility studies for storage facility). It can also help in including the private sector and Non-governmental Organizations in the process of programme implementation. A comprehensive review of targets, funding constraints, capacity gaps and the additional requirement of participating agencies will help in the more efficient implementation of the FSNP and also develop the agenda for future stages.

The road map is divided into four tables by the following FSNP dimensions: food availability, food accessibility, food utilization, and food safety. For each dimension it is proposed a set of possible steps and interventions to address the multiple crucial constraints:

*a) Prioritizing targets and activities by years:*

- Accomplished, ongoing or starting activities in 2015-2016
- Move forward activities to 2017, which should be of priority and feasible for the implementation during the remaining year of the action plan. For example: improvement of seeds and livestock and monitoring of food reserves for enhanced food availability; price assessment and social support for food accessibility; information campaigns and capacity building for better food utilization; and laboratory renovation and harmonization of legislation for ensuring food safety.
- Suggested activities to be included into the new FSNP phase that should be taken into account during its preparation and include a mechanism of regular revision.

*b) Identifying gaps in funding*

*c) Identifying main actors/implementers of the FSNP and stronger participation of academia, Civil Society Organizations, private sector and international community.*