

General aspects regarding monitoring the right to food

The content of this handbook is based on FAO's guide *Methods to Monitor the Human Right to Adequate Food* (Volume I and II) written by Maarten Immink, Wenche Barth Eide and Arne Oshaug, with contributions from other members of the International Project on the Right to Food in Development and from FAO's Right to Food Team.

José María Medina Rey and María Teresa de Febrer (PROSALUS, Spain) adapted it to the "handbook" format. The translation into English of this handbook was done by Stephen Carlin and Beth Gelb.

The purpose of the MONITORING handbooks is to provide those responsible for monitoring the right to food with the conceptual, procedural and methodological background to monitor or follow up on right to food policies, programmes and projects from a human rights approach.

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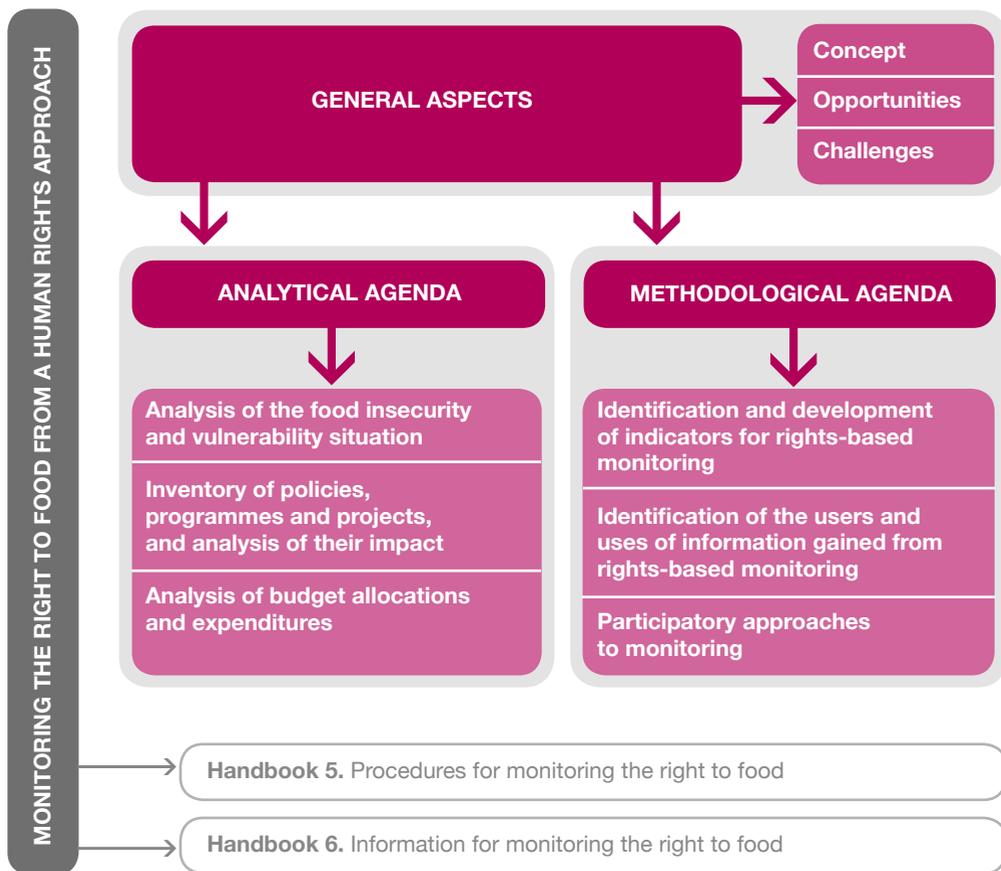
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The FAO glossary on the right to food is available at:
<http://www.fao.org/righttofood/knowledge-centre/glossary/en>

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CONVENTIONAL MONITORING AND MONITORING WITH A HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH

1.1. WHAT IS MONITORING?

Monitoring is a broad topic for which many definitions may be found in development literature:

- It is a process carried out at the same time as policy, programme and project execution which gathers, processes and analyses information to determine whether these are progressing as planned (time, cost, efficiency, etc.) and if they are helping to achieve the planned results and objectives.
- It is a dynamic and flexible activity used to facilitate the adaptations and adjustments needed to better focus actions on the achievement of results and objectives.

It can be carried out at the national, local and community levels and covers policies, programmes, projects and actions.

DEFINITION OF MONITORING (WORLD BANK)

Monitoring:

- is a continuous activity that uses information systematically;
- measures the realization of the goals and objectives defined within a specific time frame;
- provides feedback for implementation processes and problems;
- tracks the acquisition and allocation of resources, expenses and production as well as service delivery.

A typical monitoring process usually consists of at least the following five groups of activities:

- organization of the required information (including the design of indicators);
- collection of information (data) from primary and secondary sources;
- processing and transformation / tabulation of information;
- analysis and interpretation of information;
- exchange and dissemination of information (reports).

Monitoring and assessment are often referred to jointly, and these terms are sometimes used interchangeably because they are perceived as similar in their integrated functions and within their set of activities. Although it is possible to view them as complementary parts of an integrated production and information dissemination system, there are differences between the two, such as the fact that information is generated for different uses.

While monitoring is a permanent, ongoing process taking place throughout the implementation of the activity (project, programme, etc.), assessments are conducted at fixed points in time and are distributed at longer intervals. Monitoring is a continuous process of analysis, observation and suggestion of adjustments to ensure that the action is fine-tuned to achieve its objective. Assessments, on the other hand, are conducted at a specific point in time for the purpose of drawing conclusions about what is observed on a larger scale, and learning lessons for future actions based on the experience gained.¹

1.2. MONITORING FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH

The human rights approach to monitoring can be considered from two complementary perspectives: rights-centred monitoring (referring to **what** is monitored) and rights-based monitoring (referring to **how** monitoring is performed).

Rights-centred monitoring involves monitoring to check whether human rights principles have been applied in the design, funding and implementation of relevant policies, programmes, projects and activities, and whether they have had significant impact on the realization of rights. This monitoring approach therefore includes:

- monitoring the development and implementation processes of measures expected to have an impact on the realization of a human right, in this case on the right to adequate food;

1. Please see Handbook 7 of this collection on assessing the right to food.

- monitoring the results achieved with these measures (which may be policies, programmes, projects, etc.) and their contribution to the progressive realization of rights;
- monitoring the final impact obtained in terms of increasing the degree of respect, protection and fulfilment of rights, particularly the right to food;
- monitoring potential retrogressions that could occur in the realization of the right to food and related rights.

Rights-based monitoring implies that the monitoring process itself is based on and consistent with human rights principles; is transparent and participatory; helps to empower rights-holders; and strengthens the capacities of duty-bearers, providing both groups with valuable information for decision-making aimed at the realization of rights. Rights-based monitoring should include methods and approaches based on human rights and their principles.

MONITORING CONTRIBUTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH

- This approach tracks the way in which the rules, standards and principles laid down by international human rights treaties and instruments are integrated into national policies and development programmes.
- It addresses the inconsistencies between formal legal provisions and what actually happens in practice.
- It identifies how public policies, programmes and other activities may prevent the exercise of human rights.
- It increases the transparency and accountability of duty-bearers.
- It raises awareness and builds the capacity of:
 - rights-holders to claim and exercise their rights; and
 - duty-bearers to fulfil their responsibilities regarding the realization of rights.
- It places particular focus on vulnerable groups of the population facing food insecurity and the underlying and structural causes of their situation.
- It makes certain that the principle of non-discrimination is applied when tracking the decisions, actions and behaviours of political, economic, social and cultural institutions, with a view to bolstering social and gender equality.
- It promotes public participation in the formulation of policies, programmes and projects and in the monitoring process itself.

Monitoring the right to food within a country involves regular collection, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of relevant information to assess progress in realizing the right to adequate food for all members of society, and whether this is being made in accordance with human rights principles and approaches.

GENERAL COMMENT 12 (COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS)

31. States parties shall develop and maintain mechanisms to monitor progress towards the realization of the right to adequate food for all, to identify the factors and difficulties affecting the degree of implementation of their obligations, and to facilitate the adoption of corrective legislation and administrative measures, including measures to implement their obligations under articles 2.1 and 23 of the Covenant.

The Right to Food Guidelines can be used to develop a framework to monitor this right.² One of these guidelines (17) specifically addresses monitoring and evaluating the right to food and food security.

2. Please see Handbook 5 of this collection.

GUIDELINE 17. MONITORING, INDICATORS AND BENCHMARKS

17.1 States may wish to establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the implementation of these guidelines towards the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security, in accordance with their capacity and by building on existing information systems and addressing information gaps.

17.2 States may wish to consider conducting “Right to Food Impact Assessments” in order to identify the impact of domestic policies, programmes and projects on the progressive realization of the right to adequate food of the population at large and vulnerable groups in particular, and as a basis for the adoption of the necessary corrective measures.

17.3 States may also wish to develop a set of process, impact and outcome indicators, relying on indicators already in use and monitoring systems such as FIVIMS, so as to assess the implementation of the progressive realization of the right to adequate food. They may wish to establish appropriate benchmarks to be achieved in the short, medium and long term, which relate directly to meeting poverty and hunger reduction targets as a minimum, as well as other national and international goals including those adopted at the World Food Summit and the Millennium Summit.

17.4 In this assessment process, process indicators could be so identified or designed that they explicitly relate and reflect the use of specific policy instruments and interventions with outcomes consistent with the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security. Such indicators could enable States to implement legal, policy and administrative measures, detect discriminatory practices and outcomes, and ascertain the extent of political and social participation in the process of realizing that right.

17.5 States should, in particular, monitor the food security situation of vulnerable groups, especially women, children and the elderly, and their nutritional status, including the prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies.

17.6 In this assessment process, States should ensure a participatory approach to information gathering, management, analysis, interpretation and dissemination.

The development and implementation of a rights-based monitoring process will make some aspects easier but at the same time will most likely give rise to difficulties, constraints or challenges that will need to be overcome. It is therefore advisable to assess the specific opportunities and difficulties from the outset in the particular area being monitored, so as to take best advantage of the former and find ways to overcome the latter.

2.1. POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunities arising from rights-based monitoring are directly linked to how engaged countries are in realizing economic, social and cultural rights. Where there is a real commitment to realizing these rights, the need for monitoring information will become more crucial.

The stronger the commitment to realizing these rights, the more readily the parties accept the need for monitoring information.

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE SPHERE OF RIGHT TO FOOD MONITORING

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| Constitutional recognition of the right to food | This level of recognition provides a political opportunity in countries where the constitution recognizes this right which can be called upon to ensure that the relevant constitutional provisions are transformed into national legislation, policies, strategies and programmes. This in turn requires monitoring to make certain that it actually takes place. |
| Democratisation processes | These allow for more effective participation of rights-holders and duty-bearers in policy dialogues and in the formulation and monitoring of programmes, each group having the opportunity to address their information needs. |
| Commitment to food security | Monitoring the right to adequate food can be more easily assimilated when food security monitoring and the aims and objectives of poverty reduction are envisaged as part of the policy or strategy implementation process. |
| Efforts to mainstream gender and human rights | These are enriching experiences that offer learning opportunities as they are important examples from which lessons can be learned to promote the right to adequate food and to reinforce the need for rights-based monitoring. |
| Civil society working for the right to food | In order to convert these new social spaces into effective areas of core action, one of the requirements is information gathered from monitoring that same core area of society or through citizen participation in the monitoring of public programmes and local projects. |

2.2. POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

The constraints or challenges that we may encounter in a given situation will usually relate to the realization of the human right to adequate food, but with practical implications concerning how this right will be monitored. In other cases we are faced with more specific constraints when implementing rights-based monitoring. In these cases it is important to anticipate their impact on the specific area in question and prepare properly.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES WITHIN THE SPHERE OF RIGHT TO FOOD MONITORING

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| <p>Understanding of the concept of the right to adequate food</p> | <p>Many government officials do not understand the true meaning and importance of the “right to adequate food” and what is required to make it a reality. Moreover, there may be major inconsistencies in the way authorities interpret what it means to fulfil the right to adequate food and how to put it into practice.</p> |
| <p>Institutional constraints</p> | <p>Fragmentation of institutional responsibility for food security often implies fragmented responsibilities when it comes to monitoring and insufficiently coordinating monitoring activities. There is also often a strong tendency towards sector-specific fragmentation in the case of government institutions, donor agencies and even academic institutions, which hinders the development of an integrated monitoring framework. Moreover, many countries lack an institutional human rights monitoring culture.</p> |
| <p>Constraints arising from political commitments and sensitivities</p> | <p>Political commitments often lack sufficient implementation. Since monitoring may expose this lack of action, it may be curtailed. Political considerations may also influence the selection of monitoring indicators and it could happen that the most relevant criteria for rights-based monitoring and the right to adequate food are not included, because they touch upon politically sensitive issues or may expose a lack of progress.</p> |
| <p>Fragile information systems</p> | <p>Monitoring the right to adequate food should be based on existing information systems, but these may not cover all geographical areas, and data may be unreliable or unavailable when needed; different sets of data may also be incompatible or have a limited scope. Limited resources may also compromise the long-term sustainability of information and monitoring systems.</p> |
| <p>Lack of technical capacity to monitor the right to adequate food</p> | <p>Rights-based monitoring requires technical expertise, experience and skill in the use of human rights principles and approaches. Such expertise is lacking in many countries.</p> |

2.3. HOW TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

Some of the potential challenges we have identified are not unique to the implementation of rights-based monitoring. In particular, institutional constraints and fragile information systems affect the quality of policy and socio-economic programme supervision, including

food security, nutrition and poverty reduction measures. Following are some guidelines to overcome challenges arising when implementing rights-based monitoring.

Create an enabling policy environment that allows the realization of the right to adequate food

Incorporation of the right to adequate food should go hand in hand with efforts related to the incorporation of food security and nutrition issues whose integration can be significantly enhanced by capacity building, public education, awareness and advocacy. If issues related to the right to adequate food are included in food security and nutrition planning and in policy documents, this will generate a demand for rights-based monitoring information within the context of strategies and policies.

Incorporate the human rights approach into ongoing monitoring processes

The ultimate goal of monitoring based on respect for human rights is for it to become part of normal everyday activity. Rights-based monitoring should move forward starting with monitoring activities already under way, and should add value to these processes through the introduction of rights-based approaches.

Institutional capacity building

The professionals responsible for or involved in monitoring measures related to the right to adequate food must have the capacity to adequately assume their responsibilities. Capacity shall be taken to mean:

- being motivated and clearly understanding the relevance and importance of what needs to be done;
- having a degree of autonomy from the competent authority;
- being empowered and having adequate access to human, financial and organizational resources;
- possessing the skills needed to undertake assigned tasks, including technical knowledge, management skills, communication skills and proper knowledge and ideas commensurate with the duties to be carried out.

Raising public awareness and education

Raising awareness among rights-holders and duty-bearers is essential in operationalizing the right to adequate food at the national level. People can only participate in a meaningful

way if they have adequate and reliable information, and if they are aware of the problems that affect their right to adequate food. This also applies to the implementation of rights-based monitoring.

Information providers should clearly understand how to incorporate rights-based approaches into their monitoring activities. The end users of rights-based monitoring information should also understand how to organize information so that it can be used and interpreted to assist them in their own sphere of action and in meeting their respective responsibilities.

National human rights institutions and networks of non-governmental right to food organizations can undertake awareness-raising activities targeting both rights-holders and duty-bearers. It may be worth involving right to food “champions” in these activities, i.e. socially relevant people who are aware of and personally engaged in defending the right to food.

Institutional responsibility to monitor the right to adequate food and government-civil society partnerships

State institutions are responsible for monitoring the right to adequate food. Given the multisectoral nature of this right, competences need to be clearly defined and appropriate coordination mechanisms must be put in place to prevent fragmentation of this institutional responsibility.

Continuity of right to food monitoring over time is equally important both in terms of its content and in its procedures, which should be sheltered from political changes.

Public officials who have this institutional responsibility must be aware of their obligations and duties in this regard, developing an institutional monitoring culture that is rights-based and rights-centred.

Partnerships between government and civil society are increasingly important in the development and implementation of food security and nutrition as well as poverty reduction programmes. Non-governmental and community organizations operating effectively at the regional and community levels are better positioned than most government institutions to reach those most in need. Moreover, they develop and implement participatory monitoring and assessment methodologies that are better adapted to measure the causes of food insecurity and malnutrition at the local level.

Rights-based monitoring should take full advantage of government–civil society partnerships and appropriately incorporate relevant methodologies used by non-governmental organizations. In some countries, civil society organizations play a significant role in monitoring the realization of the right to adequate food.

3

ANALYTICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL AGENDA FOR MONITORING THE RIGHT TO FOOD

Rights-based monitoring adds analytical and methodological features not found in conventional monitoring:

- analysis of the results and impacts of policies and programmes;
- identification of who benefits and who does not;
- clear definition of the reasons why the groups identified suffer or are vulnerable to food insecurity;
- ongoing assessment of the implementation process of right to food measures and the provision of public services to check whether they conform to human rights principles;
- development of rights-based indicators;
- development and adaptation of monitoring methodologies that incorporate the principles of participation, inclusion and empowerment of groups of rights-holders, despite their limited technical expertise or lack of experience.

3.1. ANALYTICAL AGENDA

The lines of analysis which should accompany and support a rights-based monitoring process are largely contingent upon the priority placed on distributing the benefits of policies and programmes, identifying who benefits and who does not, the need to identify the most vulnerable groups, and the reasons for their vulnerability. From a rights perspective, equality requires that those most in need be given the highest priority in the implementation of policies, programmes and projects.

Analysis of the food insecurity and vulnerability situation

This analysis features a number of its own dimensions:

- identification and description of vulnerable groups and those facing food insecurity;
- analysis of the causes underlying food insecurity;
- setting objectives and benchmarks based on the information furnished by these analyses in order to compare and monitor progress over time.

Inventory of policies, programmes and projects, and analysis of their impact

The formulation and implementation of policies and programmes and the analysis of their distributional effects, particularly on vulnerable groups and regarding food insecurity, are part of a rights-based analysis.

These analyses should also be directly linked to the identification of corrective measures capable of:

- improving policies and programmes targeting the most needy;
- reducing or alleviating the negative effects that the implementation of policies and programmes may have on the realization of the right to adequate food;
- enhancing the positive effects;
- supporting the formulation of new human rights policies, programmes and projects on the basis of the desired impact.

Analysis of budget allocations and expenditures

Political commitment to the right to adequate food should also be reflected in government budgets. A high level of commitment should imply a significant proportion of public resources allocated and spent on measures that aim to promote the right to adequate food.

Public budget analysis³ can be a good tool for monitoring the extent to which political commitment to realizing the right to adequate food is actually being supported by public resource allocations and real expenditure. This analysis may help to produce process indicators that are useful for:

3. Please see Handbook 8 of this collection for a more detailed analysis of public budgets.

- evaluating the implementation of specific policy instruments;
- specifically detecting discriminatory implementation procedures;
- analysing whether allocations and expenditures are consistent with the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR).

3.2. METHODOLOGICAL AGENDA

We can identify at least three cross-cutting methodological issues related to rights-based monitoring: identification of indicators, identification of information users and providers, and methodologies employing a participatory approach.

Identification and development of indicators for rights-based monitoring

Many of the technical discussions related to the monitoring of economic, social and cultural rights revolve around indicators. Sets of indicators relevant to food insecurity, vulnerability and poverty can be found in many countries and should be the basis for the development of rights-based monitoring when necessary. But it should not be forgotten that these indicators are often used more to track the impacts or likely results of right to adequate food measurements than to identify their implementation processes. In other words, these indicators are geared more towards impact assessment than process monitoring.

The first step should be to take stock of what already exists and evaluate the available indicators and their actual use from a human rights perspective. Many performance indicators generated by conventional food safety monitoring systems can be adapted to monitor the real progress towards the realization of the right to adequate food. Rights-based monitoring also requires an understanding of the implementation processes of policy measures and programmes.

A number of specific inputs are needed to identify and develop indicators to monitor the right to adequate food:

- a conceptual–analytical framework defining exactly what is to be monitored;
- a set of human rights guidelines and methodological considerations that help in the selection of indicators;
- an inventory of potential indicators already being considered as part of monitoring process activities under way;
- an assessment of these indicators, their relevance to the monitoring framework, and the likelihood that they can be consistently prepared and analysed according to human rights principles;

- other internationally accepted regulatory principles or standards relevant to what is going to be monitored;
- additional indicators that need to be identified or developed to complete the monitoring framework.

The modification of the indicators already in use or being established and the development of additional indicators should be done gradually so as not to overburden ongoing monitoring activities.

It is important to note that the identification of appropriate indicators should directly involve all stakeholders, including programme managers, legislators and representatives of vulnerable groups or those facing food insecurity, so that indicators respond to the monitoring questions posed by the different user groups involved in this process.⁴

Identification of the users and uses of information gained from rights-based monitoring

When using rights-based monitoring it is important to identify:

- the end users of information gained from rights-based monitoring;
- the purpose of the required information;
- the providers of the monitoring information;
- what can be done to help the different groups of stakeholders to transform the information gained from monitoring into better and more effective decisions and actions.

4. Please see Handbook 5 for further details on right to food indicators.

INFORMATION FOR MONITORING THE RIGHT TO FOOD

| USERS | SUPPLIERS |
|--|--|
| <p>The main user groups of information gained from monitoring are government officials, civil servants, civil society groups representing rights-holders, and private sector stakeholders (e.g. food producers and processors). In all cases, it is important to be aware of and take into consideration the specific information requirements of these individual groups of users. Information needs should be considered before actually collecting the information, as this will help ensure that the final information produced and disseminated is technically and socially accessible and relevant to the different groups of users.</p> | <p>The right to adequate food is multifaceted, and is intertwined with other economic, social and cultural rights, as well as other political and civil rights. Monitoring the right to adequate food requires information from different sources at different levels, such as sectoral databases, censuses, national surveys, poverty and livelihood vulnerability analyses, policy analyses, programme evaluations and assessments, food security and nutrition status reports, etc.</p> |

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF MONITORING

Rights-based monitoring also requires the establishment of an institutional framework specifying:

- the institutions and organizations that will take part in the main components of the monitoring process and how information collection and analysis responsibilities should be shared among the different entities;
 - what institution will be primarily responsible for monitoring;
 - how monitoring information will be exchanged (horizontally and vertically) between institutions and national and regional organizations;
 - existing institutional capacities and shortcomings so as to properly engage in rights-based monitoring of the right to adequate food;
 - how to ensure that monitoring information directly tracks decision-making and action.
- Ideally, the institutional framework should be implemented jointly between government and civil society.

An ongoing and structured dialogue should be promoted between information users and suppliers with a view to ensuring that rights-based monitoring is:

- timely;
- relevant with regard to the responsibilities of duty-bearers and their information needs;
- technically and socially accessible to the information users for whom it is intended;
- adequately disseminated among the different user groups.

Rights-holders and their representatives are an important group of rights-based monitoring information users. The right to information is essential to being able to exercise other rights given that access to information empowers and gives participation real meaning, allowing rights-holders to:

- confirm and claim their rights;
- participate in public policy debates and discussions;
- participate in social control mechanisms, the purpose of which is to hold duty-bearers accountable;
- plan independent actions to address priority problems;
- engage in political and social mobilization initiatives;
- acquire greater awareness and a deeper understanding of their human rights.

A monitoring system is synchronised with rights when the results of the information target specific groups of rights-holders, and when content and dissemination methods take full account of the limited access to information that these groups face.

Participatory approaches to monitoring

Often, both participation in the monitoring process and access to information are limited to small technical groups. In the case of rights-based monitoring, the process should be participatory and inclusive, using methodologies adapted by and for the people involved in the monitoring process.

Rights-holders can participate directly or indirectly through organizations that represent their interests, such as advocacy and consumer protection organizations and community-based organizations.

The meaning of the concept of participation can range from the people from whom information is requested to those who are consulted on certain issues, and may include monitoring processes already under way and assumed by the population directly benefiting from the results of the monitoring. In the latter case, people are empowered through learning, their capacity for self-determination is respected and their ability to claim their rights and demand accountability from governments is enhanced.

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This collection of RIGHT TO FOOD HANDBOOKS has been compiled from publications forming part of the Right to Food Methodological Toolbox prepared by FAO's Right to Food Team.

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For more information on the Right to Food Methodological Toolbox, visit the website: www.fao.org/righttofood or contact us at: righttofood@fao.org

RIGHT TO FOOD HANDBOOKS

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