The issue

The COVID-19 pandemic has re-emphasized the need for timely market information. Similar to the food price crisis of 2007-2008, the current global shock has reiterated the value of evidence-based market data and analysis that are critical in informing policy decisions, particularly in times of crises. The effects of the pandemic have led to widespread unemployment and income losses, lowering the affordability of foods and heightening food insecurity, while concurrently the lockdown restrictions have adversely affected the efficient functioning of actors along food value chains. Such impacts require timely dissemination of market data, including price information, which can play a vital role in helping to assess the effects of a crisis, enabling entities to efficiently respond to changing market dynamics and supporting the formulation of appropriate government responses. The present action sheet is offering a digital solution to meet these needs.

The action

Building on the Food Price and Monitoring (FPMA) tool that has been in regular use in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS) for several years, GIEWS proposes to develop a full-featured price monitoring system that will be available as an internet cloud-based service for all countries or regions. The system will provide online solutions for price data collection, storage, analysis, dissemination and reporting that can be adopted as a complete package or partially, depending on needs, with the overall aim to strengthen the regular use of timely market intelligence in countries and regions.

The action includes a component of Information Technology (IT) development to: (i) bring the FPMA Tool up to date with latest technologies and improve its performance with larger datasets; (ii) enhance the analytical and reporting features of the Tool, in particular in relation to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 2.c.1 to monitor price anomalies, and (iii) compliment the Tool with a mobile device-based solution for data collection.

Being cloud based, the system will be particularly suitable for countries where national IT infrastructures and capacities are limited, or countries stressed by emergencies, and its deployment can be rapid. Moreover, in the current context, movement restrictions, enforced by the global COVID-19 pandemic, make the cloud-based system an advantageous and practical solution, since the software is hosted remotely and accessed over the internet and thus requires no physical presence for IT maintenance and database administration.
Apart from the IT development, the action will focus on supporting countries to populate the database with relevant data either through establishing new data collection activities or from integration of price data from existing national systems, as well as providing training on market analysis techniques and best practices for reporting making use of the features of the system.

**Expected results**

1. Increased number of countries adopting the FAO-provided FPMA system.
2. Strengthened institutional capacity to analyze, report and disseminate reliable and timely market price information.
3. Improved market-information sharing and coordination among key stakeholders through supporting the adoption of a common-platform and web-based market price monitoring system, providing user-friendly access to comprehensive data and analysis/reporting features, accessible to vulnerable segments such as small farmers.
4. Improved government preparedness to respond quickly to crises with impact mitigating measures based on timely and transparent market information.
5. Improved government capacity to include evidence-based price analysis where appropriate in policy and planning decisions to protect consumers against high and volatile prices, while supporting growth in agriculture and trade.
6. Improved transparency, competitiveness and more equitable sharing of benefits among key entities along the food value chain.

**Programme links**

In the current context, strengthening country level price monitoring can contribute to post COVID-19 recovery programmes for sustainable inclusive markets. Generally, the activity aligns closely with FAO’s Strategic Objective 1, which aims to strengthen capacities of governments and other stakeholders to include analysis of key food insecurity indicators in national policy formulation processes that protect consumers against high and volatile prices. It also contributes to Strategic Objective 4 through promoting transparency of price information to support informed production and selling decisions of farmers. Its results will also ultimately feed into the analytics foreseen for the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, measuring the SDGs.

**Regional and Country focus**

Countries lacking effective tools for price data dissemination to analysts and decision makers.

**Partnerships**

Partners will normally be national institutions and organizations who are responsible for collection, analysis, reporting and dissemination of food price data, such as national statistics offices and ministries of agriculture, but could include regional institutions and economic communities.

**Contacts**

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