



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR INFORMATION AND STATISTICS

Whether the goal is to forecast crop yields, monitor or measure food insecurity, prevent famine or inform policy-makers on emerging food security concerns, gathering and sharing accurate data and statistics is an essential first step.

In today's digital world, where the flow of information is instant and global, raw data collected at local level feeds into systems that merge data across topics, countries or regions, building complex pictures of on-the-ground reality, and giving decision-makers a better understanding of who is food secure and who is not. The challenge is to ensure capacity exists for credible cross-sectoral analysis of the food security situation and for communicating effectively.

Given the many actors involved – including governments, development organizations, civil society and the private sector – there is a risk of their differing approaches leading to conflicting information or information overflow. FAO is well-positioned to support the harmonization of these approaches for better quality results.

Harnessing information for food security

FAO has built a Global Learning Platform to strengthen food security information and analysis skills world-wide through e-learning courses that offer capacity development and on-the-job training. FAO also leads the partnership implementing the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, aimed at raising national capacity to gather, analyse and disseminate statistics and information, and supporting decision-makers in designing targeted poverty reduction and food security investment plans. A new interactive website – data.fao.org – pulls together FAO's statistics, maps, pictures, and documents on food and agriculture with online data analysis.

FAO AND WFP SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE TO TARGET DEVELOPMENT AND EMERGENCY INVESTMENTS

The recent famine in the Horn of Africa, high and volatile global food prices, periodic food crises, and the persistence of chronic hunger and malnutrition can all be linked to failed policies due to insufficient information and understanding of possible threats to food security. In 2011, FAO and WFP collaboratively launched a Joint Strategy on Information Systems for Food and Nutrition Security (ISFNS), to increase capacity to produce credible food security information worldwide. Through ISFNS, FAO and WFP will draw on their collective expertise to strengthen in-country information systems and analytical capacity, speaking with one voice on where investments are needed, in both the emergency and development contexts. Generating credible data, statistics and information in support of better food security decision-making world-wide is easily a USD 100 million dollar a year business – an amount that is less than half a percent of what resource partners spend annually on emergency response.

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FOCUS AREA



EXAMPLES OF IMPACT

COHERENCE IN INFORMATION FOR AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT (CIARD)

All too often, the important outputs of scientists and researchers are not easily locatable or accessible by others who would benefit from the knowledge they contain. The global CIARD movement, launched in 2008, offers those scientists and researchers and their institutions the kind of guidelines, model policies and practical tools they can apply to make sure their work is disseminated effectively, greatly increasing the chance that it will be put to use in ways that contribute to the public good.

PROCESS: CIARD has 15 core partners and more than 150 organizations on board that are coordinating their knowledge-sharing efforts by promoting common formats for information



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sharing and exchange and using open information systems. On its global registry, known as the CIARD RING, organizations are posting openly accessible information sources and services they have developed, making them available for others to access, download and use on their own websites.

IMPACT: The services and sources posted on the CIARD RING provide access to a rapidly expanding spectrum of millions of agricultural information objects that are openly accessible on the internet, ranging from a collection of Moroccan soil fertility maps, through a Chinese document database, to a range of automated newsfeeds.

THE INTEGRATED FOOD SECURITY PHASE CLASSIFICATION (IPC)

In any food insecurity situation – whether acute or chronic, slow or sudden onset, and regardless of the causes – governments, with the support of humanitarian and development agencies, must have access to a realistic picture of the situation on the ground to prepare their response. Problems arise

when agencies have different parameters for defining the conditions. Lack of consensus on the nature and severity of food insecurity situations can lead to disagreement on appropriate action to be taken.

PROCESS: FAO, working with other agencies with similar responsibilities in assessing food security situations, developed the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), a set of protocols to standardize the classification of food insecurity that provides a “common currency”, making it easier for multiple actors to analyze situations in a comparable, evidence-based and transparent manner and agree on appropriate responses.

IMPACT: IPC has trained hundreds of analysts and applied the IPC tool in close to 30 countries. Kenya adopted the IPC in 2007, and has used it to detect and, in turn, avert wide-scale famine with fast action. Kenya now conducts its own IPC analyses with support of international and national experts.

