

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF OBSERVERS IN FAO/WFP CROP AND FOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT MISSIONS<sup>1</sup>**

For countries facing a widespread and serious food emergency, FAO and WFP jointly carry out Crop and Food Supply Assessment Missions (CFSAMs), at the request of national governments. The primary purpose of these Missions is to provide accurate, timely and credible information on imminent food security problems in a country or a region so that appropriate actions can be taken by the governments, the international community, and others, to minimize the impact of the food emergency on the affected populations.

### **Main objectives of CFSAMs:**

- To make a rapid assessment of the status of major crops and prepare an estimate of food production for the current marketing year;
- Collect information on livestock production and health, and assess the contribution of livestock to food security;
- Use satellite imagery (provided through FAO/GIEWS) including Crop Yield Estimates (CYE), as an input into the selection of areas and specific sites to be visited;
- To assess the country's overall macroeconomic situation, its capacity to commercially import food and to effectively deal with the crisis.
- To evaluate the country's overall short-term food security by estimating total domestic availability of food supplies, total food utilization (human consumption, feed requirement, and industrial and other uses) and the resulting food deficit for the upcoming marketing year, to be met through estimated commercial imports, and food aid, if necessary.
- To assess the emergency food security situation including the number of people in need of emergency food assistance, their geographic distribution, and determine the volume and composition of food assistance requirements.
- To make a first assessment of potential for local purchases and constraints (rail and road transport capacity, etc.) to food assistance distribution.
- Occasionally, to contribute to a first assessment of short-term disruptions of the agricultural production capacity and immediate rehabilitation needs.

### **Mission Composition:**

Usually, the Mission includes, on the FAO side, an agricultural economist and an agronomist, and on the WFP side an Emergency Food Security Specialist. Various national consultants also participate. Most of the time these FAO and WFP staff or consultants are accompanied by national Government staff, usually from line ministries. The host Government's role is to facilitate the work of the UN Mission. As available, the mission is also joined by representatives from donor agencies or

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<sup>1</sup> CFSAMs are conducted by the Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) of FAO and the Regional Bureaus of WFP, in collaboration with the Country Offices and the WFP HQ's Emergency Needs Assessment Unit (OEN).

NGOs as observers. In some instances, specialist NGO staff may be recruited by WFP to join its staff as member of the mission. The following guidelines are intended to clarify their role.

### **Role and Responsibilities of Observers:**

Both UN agencies are aware of the importance placed on the results of these missions by the donor community for food and non-food aid allocations worldwide. Although donor agencies rely on a variety of information sources to make decisions on food aid and emergency response activities, the FAO/WFP Assessments usually figure prominently, because of their mandate to provide an independent, unbiased and professional judgment.

### ***Guiding principle:***

*To ensure transparency of the assessments and to build partnership in the assessment exercise, FAO and WFP welcome participation of donor representatives and NGOs in CFSAMs as observers. However, in order to maintain the independence and objectivity of the missions and to guard against any potential doubts regarding mission findings, neither donor representatives, NGOs nor recipient government officials participate as mission members. It is the responsibility of the FAO and WFP staff to prepare the mission report which is regarded as a UN document. Observers are not responsible for the report and its conclusions. The number of observers needs to be kept small to ensure the efficient working of the Mission.*

The main **purpose of observer participation** is:

1. To **observe the work of the mission**, thus ensuring the transparency of the process,
2. To **contribute to the quality and quantity of information and analysis**, and
3. To **provide technical inputs**, aimed at improving the output of current and future missions.

Observer participation can take place in CFSAMs at any one or all **three stages of the mission**:

- **Before**, in planning and preparing the country specific or regional assessments
- **During the mission**, to contribute information and analysis pertaining to the work of the mission, and
- **After the mission** to provide comments and feedback in order to improve on the process and/or methodology.

### **Other considerations:**

- Observers are to make their own arrangements (i.e. obtaining government permission, making all travel provisions, etc.).
- The mission members should allow for sufficient time in the field for an exchange of views with the observers on the preliminary findings. However, all input from observers should be provided promptly, and as guided by the

FAO and WFP staff participating as Mission members so as not to delay the team's work in-country and its departure.

- The observer's written comments must be communicated to the mission before the mission leaves the country.
- The observer's written comments to the team must simultaneously be sent to FAO and WFP Headquarters (GIEWS and OEN).

In order to facilitate observer participation, **FAO and WFP shall take the following steps:**

- Inform all parties with potential observers of planned missions, as early as possible;
- Arrange pre-assessment consultative meetings whenever possible;
- Allow for exchange of views with observers and all other interested parties on preliminary findings prior to the mission leaving the country, without any prejudice to the independence of views of the mission members;
- Consider observer contributions in the continued development of normative guidance for CFSAMs.

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