

The background of the cover features the United Nations logo, which consists of a world map centered on the Atlantic Ocean, surrounded by a laurel wreath. The logo is rendered in a light blue color against a darker blue background.

The elimination of food insecurity in the Horn of Africa

**A strategy for concerted government
and UN agency action**

SUMMARY REPORT

**INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE ON THE UN RESPONSE
TO LONG-TERM FOOD SECURITY, AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
AND RELATED ASPECTS
IN THE HORN OF AFRICA**

The elimination of food insecurity in the Horn of Africa

**A strategy for concerted government
and UN agency action**

SUMMARY REPORT

Preface

At the ACC meeting, held in Rome from 6 to 7 April 2000, the UN Secretary-General announced the establishment of an Inter-Agency Task Force on the UN Response to Long-Term Food Security, Agricultural Development and Related Aspects in the Horn of Africa. The Task Force was to consist of senior representatives of ten ACC member agencies¹ and be chaired by the Director-General of FAO.

In its Final Report, summarized in this document, the Task Force outlines the broad scope of the UN's response to the challenge of eliminating food insecurity in the form of a Strategy and Framework for Action. It also sets out ways of moving from the Framework into action. Every effort has been made to ensure that the strategy builds upon, and is in line with, governments' own strategies for food security although, in the time available, this could not be pursued with the degree of consultation that will ultimately be needed. Full ownership of the strategy, and commitment by the governments of the region to its implementation, will be sealed after this report has been submitted and Heads of State have committed themselves to eliminating famine and food insecurity.

The recommendations made by the Task Force contain nothing new in terms of the diagnosis of the underlying causes of the problem, or concerning the steps that must be taken to achieve food security in the region. The strategy for action is presented in the hope of being able to exploit both the promise of peace in the region and the renewed commitment to food security by governments. It is hoped that this exercise, which has brought together UN agencies, governments and NGOs in a truly collaborative effort, will evoke a similar spirit of cooperation when our common vision is turned into actions that will, once and for all, eliminate famine in the Horn of Africa and eventually relieve the plight of the region's food-insecure.

¹ ECA, FAO, IFAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, WMO and the World Bank.

Contents

Preface	iii
FOOD INSECURITY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA	1
The scale and impact of food insecurity	1
The underlying causes of food insecurity	1
Food insecurity in rural areas	2
The supporting environment	4
A LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR FOOD SECURITY	5
A framework for action	5
Broadening opportunities for sustainable livelihoods	5
Protecting the most needy	6
Creating an enabling environment	7
FROM FRAMEWORK TO ACTION	9
Towards a commitment to food security	9
Country Food Security Programmes	10
Formulating and implementing CFSPs	11
A Regional Food Security Programme	12
The way ahead	12
Starting the process	12

Food insecurity in the Horn of Africa

Millions of people in the Horn of Africa are undernourished and at risk of famine. They suffer drought, conflict, a weak infrastructure and a limited livelihood base. But if the people and governments of the region are committed to working together, along with international non-governmental organizations, they should be able to take far-reaching measures that ensure long-term food security.

THE SCALE AND IMPACT OF FOOD INSECURITY

The Horn of Africa is one of the most food-insecure regions in the world. In the region as a whole, more than 40 percent of people are undernourished, and in Eritrea and Somalia the proportion rises to 70 percent. The seven countries of the region – Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda – have a combined population of 160 million people, 70 million of whom live in areas prone to extreme food shortages. Over the past 30 years, these countries, which are all members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), have been threatened by famine at least once in each decade.

Even in normal years, the IGAD countries do not have enough food to meet their peoples' needs. In four of them – Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia – the average per capita dietary energy supply (DES) is now substantially less than the minimum requirement; in Somalia in 1996, for example, it was 26 percent less. This has a devastating effect on children, in particular, who face life-long physical and cognitive disabilities. In Ethiopia, two-thirds of children are stunted; in Somalia, 20 percent of children die before their fifth birthday. The nutritional status of women, who are the main farmers and carers of families, is also a grave concern.

In these precarious circumstances, any external shock, be it a drought, a flood or an invasion of migratory pests, can push large numbers of people over the edge. Total national food production may not fall by much: even in the worst famine years, aggregate national production has only dropped to about 7 percent below the long-term average. But for the poorest communities, the effects can be disastrous, as families that had insufficient food to start with suddenly find themselves with none at all.

The farmers living at subsistence level in the

higher-rainfall areas form the region's largest group of food-insecure: they tend to have little land and very few assets and typically work in remote areas far from markets. Also at risk are the 15 to 20 million pastoralists inhabiting the vast areas of arid and semi-arid lowlands: in times of drought, these herding communities not only go hungry, they can also lose their productive assets. Finally, there are the growing numbers of urban poor, many of whom have fled poverty and conflict in the countryside.

THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF FOOD INSECURITY

Although food insecurity is inevitably bound up with agricultural production, it should be considered within the broader context of poverty. Farmers and pastoralists are vulnerable to food insecurity not simply because they do not produce enough but because they hold little in reserve. They usually have scant savings and few other possible sources of income. To achieve greater food security, therefore, in addition to boosting their agricultural output, they must create more diverse and stable means of livelihood to insulate themselves and their households from external shocks. This will not be easy. The path ahead is strewn with obstacles – two of the most important being natural hazards and armed conflict.

Natural hazards

The main natural hazard affecting the Horn of Africa is drought. Large parts of the region are arid or semi-arid. The rainfall is low, unreliable and unevenly distributed and, although there have always been cycles of drought and flooding, there is evidence to suggest that the climate is becoming more unstable and the weather events more severe.

Faced with this unstable environment, the people of the region have developed specific coping strate-

gies. Farmers, for example, can stagger their crop planting and, when the situation is exceptionally bad, they may even resort to hunting and gathering. Pastoralists, too, have various options: they can split their herds, set aside pastureland to provide grazing reserves or migrate to new pastures. Nevertheless, even the best coping mechanism can be overwhelmed by an extended drought.

Conflict

Armed conflict, both within and between countries, is another central factor contributing to the vulnerability of people in the region. Conflict and food insecurity are inextricably linked, each triggering and reinforcing the other. Some people living in food-insecure communities feel they have been marginalized by central governments. At the same time, conflict itself almost always intensifies hunger, as it drives people from their homes and disrupts marketing and distribution systems. Then there are the long-term effects: communities that have been torn apart have little confidence in the future and are reluctant to invest in agricultural improvements.

Meanwhile, governments continue to squander scarce resources on arms. In 1997, for example, the IGAD countries allocated US\$2 billion to military expenditure. This discourages donors, who risk funding warfare instead of alleviating poverty through development programmes.

Population growth

The population of the Horn of Africa (160 million) has more than doubled since 1974 and is projected to increase by a further 40 percent by 2015. The increase has already put intense pressure on natural resources, particularly land and forests, and has resulted in increasing rural-urban migration. Despite this, there has been an increase in the number of people dependent on agriculture.

FOOD INSECURITY IN RURAL AREAS

The region's most vulnerable people are those living in rural areas. They have little political leverage and tend to be scattered and difficult to reach. Consequently, they are left to fend for themselves and deal with the vagaries of the climate.

Fragile ecosystems

With the exception of Uganda, only between 4 and 10 percent of the Horn of Africa's land area is classified as arable. Most of the poor are concentrated in the arid and semi-arid ecosystems and, as a result of population growth, have been forced to cultivate increasingly marginal land more intensively, with less opportunity to replenish the soil. In Ethiopia, for example, almost 40 percent of farm households have less than 0.5 ha of land, and more than 60 percent have less than 1 ha, from which to support a family of about six to eight people.

Unsustainable exploitation of the fragile ecosystem has resulted in reduced biomass, biodiversity and water infiltration, and increased runoff and soil erosion. This exacerbates environmental degradation and low agricultural productivity, thereby contributing further to poverty and food insecurity.

Environmental degradation also affects the pastoralists, although the evidence for this is more ambiguous, since there have always been cycles of herd expansion and decline. Herds tend to expand at times of greater abundance, but subsequent overgrazing – aggravated by drought – reduces available feed and the animals starve or fail to reproduce. The consequent reduction in livestock numbers, combined with better rains, allows the rangelands to recover quickly (although a major drop in the number of animals means the people who depend on them for a livelihood suffer). These cycles make it difficult to discern any secular trend.

Low-productivity agriculture

Crop yields in the Horn of Africa are among the lowest in the world. This is largely due to inadequate water control, as less than 1 percent of cultivable land is irrigated, compared with 37 percent in Asia. Yet, even farmers who have the benefit of a more reliable rainfall tend to lack access to knowledge, finance and markets. Moreover, they usually have very little land.

Those who live in low-rainfall areas have the additional disadvantage of being unable to exploit the "green revolution" technologies, such as hybrid seeds and fertilizers, which have typically been developed for areas with a higher rainfall or at least better prospects for irrigation. A number of appropriate technologies exist for drought-prone areas, some of

which are applied in other parts of Africa, and these could be extended to marginal areas of the Horn of Africa.

Neglected pastoralism

Pastoralists are generally better off than farmers, at least until disaster strikes and they risk losing all their assets. Governments and international organizations have made relatively few efforts to improve pastoral systems and, when they have acted, they have often inadvertently done more harm than good. A generation of ill-conceived projects have aimed at providing water sources for livestock, as well as veterinary and other services, in apparently unoccupied rangelands. Even where these interventions have been successful, however, as with the virtual elimination of rinderpest, they have only served to increase overall livestock numbers and have therefore led to overgrazing.

Weak knowledge and information systems

Governments, both local and national, seldom have sufficient data or analytical capacity to respond quickly to changing circumstances. At the same time, local communities may know little of the broader developments that impinge on their livelihoods. Most information systems have focused on early warning systems for crop production areas. But even when there have been adequate warnings, action has been slow. Effective relief interventions demand a precise sequence of events, starting with early warnings and pledges of food aid and continuing through to the delivery of food supplies and accurately targeted distribution. As the recent crisis in the region has demonstrated, there are many weak links in the chain.

Narrow livelihood base

Most people in the region's rural areas rely almost entirely on growing a small range of crops, or on pastoralism. In other words, they are dependent on a narrow livelihood base that renders them vulnerable to external shocks. They have few options for diversification. Without irrigation or access to markets, farmers find it hard to switch to other crops and, since they lack education, they have few opportunities to branch out into other forms of employment. Women, in particular, are at a disadvantage: men's migration, either to cities or to work on large farms, puts an extra bur-

den on women who remain on the family farm; and many technological innovations have benefited only men, leaving women with additional work and no greater level of food security.

The uneven effects of liberalization

All countries in the Horn of Africa have been liberalizing their markets, for example by reducing control by state marketing boards and leaving farmers free to sell their produce where they wish. Although liberalization has opened up new opportunities for farmers who have good land, irrigation systems and access to markets, it has brought fewer benefits to resource-poor farmers and those working in more remote areas. Indeed, they may now be worse off than before, paying more for fertilizers and other inputs, while receiving lower prices for their crops. Similar disparities have arisen from the liberalization of financial markets: banks will lend to larger-scale farmers but are less willing to extend credit to the poor, whom they regard as high-risk clients.

Pastoralists, on the other hand, have often benefited from liberalization, and particularly from the profitable export market in the Gulf countries.

Weak infrastructure

Many areas are marginalized by inadequate roads and transport systems as well as by a lack of telecommunication services and energy sources. As a result, many people are cut off from national and regional economies. Water supplies are also inadequate: in Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, only one-quarter of the population has access to safe drinking-water. Sanitation systems, too, are poorly developed: access to safe sanitation is as low as 13 percent in these three countries and barely exceeds 50 percent elsewhere, except for in Kenya.

Poor health

The countries of the Horn of Africa have some of the worst standards of health in the world. The most vulnerable are children, many of whom are undernourished and suffer from infectious diseases, especially measles, and other types of illness such as malaria and internal parasites. The status of women's health is also poor. Two-thirds of women of reproductive age suffer from anaemia, which accounts in part for the excep-

tionally high levels of maternal mortality. HIV/AIDS is a more recent but equally worrying threat. The chances of being treated for a serious illness are low. Those who live in the towns and cities have better access to services, but rural communities are poorly served and the nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists are typically in the worst position of all.

Low standards of education

Access to education is similarly poor, although there are wide variations from country to country. In Kenya, primary school enrolment is 85 percent, for both boys and girls, and adult literacy is 77 percent. In Somalia and Ethiopia, on the other hand, the enrolment ratios are 11 and 37 percent for boys and girls, respectively, and the literacy rates are only 24 and 33 percent. In both of these countries, girls are the most disadvantaged.

THE SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENT

As well as suffering from fragile environments and poor standards of health and education, rural communities in the Horn of Africa find themselves working in an adverse economic and political environment.

Weak economies

The IGAD countries are among the poorest in the world: the average gross national product (GNP) is just US\$190. Except for in Kenya and Uganda, economic growth over the period 1965-1998 barely kept pace with, and even fell behind, the rate of population growth. The economies of the region depend crucially on agriculture: a good rainy season produces a spurt in growth but when the rains fail, growth falters too. Several of the economies are also highly susceptible to international commodity prices, particularly for coffee and tea. There are few other sources of income. Eritrea and Djibouti can earn revenue from their ports but, with the exception of the Sudan, none of the countries in the region is well endowed with mineral resources.

Reduced aid

Overall official development assistance (ODA) for the IGAD countries has fallen by 40 percent since 1990, with an even greater drop in ODA flows to agriculture, and aid now averages only US\$15 per capita per year. Moreover, the assistance provided, particularly

the food aid, has tended to encourage a culture of dependence. UN agencies have found it difficult to deliver coherent assistance, as their capacity has been weakened by changing targets and declining resources.

A lack of “pro-poor” policies

With a few exceptions, governments in the region have yet to prepare explicitly “pro-poor” strategies that include measures to ensure food security. Most countries have been liberalizing their economies but many of the poor have little contact with markets and so do not gain from any of the opportunities presented by liberalization. Nor have they benefited from newly created commercial banking and rural financing initiatives.

Overcentralized governance

Several countries have taken bold steps to democratize and decentralize their systems of governance. The process has been slow, however, and it is hampered by the shortage of skills to be found at the local level as well as uncertain flows of resources.

Aid responses

Most official efforts in recent years have gone into emergency relief interventions rather than long-term development plans. There have been attempts to change this pattern by linking relief operations to development programmes. However, given the shortage of government funds, such programmes have been difficult to sustain. Although there has been a move to improve the coordination of UN assistance, for instance with the adoption of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), agencies have generally been unable to meet the challenge of providing coherent and consistent support to governments.

The global environment

Although countries in the Horn of Africa may benefit from globalization, there are a number of risks involved, particularly for the poorest farmers who have little access to new technology and now face even stiffer competition from foreign, capital-intensive producers.

A long-term strategy for food security

If the countries of the Horn of Africa are to eliminate food insecurity, they must not only boost agricultural output but also improve standards of health and education and strengthen their infrastructure so as to expand economic opportunities.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

The elimination of food insecurity in the Horn of Africa must be considered a long-term development goal that can best be achieved by progressing through a sequence of challenging, yet attainable, targets. Several relevant targets were established during the series of international conferences and summits held in the 1990s, the most crucial for food security being the 1996 World Food Summit, which resolved to halve the number of undernourished people by 2015. This commitment, undertaken by Heads of State and Government attending the World Food Summit, was reiterated in the UN Millennium Summit Declaration of September 2000.

For the countries of the Horn of Africa, achieving this goal will entail a reduction in their total number of chronically undernourished people from 70 to 35 million. However, the problem of food insecurity cannot be addressed in isolation. Parallel progress needs to be made with relation to international goals set in other important areas, including poverty alleviation; education and literacy; reductions in infant, child and maternal mortality; improved reproductive health; and environmental protection. The countries of the region can now establish their own regional and national targets as well as associated indicators on the basis of these global goals.

As well as setting targets, the international conferences affirmed that their established development goals should be achieved within the framework of human rights. This “rights-based” approach recognizes the responsibility of national governments and their international development partners in ensuring the fulfilment of people’s fundamental rights – including the right of everyone to be free from hunger. Second, it establishes that development beneficiaries are entitled to participate in all decisions affecting their lives.

Action taken to reach the development goals set over the past decade must be implemented simultane-

ously at different levels. There will always be a place for large-scale investments – in improved ports and roads, for example – but the bulk of investments in the future are likely to be on a smaller scale, responding to local preferences and needs. This implies a central role for local civil society organizations such as NGOs, farmers’ associations and other community-based organizations. At the same time, governments will have to devolve as much official responsibility as possible to the local level.

The strategy to be adopted should open up opportunities for those living in the most remote areas, including the fragile and highly famine-prone highland areas and the arid and semi-arid lowland areas. They should also give women an equal voice in decision-making. Programmes will need to respond more effectively to the rights of pastoral and agropastoral people and, even when the focus is not specifically on poverty, they should be assessed for their likely impact on the distribution of income and resources in the region.

Critical to the success of any intervention is the acceptance by all partners – local and external – and beneficiaries that they are embarking on a long-term commitment, one that will span many more years than a typical development project.

The strategy comprises three core components:

- broadening opportunities for sustainable livelihoods;
- protecting the most needy;
- creating an enabling environment for reducing food insecurity and poverty.

BROADENING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

The principal route to long-term food security is through broad-based agricultural development. Conditions vary greatly across the region, so it is impossible to offer universal prescriptions. Each community must determine how to make optimum use of the re-

sources available and adjust its use of land, water and labour accordingly.

For the high-rainfall areas, there are tried and tested techniques for raising agricultural output. Farmers in these areas can also consider growing higher-value commercial crops or diversifying into livestock.

Farmers in the low-rainfall areas have fewer options. Some may be able to use small-scale irrigation or water harvesting techniques, but farmers who are limited to rainfed agriculture will have to make more efficient use of scarce moisture and adopt drought-tolerant crop varieties.

For pastoralists, the situation is somewhat different, given that they are already the most efficient and sustainable users of the region's low-rainfall marginal areas. Any efforts to improve their productivity, therefore, must take into account the delicate balance between livestock numbers and the ecology of the rangelands.

Most of these resource management decisions have to be made by the communities themselves. Governments and international organizations can, however, strengthen people's capacity to assess their resources and opportunities, facilitate their access to knowledge and expertise, and help them to test alternative solutions.

Expanding markets and trade

If the people of the region are to diversify their activities and boost productivity, they need more opportunities to market their produce and better flows of market information. At present, trade in the IGAD region is constrained by complex and high tariff structures as well as lengthy and inefficient licensing procedures. The individual countries in the region will therefore need to harmonize their policies so as to facilitate trade.

Diversifying employment and income

Farmers need to diversify their sources of income by practising more short-cycle livestock farming. In pastoral areas, the processing of milk and meat products and the production of hides and skins could provide opportunities for supplementing incomes. In the long term, however, many more people are going to have to work outside agriculture. This will require higher standards of education and more skills training as well as better transport and communications, along

with easier access to markets and financial services. Governments can also help by removing any legal or bureaucratic barriers to new businesses.

Safeguarding natural resources

The best way to relieve pressure on the region's natural resources is to slow the rate of population growth. At the same time, however, it is also vital to conserve natural resources. Rather than simply trying to regulate against overuse, a better approach would be to encourage communities to safeguard their own resources while also allowing them to share in the benefits of sustainable resource and environmental management.

Improving health and nutrition

People can only take full advantage of new opportunities if they are healthy and well nourished. Having sufficient food is only a part of the solution; adequate food supplies need to be linked with improved health care, nutrition education, and safe water supplies.

The people of the Horn of Africa also require higher standards of education, with better schools and teachers. More advanced systems of information, communication and knowledge are also essential, but these need to be targeted at remote and marginalized areas and designed in close consultation with the people who will be using them, if they are to serve the needs of the poor.

PROTECTING THE MOST NEEDY

As well as increasing development opportunities, governments still need to organize systems of protection for those in immediate need. The region will remain highly vulnerable to natural and human-induced disasters, so it is important to improve systems for dealing with such emergencies.

Meteorological forecasts can warn of droughts and floods with several months notice, yet this information rarely reaches farmers and pastoralists. Furthermore, governments and donors, who do have access to this information, do not yet respond quickly enough or adequately. To improve their performance, agencies require better information on the vulnerability of particular groups. It is important to build partnerships with NGOs, as they often have the most useful information.

Nowadays, relief programmes are increasingly being planned to include elements of recovery, using food- or cash-for-work programmes as well as small-scale credit schemes. This has proved difficult to carry through, however, as many staff lack the requisite experience and the funds are generally inadequate for long-term rebuilding of infrastructure and services.

Social safety nets can prevent child malnutrition, while feeding programmes, although expensive, can be made cost-effective if they are focused more directly on schools and clinics in the poorest areas and if they devolve responsibility to local community and parents' groups. The most vulnerable people – orphans, the elderly, the handicapped and the otherwise incapacitated – will need more permanent support. Any such programmes, however, must be fiscally sustainable.

CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Many governments in the region have embarked on wide-ranging institutional reforms. On the one hand, they have been making room for the private sector and civil society. On the other hand, they have been trying to improve the quality of residual government activities, for example increasing the efficiency of public services, fighting corruption and decentralizing many activities. These developments can help alleviate poverty and bolster food security, but governments also need to ensure that reforms meet the needs of the poorest and most marginalized members of society.

In theory, reducing the size of government should open up opportunities for alternative providers. However, there is no guarantee that a robust private sector or an active civil society will automatically materialize to fill the gaps. To encourage those operating in these sectors, governments will need to streamline regulations and procedures and to simplify trade regulations, while investing in physical infrastructure and communication systems. At the same time, they should establish an appropriate regulatory environment for NGOs.

A necessary part of this process will be decentralization. Local people should have a greater say in political processes and be allowed to fashion services to their own needs. This will not happen automatically.

Local administrators will need support and training if they are to develop skills and capacities that are commensurate to their new responsibilities. To underpin all these activities, there need to be strong legal systems with fair and effective enforcement mechanisms so that people learn to trust in the rule of law.

Many of the most important activities in support of food security will take place at the local level as community-based interventions shaped by local demand and local participation. Other activities are required at the national or international level, however. At the national level, governments will need to strengthen a number of institutions and regulatory bodies, including those for agricultural research and surveys. Still other activities will need to rely on cross-border cooperation, as in the case of locust control and the control and eradication of livestock diseases such as rinderpest.

Any strategy for reducing food insecurity should also include measures for mediating current conflicts and preventing future ones. Governments should foster collaboration with NGOs that have proven skills in this task, as well as reducing both domestic and cross-border flows of arms.

Strengthening regional cooperation

Many of the issues related to food security need to be addressed at the regional level. Stronger regional cooperation can make a significant contribution to food security by creating a more favourable environment for conflict resolution, strengthening economic integration and promoting technical cooperation.

Consensus building

The ideas and principles defined in the report emerged from close consultation throughout the region with senior government officials, all of whom expressed strong support for the work of the Task Force. The UN country teams and Resident Coordinators were also very positive, noting that the initiative represented a unique opportunity for UN agencies to work together to address the problem of food insecurity.

From framework to action

National governments and their international development partners must commit themselves to setting common goals, policies and programmes to end famine and food insecurity in the Horn of Africa.

TOWARDS A COMMITMENT TO FOOD SECURITY

The principal message of this report by the Task Force is that it is within the capacity of the countries concerned and the international community to eliminate famine and tackle food insecurity in the Horn of Africa. Having established the necessary strategy and framework, it is now essential to secure the commitment of governments, regional organizations, UN agencies, donors and civil society, all of whom have key roles in translating common policies into concrete and concerted action.

Commitment by all partners

Governments. At the national level, governments must assume full responsibility for eliminating food insecurity by ensuring such conditions as good governance, health and education services and their people's empowerment. Resource allocation, particularly to support basic agricultural production activities carried out by small-scale farmers, would be a tangible commitment to relieving their dependence on external assistance. Efforts must also be directed at ensuring national and regional peace and stability. A central part of the commitment by national governments must be to put together comprehensive Country Food Security Programmes (CFSPs).

Regional organizations. The main intergovernmental organizations of the region include IGAD, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community (EAC). Together with the governments concerned, IGAD should formulate and implement a Regional Food Security Programme (RFSP), encompassing conflict resolution, technical cooperation, the promotion of interregional infrastructure development, the fostering of trade and the liberalization and harmonization of trade policies,

economic integration and an integrated early warning system for the region.

UN agencies. Working together closely within the UNDAF, the UN agencies can provide support to governments in many ways, including policy dialogue, capacity building and support for the delivery of basic economic and social services. An important role of UN agencies is to assist governments in setting priorities for development programmes and formulating investments aimed at achieving food security and disaster preparedness and mitigation.

Donors. Both multilateral and bilateral donors need to pledge long-term funding in support of national efforts to end famine and food insecurity at a level that is commensurate with the scale of the problem. In addition to traditional mechanisms such as soft loan or grant-funded projects and sector programmes, this will require a longer-term commitment on the part of donors as well as innovative funding mechanisms allowing greater responsiveness to local-level initiatives. Common mechanisms will also be required to facilitate the implementation of CFSPs.

Civil society. All forms of civil society, including NGOs, farmer- and community-based organizations and the private sector, need to commit themselves to collaborating with governments and international partners and donors to address food insecurity. They should play an active part in policy dialogue and conflict resolution, information and knowledge exchange – especially in support of participatory planning – and the delivery of services that are typically lacking in newly privatized economies.

Securing commitment

To obtain a formal commitment by the different partners involved, the Task Force proposes that a high-level meeting be held in 2001, at which Heads of State,

senior representatives of regional organizations, UN agencies, donors and civil society could pledge their support, possibly in the form of a “compact”.

COUNTRY FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMMES

Each government will need to formulate a Country Food Security Programme (CFSP), building on the recommendations of the World Food Summit Follow-up Strategies, as well as existing national food security initiatives and Poverty Reduction Strategies. The CFSPs will have two main thrusts: one to eliminate famine; the other to tackle chronic food insecurity.

Famine elimination

One of the main elements of each CFSP should be a programme for disaster preparedness and the elimination of famine. Early warning systems will need to be restructured so as to give better coverage of pastoral and agropastoral areas, and also be linked to regional systems. They should be based on active two-way communication between local communities and national and international decision-makers. Farmers and pastoralists should be able to tell decision-makers when and where their food stocks are running low and their cattle are dying, while international agencies, who have access to meteorological forecasts, should ensure that this information is delivered rapidly to local communities.

Some of the most critical decisions will concern strategic grain reserves, which is a complex issue that calls for specialist expertise. Sufficient food must be provided to guarantee that no one starves but care must be taken not to disrupt local food markets.

It is also important to move swiftly from emergency relief operations to rehabilitation and development activities. The provision of cheap or free farm inputs and credit during emergencies can also help kick-start a recovery as long as it is followed up by targeted investment in infrastructure and services.

One consequence of adopting a longer-term strategy is that donors may want to cut food aid, and this could result in a net reduction in ODA. To avoid this, donors could commit themselves to delivering a base level of food aid for the next five years or so.

Programmes to address chronic food insecurity

Beyond dealing with emergencies, however, governments will also need to address long-term chronic food insecurity with coordinated programmes, targeted at the most vulnerable populations in specific parts of the country. CFSPs would avoid broad and poorly directed national approaches.

Broadening opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.

The immediate focus would be on enhancing the livelihoods of small resource-poor farmers, through a combination of agricultural technologies and support services, access to markets and credit, along with rural enterprises and agroprocessing. For those in the highland areas, for example, this will mean making better use of water by adopting small-scale irrigation techniques, building on the experience of FAO's Special Programme for Food Security. In the drier areas, on the other hand, the focus is likely to be more on the promotion of drought-resistant crops as well as the conservation of both soil and water. At the same time farmers should seek to diversify their sources of income, rearing more short-cycle livestock, taking advantage of non-timber forest products and, in some places, developing ecotourism.

Pastoralism represents a sustainable and ecologically sound response to harsh environments. Pastoralists could achieve greater security, however, if they had better marketing and information systems for their stock and broader opportunities for investment instead of simply buying more livestock. Processing milk, meat and other animal products would also be a means of boosting their incomes. All of these measures should, however, be guided by the need to conserve the natural resource base, making the most of the synergies between the agricultural and environmental agendas.

Protecting the most needy. Even in normal times, there will always be groups requiring special support, such as the elderly, the handicapped and orphans. Some of their needs can be met through hospital and school feeding programmes but, given the expense of providing continuous social safety nets, the best option will usually be to strengthen existing community initiatives, with cost-sharing arrangements between communities, governments and donors.

The very poor or destitute who are able to work are best helped through cash- or food-for-work programmes that provide a minimum basic income while also lifting households on to the path of self-reliance.

A growing number of food-insecure people are now found in the urban areas, typically in the informal settlements at the edges of major cities. Some, particularly those in the peri-urban areas, can take advantage of startup assistance to grow their own food, or even to supply local markets. Others can be helped through cash- or food-for-work programmes to maintain the urban infrastructure and environment.

Creating an enabling environment. Governments in the region can take many other steps to bolster food security and create the conditions for sustainable development.

Improving governance. Governments need to strengthen their “core functions”, particularly support for agriculture, while decentralizing many of their activities. At the same time they need to make more room for civil society and the private sector; in particular, they must establish a strong legal framework to facilitate action by these partners.

Conflict resolution. Each CFSP should include proposals for the prevention and resolution of both local and international conflicts, working through IGAD and OAU, and perhaps towards a Common Security Framework in the region.

Infrastructure. Proposals for the development of large-scale infrastructure should be reviewed to ensure that they address the needs of remote areas and vulnerable groups. At the same time, governments will need to look closely at small-scale infrastructure, particularly rural roads, livestock markets, and basic services, ensuring that these developments are community-driven.

Civil society. Governments should enable civil society organizations to contribute to food security, by providing an appropriate legislative framework and encouraging the replication of successful experiences. Rural producers’ organizations and NGOs should be able not only to offer services but also to participate in planning, decision-making and resource management. They will also be able to work more effectively by networking across the region.

FORMULATING AND IMPLEMENTING CFSPs

CFSPs will consist of a mix of investment projects, policy and institutional reforms, implemented primarily by government agencies, but with important contributions from the private sector and NGOs. The projects will be financed by international financing institutions and bilateral donors. The UN system will also offer support, aimed at strengthening governments’ technical, planning and implementation capacities.

CFSPs will build on existing national food security initiatives, such as Ethiopia’s Food Security Programme and Uganda’s Poverty Eradication Action Plan, as well as the World Food Summit Follow-up Strategies for National Agricultural Development. They should also be viewed as integral parts of the Poverty Reduction Strategies that are being elaborated in the context of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

Participation and partnerships

Much of the activity will take place at the district or community level. Local authorities, community leaders, NGOs and other representatives of civil society should form teams – with external assistance where necessary – to formulate investment proposals and initiatives. These teams should ensure the full participation of women and other excluded groups. They must also take a “sustainable livelihoods approach”, guided by vulnerability profiles and food security assessments.

At all stages, government agencies will be working closely with civil society as well as with donor agencies who will review the plans and tentatively identify specific elements that different agencies might finance.

Funding mechanisms

The CFSPs will need substantial funding. Much of this can come through conventional channels of bilateral grants and concessional loans but it will also be necessary to create new, decentralized mechanisms to offer community-based initiatives more direct and flexible access to funds.

Some donor funding may come from the realloca-

tion of existing commitments as well as from the proceeds of debt forgiveness but substantial new commitments will also be required.

Institutional framework

The overall responsibility for implementing CFSPs would be with the governments of the region. The institutional framework would need to be tailored to the structures and capacities of the individual countries. However, there needs to be a basic structure underpinning the central role of government and the effective engagement of all other partners.

In each country, these activities will need to be coordinated by a body that represents all line ministries, so it will be important to designate one national agency that can serve as a focal point and operate at all levels, including liaison with international partners, in order to ensure coherence and congruity.

UN agency support

All these CFSP activities can benefit from UN agency support, according to the needs expressed by governments. This might include, for example, help with vulnerability profiling and the collection and analysis of information, or with the exchange of information and ideas among countries.

In each country, the UN Resident Coordinator would take charge, drawing on the resources of the Country Team and, particularly, the UNDAF Thematic Group on Food Security and Agriculture, chaired by FAO. Once the CFSPs are under way, the responsibility for monitoring and evaluation would fall to governments, who could contract these tasks out to local institutions or companies. The progress reports and conclusions could be presented to the Secretary-General through the ACC Rural Development and Food Security Network.

Conflict prevention and resolution

Mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution would need to be created in each country, including systems for conflict early warning.

Strong links would need to be forged with NGOs and UN agencies that are active in this field, as well as to the OAU Conflict Management Centre, to which early warning information would be supplied and from which advice and technical assistance could be provided.

A REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME

Regional cooperation can contribute substantially to solving the problem of food insecurity. For this purpose a Regional Food Security Programme (RFSP) should be formulated as a matter of urgency to deal with such issues as external trade, transboundary disease control, international water rights and regional road and telecommunications infrastructures.

The lead agency for formulating and overseeing the implementation of the RFSP would be IGAD, which could expand its Food Security and Environment Protection Programme to provide these services. IGAD's member countries will need to commit the appropriate level of both financial and human resources, while the UN agencies, in particular the Economic Commission for Africa, would provide IGAD with the necessary technical and capacity building support.

Funding would also be needed for the common planning and coordination activities of the RFSP. Investment projects that have a regional dimension would, however, be implemented by governments. In this case, IGAD would play a monitoring and coordinating role.

THE WAY AHEAD

The participatory approach to programme formulation and implementation outlined in this report is time-consuming, but it is essential if policies and investments are to be coherent and gather broad political and financial backing. The approach advocated envisages three main phases:

- i) CFSP formulation, to be completed by mid-2001;
- ii) the mobilization of resources, which can start during the formulation phase;
- iii) implementation.

STARTING THE PROCESS

ACC meeting

The elimination of food insecurity is a long-term undertaking, with a horizon of at least ten years. The submission of the Task Force report marks the beginning of the process. The report will be discussed at the

ACC meeting in October 2000, which will make the necessary arrangements for follow-up actions and indicate the steps needed to mobilize resources. This will be followed by meetings of the UN Country Teams, after which the process of formulating the individual CFSPs and the RFSP will begin. Priority must be given to mobilizing resources for the preparation of these programmes, which should be completed by mid-2001.

High-level regional conference

The ACC may also decide to hold the high-level regional conference proposed by the Task Force, possibly in July 2001. At this point, the CFSPs and the RFSP would have been formulated and so the conference would effectively launch the implementation phase.

The conference would enable governments and international development partners to confirm their commitment and pledge funding as well as to agree on the future timetable and progress reporting system.

Tentative timetable

27/28 October	ACC Meeting in New York
November	Mobilization of resources for formulation phase of CFSPs and RFSP
November	Meeting of Horn of Africa Country Teams
December	Start of CFSP and RFSP formulation
January – June 2001	CFSP and RFSP formulation
July 2001	High-level regional conference
