

Annex 5

Guidelines for observers

The following is an updated version of the guidelines agreed among FAO/GIEWS, WFP-Food Security Analysis Service and the representatives of WFP's principal donors in July 2005.

Guidelines for the participation of observers in FAO/WFP crop and food security assessment missions

For countries facing a widespread and serious food emergency, FAO and WFP jointly carry out Crop and Food Security 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 tasks of CFSAMs:

- To verify/refine/make (as appropriate) estimates - forecasts - of **food production** in the forthcoming marketing year - at national and, where appropriate and possible, at sub-national levels - based on assessment of the status of and prospects for major staple food crops and, where appropriate, livestock and fisheries;
- To verify/refine/make (as appropriate) estimates of food **stocks, losses and utilization requirements** (for human consumption, animal feed, industrial uses) in the coming year;
- To verify/refine/make (as appropriate) estimates of **exports** and **imports** in the coming year including the public and private sectors' capacity to import food based on an assessment of the overall macro-economic situation, an analysis of prices, effective demand and traders' expected behaviour and already-planned food aid;
- To prepare a national **staple food balance sheet** - and balance sheets at sub-national level where appropriate and possible - and estimate any uncovered food import requirement;
- To identify possibilities for **local purchases** in surplus areas (if any) to help cover deficits in the crisis-affected areas including the quantities that could be purchased, where and when, without unduly disturbing the market and prices;
- To verify/refine information available on the **food security situation** (and vulnerabilities) at **household level** among populations affected (or expected to be affected) by the crisis, and identify the population groups that are (or will be) unable to meet their basic food needs - that are/will be acutely food insecure - as a result of the cri-

sis, differentiating those who were chronically food insecure before the current crisis from those who were not;

- To verify/refine/make (as appropriate) estimates of the **numbers of people** in need of emergency food security assistance, their expected **food access shortfalls/gaps** in the coming year, and the periods when they will need assistance.
- To recommend the actions to be taken to address the **uncovered import requirement** (if any) and food insecurity at household level including the type and quantity of **targeted assistance** (food and/or non-food) required, when and for how long, to ensure that the target population groups will have access to adequate food during the coming year. (These recommendations to be based on analysis of market conditions and institutional and logistic capacities and constraints for the delivery and distribution of food or other food-security related assistance.)
- To recommend any follow-up, more detailed assessments or other actions that may be required.

When, in the process of the above, the CFSAM team identifies avoidable constraints on food production and marketing operations and it may make practical suggestions (or propose further studies) to overcome those constraints and expedite the recovery of food production and market operations in order to ensure - or at least maximize their contribution to - food availability and access in the affected areas in the coming year. The team may also draw attention to any (public health or other) action needed to address nutritional problems and improve food utilization at the household level.

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 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 core 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.).
- In order to enable donors to get a balanced overview of, and contribute to, the work of the mission, observers should be available and ready to participate in a significant proportion of the field visits and the team's meetings in the capital.
- 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 Food Security Analysis Service).

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.