Hunger is a daily reality for almost 1 billion people, and threatens the lives and livelihoods of many people living in poor or crisis-affected countries. Even more people are suffering from malnutrition. The recurring global economic and financial shocks of the past four years demonstrate that distant events can have important implications for short and longer-term food and nutrition security. National and regional information systems that provide timely and credible data, statistics and analysis are essential for effective formulation of development and humanitarian policies and programmes, food and nutrition security preparedness, crisis mitigation, and response planning.

Recent global and regional efforts have been undertaken to improve coherence and communication of information to decision makers, such as the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) and the EC-funded FAO project on ‘Linking Food Security Information to Action’. Innovative multi-stakeholder food security information networks, such as the SETSAN\(^1\) in Mozambique, SIFSIA\(^2\) in South Sudan and KFSSG\(^3\) in Kenya, have mobilized adequate resources to inform policy and programming functions in both development and emergency contexts. The 2009 FAO-WFP joint thematic evaluation on FAO and WFP support to information systems for food security concluded that such multi-stakeholder networks are a reliable, lower cost, and more sustainable approach to country-level capacity and institution building.

Recent evaluations and consultations\(^4\) have highlighted the following issues:

- Greater country and regional ownership of food and nutrition security information is required to ensure the sustainability of these systems.
- Capacity development of local actors and institutions must be prioritized, based on expressed demand for assistance and south-south cooperation.
- Food and nutrition security information products provide valuable inputs to humanitarian policy and response; on the other hand, they need to be strengthened to better inform longer term decision-making, including resilience and poverty alleviation programmes, climate change adaptation, and agricultural development strategies and investment plans.

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\(^1\) Secrétariado Técnico de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional - Technical Secretariat for Food and Nutrition Security.
\(^2\) Sudan Institutional Capacity Programme: Food Security Information for Action.
\(^3\) Kenya Food Security Steering Group.
The FSIN

• Improvements are needed in how food and nutrition security information is communicated, and how it is used for policy and decision making at national, regional and global levels.
• In response to the donor pledges made at the 2009 G8 Summit at L’Aquila to re-prioritize agriculture and food security, many developing countries prepared ambitious food security plans, but these often do not include food and nutrition security information capacity development programmes.
• In many at-risk countries, there is a need for greater donor coordination. Resources devoted to developing food and nutrition security information systems are currently scattered, which has resulted in often fragmented or piecemeal approaches in strengthening capacities at country and regional levels.

Despite the huge challenges that lie ahead to meet global food security it is surprising – indeed perhaps shocking – that currently, there is no global entity or focal point for setting standards in information systems for food and nutrition security. The same can be said for a global entity to facilitate coordination or advocating for increased investment in more reliable information for the reduction of food insecurity and malnutrition. The Food Security Information Network (FSIN) that is proposed in this Concept Note is designed to respond to this gap by establishing quality standards, recognizing and closing the most critical data and information gaps, improving coordination, and sharing best practices. The FSIN will also facilitate south-south capacity development efforts, while building an active community of practice, which combines regional and national networks, academics, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and donors. This is expected to result in greater data sharing, adherence to standards, use of best practices, and sustainable capacity development as defined by the needs of public and private actors on the ground. The aim of the FSIN is to take these coordination and knowledge sharing efforts to the global level for the benefit of information systems capacity development at country and regional levels.

This Concept Note has been prepared by FAO, IFPRI and WFP and presents the objectives, key features and budget requirements of the Network. It will not in any way replace existing initiatives but rather build on them and bring them together to maximize their impact.

Overall Objective, Purpose and Expected Results of FSIN

The overall development objective of this project is to improve food and nutrition security at national and regional levels, in the most at-risk regions, especially for the most vulnerable populations.

The project purpose is to enhance well-informed food and nutrition security decision-making, at national, regional and global levels, with well-coordinated support from local and international partners.

To have the desired impact on the reduction of chronic hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, decision-makers at global, regional and national levels must have access to, and make better use of, higher quality data and information, among others on agriculture, food and nutrition, markets, poverty, climate, risks and hazards, vulnerability, based on comparable global standards.

5 More details are available in a full project funding proposal.
Expected Results

For the 3-year period of the project, four main results have been defined:

1. Countries will have easy access to demand-driven, harmonized sets of standards, methods and tools for food and nutrition security information gathering, analysis and decision-making.

2. National and regional level capacities for food and nutrition security information gathering, analysis and decision-making are strengthened (in at least 19 countries/regions).

3. A global community of practice, composed of a broad range of stakeholders dedicated to strengthening information systems for food and nutrition security, is established with strong country and regional-level participation.

4. A well-resourced and dynamic FSIN has the necessary capacity and resources to fulfill its agreed-upon functions.

Components and Functions of FSIN

The FSIN will operate at national, regional, and global levels (see figure 1 below). While working closely with national and regional institutions (e.g. CILSS, SADC, IGAD, COMESA, ASEAN and SICA⁶), FSIN will draw upon knowledge, expertise and resources from related initiatives world-wide. This will include collaboration with the IPC Global Partnership, the FAO Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS), the WFP Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Unit (VAM), the Global Strategy to Strengthen Agricultural and Rural Statistics, the IFPRI-led Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS), and others.

In addition to providing access to technical expertise, FSIN will function as a multi-stakeholder association of food and nutrition security information specialists. With a Technical Working Group (TWG) and a dedicated inter-agency Secretariat, the FSIN is expected to encourage country and regional level entities to function in an open networking environment. This means to be inclusive of all who might bring data and insights to better understand evolving food and nutrition security situations. These multiple, interacting country and regional networks will constitute the community of practice. Grants will be provided on a limited basis to those participating in the network focusing on the improvement of food security information. It is foreseen that the administration of grants will be done in collaboration with donors and partner agencies, such as IFAD.

⁶ Comité Inter-Gouvernemental pour la Lutte Contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel, Southern Africa Development Community, Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, Community of Eastern and Southern Africa, Association of South East Asian Nations, Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana.
Once fully operational, the FSIN is expected to perform the following functions:

1. Bring people and institutions from developing countries together with a shared interest in capacity building and institutional development of such networks in order to strengthen national and regional food security data, analysis and food security decision-making.
2. Share standards, methods, tools and experiences for improving data quality, agree on a core set of indicators for monitoring and analysis, and advocate for quality information.
3. Review country and regional needs for food security information development on a demand basis, while encouraging partnerships for long-term sustainability, including through south-south collaboration and public-private sector partnerships.
4. Advocate actively for increased investment at country and regional levels to strengthen food security information capacity, and through other country examples, to develop and communicate examples of how food and nutrition security information systems can be better linked to policy processes.
5. Create a platform for the exchange of expertise and information products on food and nutrition security key indicators.
6. Coordinate with all ongoing food security information system investment activities to assist with standards and harmonization of methodologies and to create synergies based on ongoing work and identified information gaps.
7. Collaborate through working groups on subject matter of common interest, while also maintaining a website for data and knowledge sharing and dissemination.

Figure 1. Components and Functions of the Food Security Information Network
For the FSIN initiative to be successful, sustained multi-year funding will be required. Multi-donor funding is envisaged to encourage a harmonized approach from various donors for an initial three-year phase. Four Result areas have been elaborated and the budget requirements by Result have been summarized as shown in table 1 below.

Initially a total of almost 12.8 million USD is called for, of which 60 percent is earmarked for strengthened capacities at national and regional levels in a limited number of countries. Given that resource requirements for effective capacity development in a larger number of countries would be much greater, the envisaged grants facility will have a modest outreach. Additional funds would enable FSIN to expand its scope and assist more countries in strengthening their technical and institutional capacities in support of improved analysis and information for decision-making. Currently, funding commitments have been made by the European Commission and by USAID through FAO and WFP, providing the FSIN initiative with up to USD 2 million for start-up activities. Resource partners are encouraged to provide further contributions to allow FSIN achieve the four results as stated below. Please refer to the full FSIN project funding proposal for further details.

Table 1: FSIN Project results and required budget (October-2012 to October-2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Budget (USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Countries will have easy access to demand-driven, harmonized sets of standards, methods and tools for food and nutrition security information gathering, analysis and decision-making.</td>
<td>2,451,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>National and regional level capacities for food and nutrition security information gathering, analysis and decision-making are strengthened (in at least 19 countries/regions).</td>
<td>7,465,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A global community of practice, composed of a broad range of stakeholders dedicated to strengthening information systems for food and nutrition security, is established with strong country and regional-level participation.</td>
<td>465,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A well-resourced and dynamic FSIN has the necessary capacity and resources to fulfill its agreed-upon functions.</td>
<td>921,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect Support Costs (13%)</td>
<td>1,469,612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,774,317</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>