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## MONITOR THE REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT TO FOOD

### Why Monitor the Right to Food?

The right to food is still not realized for many people. It is important to know who is not enjoying the right to food and why, so that efforts can be made over time to increase the number of people who are benefiting from this right. At the same time, those who are enjoying the right to food need to be protected to ensure that their situation does not change.

Monitoring through the periodic collection, analysis and interpretation, and dissemination of relevant information is critical to know whether progress is being made and whether policies, programmes and other actions by government and other stakeholders adequately address the causes that limit the realization of the right to food, while at the same time respecting and protecting the right to food. Monitoring information serves to make decisions on what needs to be done or what to do differently. It also speeds up progress towards the realization of the right to food.

### How to Monitor the Right to Food?

The Right to Food Guidelines\* invite states to monitor progress towards the realization of the right to food. Guideline 17, "Monitoring, Indicators and Benchmarks", includes an agenda for this purpose. It invites states to pay particular attention to the situation of vulnerable groups and to any discrimination they might suffer from. In order to assist states and others in these efforts, the Right to Food Unit at FAO is preparing a methodological reference guide that shows how assessment and analytical methods can be applied in monitoring the right to food.

The Right to Food Guidelines also emphasize that the monitoring process itself should be participatory, inclusive and empowering. This means that monitoring is not only to be undertaken by technical monitors, but also by the people themselves or their representatives. It also means that the findings and conclusions obtained from monitoring should be shared widely and linked to follow-up actions by government, civil society and grass roots groups.

### What Should Monitoring the Right to Food Focus On?

Poverty and food security monitoring is currently being carried out in many countries. Including the right to food in existing monitoring systems means adding the following key questions:

- Are people (children, women and men) progressively getting better access to food that is safe to eat and culturally acceptable to them? Does this food meet

all their nutritional requirements?? Is this true especially for vulnerable and needy population groups? Is data sufficiently disaggregated to identify the most vulnerable groups?

- What are the effects of policies, programmes and other government actions on the realization of the right to food? How do the above effectively respect, protect and facilitate the realization of the right to food, particularly with respect to the neediest segments of society?
- Are these policies, programmes and government actions designed and implemented in ways that are transparent, non-discriminatory and in accordance with the rule of law? Do they involve good governance and include mechanisms by which public officials can be held accountable for their performance, for the use of public resources, and for compliance with the state's obligations under international treaties and agreements, as well as the national constitution?
- Do budgetary allocations and expenditures show over time that the government is honouring its commitment to make maximum use of available resources to further the realization of the right to food?
- Is the legal, regulatory and institutional environment of the right to food, as well as changes over time in that environment, conducive to the realization of the right to food? Does it provide equal protection of the right to food for everyone?

### Who Should Monitor the Right to Food?

The right to food should be integrated into ongoing monitoring activities at different levels. Thus, institutions with responsibilities to monitor poverty, food security, health and nutrition should be fully involved and should have adequate capacity to undertake right to food monitoring. Certain aspects are best monitored by human rights institutions, such as a human rights commission or ombudsperson office.

Non-governmental organizations that work in areas related to the right to food are increasingly acquiring monitoring capacity. Grass roots groups and community based organizations should have access to monitoring information. They should have the capacity to generate their own information and to foster their autonomy. They should also be able to design and implement right to food measures and monitor government actions that affect their right to food.

*\* The Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, adopted by FAO Council in November 2004 are available for downloading on the right to food website: [www.fao.org/righttofood](http://www.fao.org/righttofood).*



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