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MONITORING FOOD SECURITY ACTIVITIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL: METHODOLOGICAL PROGRESS AND ILLUSTRATIVE RESULTS

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since the World Food Summit in 1996 the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) has been mandated to monitor progress towards the 2015 target of halving hunger in the world. Monitoring is especially important for tracking what actions have been taken and to provide guidance on best practices.

2. One pending item from the 34th Session of CFS is to improve reporting on the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action through the CFS. How to monitor and report on progress towards eliminating hunger and food insecurity is an underlying issue of considerable importance for the CFS reform. Various attempts have been made, using a variety of formats, but with only modest success. At the 35th Session the issue of monitoring will be examined within the context of the overall reform.

3. In response to recommendations made at the 33rd Session, the Secretariat began implementing a work programme to improve monitoring of food security interventions at national level. It included:

- **Developing a Software Tool for Tracking and Mapping Food Security Activities at National and Sub-National Levels**

An important aspect of the support offered by FAO since 2001 for the formulation of National and Regional Programmes for Food Security (NPFS and RPFS) has been to help ensure that the programmes add value and bring coherence to ongoing food security activities. During this biennium the Secretariat supported the development of software for tracking and mapping food security activities of governments and their development partners. Although developed primarily as a decision-support tool, the software has potential as a tool for generating global monitoring reports. This tool is described in more detail in Section II of this document.

- **Building National Capacity for Monitoring and Evaluation**

In addition to tracking and mapping interventions a food security monitoring system must generate assessments and evaluations that show the impacts. These reports can assist decision-makers in identifying best practices for future replication. To help member countries undertake their own assessments, the Secretariat is developing an on-line distance learning course on impact assessment for large-scale food security programmes. It has also provided technical support to requesting governments to help them prepare baseline surveys, integrate NPFS monitoring into national food security information systems, and organize their own evaluations.

- **Drawing Interim Lessons from Available Documentation**

Although national monitoring systems are in general still under development, a number of impact assessments and evaluation reports have been prepared that provide the basis for identifying emerging lessons from initial experiences with NPFS and RPFS. Accordingly the Secretariat commissioned a comprehensive review of evaluations and impact assessments of SPFS pilot projects and upscaling processes since the release of the independent external evaluation in 2002 until the end of the SPFS Pilot Phase in 2008. Highlights of lessons learned from this review are reported in Section III, together with brief country case studies illustrating emerging best practices related to three thematic issues.

Implications for CFS

4. The monitoring of progress towards achieving WFS and MDGs targets should be clearly distinguished from decision-support monitoring. The work in progress covers most of the issues that CFS will need to address when considering ways to improve monitoring and reporting on food security activities at national and regional levels. The Secretariat is ready to collaborate with designated representatives of the CFS in the further development of this work.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOOD SECURITY ACTIVITIES TRACKING AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (FS-ATMIS)

5. Development of the software for tracking and mapping food security activities at national level has been conducted within the framework of the GIEWS workstation – an interactive tool of FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System.

6. The software, which is called Food Security Activities Tracking and Management Information System (FS-ATMIS), is a decision-support tool for food security-related activities and initiatives of governments and development partners. Its main aim is to help users to identify gaps and redundancies in actions taken to implement national food security strategies, and to take corrective action if needed.. It tracks:

- sectoral and geographical areas of intervention;
- programmes and project activities;
- stakeholder involvement; and
- budget allocations.

7. The tool is flexible allowing for the modification of criteria according to the users' needs. It is capable of generating a wide variety of reports that can be prepared for the local, national, regional or global level, subject to the availability of information in the system.

8. The database currently contains information from 2008 for central Asian countries that belong to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). During the coming biennium FAO will carry out consultations in order to refine data-selection criteria and standard report formats. CFS would be welcome to join this process. Coverage will be extended to include African countries engaged in developing their national CAADP compacts and action plans (see *Illustrative country experiences* below).

9. Materials demonstrating FS-ATMIS will be on display in the FAO atrium during CFS to help CFS participants consider the tool's potential uses.

III. HIGHLIGHTS OF LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES EMERGING FROM NPFS AND RPFS

10. From 1994 to 2008, FAO's Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) helped 106 member countries implement pilot projects that promoted simple, low cost technologies for improving yields and incomes of poor farming households. The underlying vision was one of achieving a more sustainable and food secure world by enhancing smallholder productivity and improving household nutrition. The recommended approach recognizes and responds to the differing needs of emergent small-scale farmers, vulnerable smallholders and the landless poor. Consistent with this vision, in 2001 governments that benefited from early SPFS support began transitioning from pilot projects to large-scale food security programmes that had a broader set of

objectives. FAO shifted its attention from executing pilot projects to facilitating formulation and implementation of nationally-owned NPFS and RPFS (see Annex 1 for current status).

Emerging lessons

11. Although NPFS and RPFS are still in the early stages of development, several lessons have already begun to emerge:
- a) All NPFS share the common objective of eradicating hunger by improving smallholder productivity and rural livelihoods, but each is designed to respond to local needs and priorities. Their titles, programmatic content and the institutional arrangements for their implementation vary accordingly.
 - b) In general, the countries that have successfully implemented approved programmes are larger countries with sufficient resources of their own to invest. Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries (LIFDCs) that cannot finance implementation without the help of their development partners have generally not been able to implement all programmed activities. Until recently, countries dependent on external aid have been hindered by an anti-small farmer bias in development thinking and practice, but this is now beginning to change.
 - c) In the early years of the SPFS, pilot phase projects did not explicitly target poor and marginalized small farmers, and it was often reported that the approach tended to favour better-off farmers. Subsequently, adjustments were made and later impact assessments typically reported high rates of success in reaching the rural poor. The main factors accounting for this success were:
 - i) Strong emphasis on group formation that explicitly included women and children heads of households and the landless poor;
 - ii) Use of farmers' field schools to impart technical information and stimulate interest;
 - iii) Introduction of diversification opportunities that landless and marginalized people could take up and that yielded immediate high returns; and
 - iv) Investment in changing mindsets.

The programmes stand the greatest chance of achieving their goals when these factors have been built into NPFS.
 - d) South-South Cooperation (SSC) has provided recipient countries access to specialised experts from other developing countries in areas such as water control, crop production, livestock, aquaculture and agro processing. Their expertise in improved technologies is demonstrated directly in farmers' fields. Strategic alliances with SSC providers offer the possibility to field large numbers of experts and technicians at relatively low cost and there is growing interest on the part of governments and organizations to use this form of technical assistance.
 - e) The institutional commitment of all concerned agencies (e.g., Agriculture, Health, Education, Social Protection and Food Security) is another important determinant of success. High-level political commitment is usually essential to start the process, but to ensure that NPFS and RPFS are sustainable, public sector support has to be institutionalized so that it can continue irrespective of political changes.

Illustrative country experiences

12. The case studies presented here describe experiences gained from country-led processes over the past few years.

Innovative institutional approaches to scaling up

13. Indonesia and Mexico have developed innovative institutional approaches for scaling up successful pilot interventions to the national level.

Indonesia

In 2003 FAO assisted the Government of Indonesia to finalize a draft NPFS document that built on the successful community empowerment approach introduced during the country's SPFS pilot phase. This approach was incorporated in the country's *General Food Security Policy: 2006-2009* as the Village Food Resiliency (VFR) component that is implemented by the Directorate General for Food Security in the Ministry of Agriculture and funded from the government's agriculture budget. Target beneficiaries are farmer groups in selected villages where at least 30 percent of the population is classified as poor. These groups are formed on the basis of "affinity" or "binding factors" and facilitated by extension workers. Each group selects the activities to be implemented which will improve their livelihoods. In 2006 the nationwide VFR program was initiated in 250 villages in 122 districts. Now there are 1,174 villages in 275 districts in 33 provinces participating and an extension for the period 2010-2014 is foreseen.

Mexico

Mexico's Strategic Project for Food Security (PESA in Spanish) has established decentralized Rural Development Agencies (ADR) to promote and develop capacities of individuals and rural communities to define their own problems and identify viable alternatives. At the national level, implementation of the Project is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture (SAGARPA) with some technical support from FAO. The ADR provide a continuous follow up to local rural development initiatives. Currently 135 ADR are operating in 18 States and 655 districts, including 105 of the 125 districts with the lowest Human Development Indices in the country. Over 100,000 poor families have participated directly in community-level projects, focusing both on improving living conditions (housing, stoves, water tanks, grain storage, poultry and vegetable gardens) and on expanding productive options (soil and water management, organic coffee, maize and beans, marketing, eco-tourism). The funding comes from the federal budget and has steadily increased in response to local demand.

Addressing the structural causes of recurrent food crises

14. In areas that are subject to frequent natural disasters and endemic conflict, significant investment in smallholder agriculture may represent one of the most cost-effective options for addressing the structural causes of recurrent food crises and securing peace. The cases of Haiti and the Afghanistan/Pakistan border areas illustrate this point.

Haiti

More than half the population of Haiti lives in rural areas, where extreme poverty is very high and producing food for home consumption is the foundation for all other economic activity. Following devastating hurricanes and a sharp hike in food prices in 2008, there has been a large amount of support aimed at restoring food security by investing in agriculture. FAO is currently executing productive crisis-response projects with a total value of around US\$38 million. Large projects involve the distribution and local multiplication of quality seeds for crops such as black beans and sweet potatoes and the planting of income-generating tree crops that will also prevent soil erosion and contribute to water retention. There are also various small-scale activities aimed at restoring rural livelihoods. Nearly 250 000 poor and vulnerable farmers received improved seeds that resulted in a bean crop worth \$US5 million in 2008. Haiti has not yet adopted an NPFS but these productive crisis-response projects provide the basis for doing so.

Afghanistan and Pakistan border areas

Investing in smallholder agriculture as a technique to help stabilize the Afghanistan and Pakistan border areas is now high on the international agenda. SPFS and NPFS experiences in the region provide useful models for how such an approach might work. In Pakistan projects funded by IFAD and the EU Food Facility are now reaching many of vulnerable people using the Village Organization (VO) approach of the country's NPFS. In Afghanistan a pilot SPFS project for Community-based Food Production Capacity Building was successfully implemented in four provinces from March 2004 to March 2009. Its community-based approach is regarded as particularly suitable for the border areas where local people have limited access to markets and services.

Incorporating NPFS in Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) action plans

15. CAADP was first endorsed in 2002, but is only now being translated into national action plans. To assist countries to rapidly respond to food crises, the African Union accelerated the CAADP country roundtable process for the Food Security Pillar (Pillar 3). Malawi and Togo demonstrate ways in which NPFS can be used as a building block for developing a CAADP action plan for this pillar.

Malawi

In 2005 FAO assisted the Government of Malawi in the formulation of a *Strategic Framework for a National Action Plan for Food Security and Nutrition* – Malawi's version of an NPFS. The document built on SPFS pilot phase successes in enhancing smallholder productivity and introduced additional components to address the food security needs of the landless poor. Some priority components were selected for immediate implementation but most were included into Malawi's Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS). After its release in November 2006 this became the framework for all subsequent sectoral and cross-sectoral development programs in the country. Within the framework of the MGDS the Government of Malawi and its development partners have formulated and endorsed an agriculture development program called the Agriculture Sector Wide Approach (ASWAp) which follows the CAADP model and whose food security pillar now constitutes the country's NPFS.

Togo

Togo's NPFS was validated in December 2008 through a broad-based consultative process involving all stakeholders at different levels. It has been conceived as a cross-sectoral food security strategy that covers the four dimensions of food security as well as a plan of priority actions and investments for the period 2008-2015.. During 2009 the Programme was incorporated in the Poverty Reduction Strategy framework, and served, *inter alia*, as the basis for a stakeholder meeting on the approach to be followed for developing a national agricultural investment programme in the context of CAADP. At this meeting it was decided that five of the six components of the NPFS fit comfortably within the orientations of the CAADP. A complementary programme more specifically tied to food and nutrition security will be needed in order to ensure full coverage of all four dimensions of food security.

ANNEX 1

STATUS OF NPFS AND RPFS, SEPTEMBER 2009

National Programmes for Food Security (NPFS)				
UNDER IMPLEMENTATION		APPROVED	FORMULATED	UNDER FORMULATION
All Activities	Some Activities			
Algeria	Chad	Afghanistan	Angola, Rep. of	Colombia
Brazil	Congo, Rep. of	Burundi	Benin, Rep. of	Congo, Dem. Rep. of
Indonesia	El Salvador	Cambodia , Kingdom of	Botswana, Rep. of	Côte d'Ivoire
Mexico	Jordan, Hashemite Kingdom of	Cameroon, Rep. of	Burkina Faso	Ethiopia, FDR
Nigeria	Kenya, Republic of	Lesotho	Cape Verde	Gambia, Rep. of
South Africa, Rep. of	Madagascar	Mongolia	Djibouti	Guinea
Tanzania, United Rep. of	Malawi	Sudan	Ghana	Lao, PDR
	Mali	Togo	Guatemala	Liberia
	Pakistan		Guinea Bissau	Nepal
	Sierra Leone		Haiti	Nicaragua
			Mozambique	Papua New Guinea
			Namibia, Republic of	Paraguay
			Niger	Syrian Arab Republic
			Senegal, Republic of	Zambia
			Sri Lanka	
			Swaziland	
Regional Programmes for Food Security (RPFS)				
UNDER IMPLEMENTATION		APPROVED	FORMULATED	UNDER FORMULATION
All Activities	Some Activities			
	CARIFORUM/CARICOM – Caribbean Forum	Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)	Andean Community (CAN)
	Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa (UEMOA)	Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)	Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR)	Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
	Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation	Council for Arab Economic Unity (CAEU)	Agricultural Council of Central America (CAC)

		(SAARC)		
	Pacific Islands Forum		Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC)	Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
			Economic Community of Central Africa States (ECCAS)	Southern African Development Community (SADC)