



INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM  
FAO, Rome 7-9 December 2010

## Food-based Approaches for Improving Diets and Raising Levels of Nutrition



### **Abstract: Dietary Diversity: A Simple Tool for Developing and Evaluating Food and Nutrition Security Interventions**

**Gina Kennedy, Maylis Razes, Terri Ballard and, MarieClaude Dop,**

#### **ABSTRACT**

Monotonous diets based mainly on energy dense, but micronutrient poor starchy staples are common in food insecure areas and contribute to the burden of malnutrition, particularly inadequate micronutrient intake. Food-based strategies have been recommended as the first priority to meet micronutrient needs. An essential element to food-based approaches involves dietary diversification, or consumption of a wide variety of foods across nutritionally distinct food groups. Increasing dietary diversity is associated with increased household food access as well as individual probability of adequate micronutrient intake. Dietary diversity is measured as the number of individual food items or food groups consumed over a given reference period. FAO has developed a standardized tool for measuring dietary diversity which can be administered at either the household or individual level. The tool uses an open recall method to gather information on all the foods and drinks consumed by the household or individual over the previous 24 hours. The food and drinks mentioned by the respondent are then recorded into one of 16 standardized food groups. Information from the dietary diversity tool can then be analyzed in many different ways to provide a picture of dietary patterns within the community as well as among vulnerable groups. Examples of analytical approaches and programmatic uses are drawn from studies in Mozambique and Tanzania. These examples illustrate how information collected from the dietary diversity tool can be used to inform baseline assessment, programme design and monitoring and evaluation.

