

Nutrition Activities within the EC/FAO Programme
Food Security : Information for Action
Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division (AGN)
September 5, 2006

Background and development of the proposal :

The Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division of FAO initially proposed two activities (see 1&2) within the framework of the programme. The proposal was discussed during formulation missions in the countries with FAO representatives, EC delegations and country counterparts from Ministries, national institutions and NGOs. It was consequently modified based on the expressed needs of the country counterparts and implementation mechanisms were outlined. Three additional activities (3, 4 & 5) were requested by the country counterparts and integrated in the proposal. The nutrition contribution to the programme thus comprises five activities to be implemented in 10 countries (see Annex).

Description of the activities, partnerships and timetable for implementation :

1. *Capacity-building and technical assistance for adaptation and use of household food and nutrition security monitoring tools in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia¹, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique and Somalia.*

The Nutrition Division is providing training and technical assistance for the adaptation, use, analysis and interpretation of simple household food and nutrition security monitoring tools. There is currently a lack of indicators of food security at household level. The dimensions of household access to food and food consumption are insufficiently taken into consideration in information systems. To compensate for this lack, systems often rely on anthropometric indicators (malnutrition in preschool children) which are late-stage and non specific outcomes of food deficits. The tools to be introduced are the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) which measures food access, and dietary diversity scores which assess food consumption at household and individual levels. The tools are more specific and more sensitive to changes in the food situation than child anthropometry. They are easy to administer and analyze. They can be used in early warning systems, as monitoring indicators for food security and nutrition information systems and for evaluation of strategies and programmes such as crop and livelihood diversification.

The activity will be carried out in collaboration with government and non-government representatives responsible for food security and nutrition information systems or for food security intervention programmes. The indicators being proposed will allow the evaluation of access to food by households and the assessment of the nutritional quality of their diet.

The standardized and universal tools permit an analysis of the food security situation with a common interpretation across different locations within a country as well as across different countries. The tools can be scored by hand or through use of a simple computer program. The Nutrition Division has collaborated with the FANTA Project (Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance) to refine the HFIAS questionnaire and to define analytic techniques.

The strength of both the HFIAS and the dietary diversity score is that information from a series of questions is put together for a composite score with a universal interpretation. For the HFIAS, information from combined responses to nine questions is used to derive a score with a common meaning across different settings. In addition to a numerical score, households are categorized along a

¹ The activity is proposed under the EC funded programme "Support to the nutrition programme and food security information".

continuum from food secure to severely food insecure based on frequency responses to the questions that are ordered by severity. Dietary diversity at the household level, which uses a standardized list to ascertain the number of different food groups consumed in a 24 hour period, is an indicator of household food access, while dietary diversity of an individual reflects adequacy of nutrient intake and quality of the diet. These indicators have been shown to be associated with anthropometric measurements as well as household income and have been tested in international settings.

The workplan for this activity includes the following steps in all the participating countries with some flexibility in timing to adapt to the country partners' agendas :

- an International workshop will be organized in Kenya in early 2007 with participants from all countries involved in the EC/FAO nutrition activities as well as representatives of other institutions working on food security assessment (e.g. Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Planning etc., NGOs, universities and international organizations). The purpose of the workshop will be to bring together potential users of these tools to: 1) discuss and refine methods for the adaptation at local and national level; 2) review methods for scoring and interpreting the tools so that they provide useful information to decision-makers and programme planners, and 3) identify appropriate settings for the inclusion of these household food security tools, such as in food security and poverty surveillance, monitoring and evaluation activities, early warning, and phase classifications for identifying emergencies, both nationally and internationally.

- technical assistance will be provided by the Nutrition Division to each of the participant countries for local adaptation and implementation of the tools in pilot surveys including analysis of the results (2-3 locations per country). For several countries, adaptations and pilot use will take place before the international training workshop. The experiences and lessons learned from these trials will provide material for the international workshop.

- a meeting of national stakeholders, e.g. interested government and non-governmental food security experts and nutritionists, will be held in each country at the conclusion of the field experiences to present accomplishments and results obtained from using the tools in surveys or monitoring activities.

- a final report for each country and a manual for users will be produced that covers the adaptation, application and interpretation of the tools, based on the experiences of the participating countries.

Mozambique :

In March 2006, a field adaptation was conducted with technical assistance from the Nutrition Division in the context of the Belgian Survival Fund (BSF) programmes for improving food security in HIV affected areas (Manica and Sofala districts) with participation of provincial staff from Ministry of Agriculture and the national food security information system (SETSAN). The tools will be integrated in the next baseline survey of a BSF project managed by FAO (April 2006). The Nutrition Division will assist in analyzing the data. The experience from Mozambique will be used the International workshop. Further field adaptations will be done in 2007 in regions with different agro-ecological characteristics. Integration into SETSAN monitoring surveys is envisaged.

Malawi :

In July 2006 a field adaptation was conducted in the context of the FAO/UNICEF/WFP Protecting and Promoting Food and Nutrition Security of Orphans and HIV/AIDS Affected Children Project (OVC), in two locations, Mangochi and Mwanza districts. A team from the Agricultural College of the University Malawi conducted the adaptations with the technical assistance of the Nutrition Division. Pilot introduction in the OVC monitoring activities will follow in 2007. Stakeholders from the Ministries of Agriculture and Health will participate in the International workshop.

Kenya :

In August 2006 a field adaptation was conducted in two different settings, the poor slum area of Kibera (Nairobi) and the rural district of Kilifi (Mombasa), site of the Arid Land Resource Management Project.

A team from the University of Nairobi Applied Human Nutrition Department conducted the adaptations with the technical assistance of the Nutrition Division, with the participation of staff from the Ministry of Agriculture and from ALMRP. The team will organize a meeting with national stakeholders to discuss the results of the adaptations and the potential uses of the tools within national food security information systems. The same team will organize and facilitate the International workshop in early 2007. They will produce proceedings of the workshop. The Ministries of Health (Nutrition) and Agriculture (Home economics) requested further training to develop the capacity of provincial and districts staff to adapt, use and interpret the tools, which will take place in 2007.

Somalia :

The Food Security Assessment Unit for Somalia has already started using household dietary diversity in its Nutrition Surveillance activities. The team of the FSAU will share their experience with this tool at the International workshop. The Nutrition Division will provide technical assistance to FSAU for adaptation, use and analysis of individual dietary diversity (for women of childbearing age) in the FSAU surveys. The assistance will include training of enumerators, field work and help with the analysis of the data.

West Bank and Gaza Strip :

The tools are sensitive to rapid change in the food security situation, and inform specifically on deterioration in households' access to food and diet quality. They are useful in situations of civil instability where more conventional and labour-intensive survey methodologies are not feasible. Moreover they allow for the assessment of the severity of food insecurity. Support and technical assistance will be provided for adaptation of the tools to the national context and for testing them in real field situations. A national consultant will be responsible for the field adaptation with supervision from the Nutrition Division. It is foreseen that the tools will possibly be integrated into a food security assessment survey. In this case, the Nutrition Division will assist with the analysis of data pertaining to the tools.

Ethiopia :

The framework of the EC funded programme "Support to the nutrition programme and food security information system" could be used to fund the activity in Ethiopia. The BSF programme for improving food security in two regions is interested in integrating the tools for its baseline and follow-up surveys. The programme field sites are also targeted by the National Safety Net programme. Thus information stemming from application and analysis of the tools could be fed into the national monitoring system. The chief technical advisor of the BSF programme and a regional government food security staff would participate in the International workshop in Kenya and would conduct the adaptations with technical assistance from the Nutrition Division. The timeline has not yet been determined.

Headquarter activities :

The consultant coordinating the nutrition activities of the EC/FAO programme Nutrition participated in an International workshop for the development of the HFIAS organized by FANTA in December

2005. Training materials and protocols have been developed by the nutrition coordinator, and used in the first country adaptation in Mozambique.

Analysis of pilot data will be conducted by the nutrition coordinator at headquarters in collaboration with the country partners. Based on the experiences of the six countries and the international workshop, manuals on the adaptation, use, analysis and interpretation of the tools will be produced, including a simple software programme for data analysis; this will take place in 2007-2008.

Partnerships :

The collaboration with FANTA will continue with country activities in Malawi, Mozambique and Kenya. Institut de Recherche pour le Developpement (Burkina Faso) will provide scientific advice regarding some methodological issues.

2 Capacity-building on assessment of community-based food and nutrition programmes in Malawi and Burkina Faso.

FAO has developed an Assessment Tool for improving community-based food and nutrition programmes. The tool has been used in Latin America and some African countries successfully. This activity will build capacity of NGOs and government-led projects with community-based food and nutrition activities to assess and improve their programmes. The activity comprises two workshops and an assessment of the programmes at their field site. The activity will be facilitated by a national consultant from the Malawi University Agricultural College with the guidance of the Nutrition Division. In Burkina Faso, the activity will be proposed to the national authorities during a formulation mission in late 2006.

The outline of the activity in Malawi will be the following: NGOs selected for an EC-funded community level nutrition programme will be invited to participate in the assessment training workshops. The selected organizations will be brought together in the first training workshop, where part of the assessment will be begun. Each organization will subsequently complete the assessment at their field sites. At a follow-up workshop, plans of action for improving programmes will be shared. The expected output of the project at the end of the activity will be assessment reports prepared by the participating organizations, including plans of action for strengthening their programmes. The Nutrition Division will provide technical assistance in planning and conducting the workshops and in assessment methodologies. The lessons learned will be published in a document that will be made available on a wider basis for other interested organizations.

Schedule of the activity :

The first workshop will be organized in Malawi in the last quarter of 2006. The activity will be finalized during 2007.

3 Technical assistance for developing the National Plan of Action for Nutrition of the LAO PDR.

The government of the Lao PDR requested FAO to act as a lead external agency to assist in the development of a National Plan of Action for Nutrition, a process promoted by the International Conference on Nutrition in 1992 and carried out periodically by more than 50 developing countries. The plan (National Nutrition Strategy) is multi-sectoral, involving government, international agencies and non-governmental organizations.

FAO will provide assistance to all the national institutions concerned with nutrition, together with UNICEF and WHO, for the development of a strategic framework for the formulation and implementation of all activities related to nutrition in the country. FAO will provide guidance to the

government, in particular the Ministry of Agriculture, for integrating agriculture and food-based approaches into the Nutrition Strategy. The framework will highlight priorities, practical actions to be taken and targets to be met.

Schedule of the activity :

The activity will be carried out during 2006.

A staff member of the FAO Nutrition Division is presently doing a first backstopping mission to assist the National Working Group drafting the strategy. An advocacy meeting will be convened in May. With the guidance of the Nutrition Division staff and of a FAO consultant, the Nutrition Strategy will be finalized by the working group and agreed upon by all stakeholders. Dissemination workshops will be organized at central (for Govt, donors, UN, IOs and NGOs) and regional levels (Governors, Health, Agriculture, Education provincial staff and Lao Women's union) to present and discuss the nutrition strategy and its implementation.

4 Technical assistance and capacity building to conduct a nutritional analysis of the National Household Budget Survey (HBS) of Cape Verde with a special focus on the relationship between the food situation and nutritional status

The National Statistics Office (INE) and the government have requested assistance from FAO to perform a nutritional analysis of National Household Budget Survey of Cape Verde (2001/2002). The National HBS is the sole source of data on food consumption and nutritional status in the country, therefore the results of the analysis will be crucial for defining the food and nutrition policy of Cape Verde. The objective is to assess the nutritional adequacy of the diet and the relationship between dietary patterns and under- and overnutrition. The analysis will lead to specific policy recommendations in the context of the country's reference policy frameworks.

The analysis will be carried by the technical team of INE and the Nutrition Division. A report will be prepared and presented to policy makers, including Ministries of Agriculture and Health, during a national workshop to discuss implications for policy setting and integration of nutrition considerations in existing national development strategies.

Schedule of the activity :

The work will be done during 2006. It has already started with the preparation of the analytical tools (food composition table for Cape Verde, calculation of nutrient requirements of the population). A staff of the Nutrition Division will do a backstopping mission shortly to organize the work with the INE together with an international consultant.

5 Technical assistance and capacity building in compilation and use of food composition data for analysis of Household Budget Surveys in Armenia and Georgia:

The Household Budget Survey (HBS) is a key document for food security and poverty analysis. HBS data are the basis for the calculation of key food security indicators - among others, the prevalence of undernourishment. The governments of the countries have requested assistance to improve the calculation of the energy and nutrient supply derived from HBS. This activity will complement the capacity building provided by the FAO Statistical Division.

A staff of the National Statistics Office (NSS) and a national nutrition consultant will be responsible for compiling food composition data for processing intake data from the HBS. The programme will support their participation in a regional training course on Food Composition. Thereafter they will receive direct guidance from a staff of the Nutrition Division for compiling the food composition table of their country. The activity is an opportunity for setting up a coordination at national level between

the NSS and the nutrition sector for compiling and up-dating a national food composition table that will be used for processing all food intake data collected in the countries.

Schedule of the activity :

The training course will take place in November 2006. The backstopping mission of the Nutrition Division staff will take place during the last quarter of 2006 or beginning of 2007. The activity will be completed during 2007.

Annex : Nutrition Activities in EC/FAO programme Countries

Country	1 - Capacity-building and technical assistance for adaptation and use of household food and nutrition security monitoring tools	2 - Capacity-building on assessment of community-based food and nutrition programmes	3 - Technical assistance on developing a National Plan of Action for Nutrition	4 - Technical assistance and capacity building to conduct a nutritional analysis of National Household Budget Survey data	5 - Technical assistance and capacity building in compilation and use of food composition data for HBS
Cape Verde				X	
Burkina Faso		X (tentative)			
Malawi	X	X			
Kenya	X				
Somalia	X				
Mozambique	X				
Laos			X		
Armenia					X
Georgia					X
West Bank & Gaza	X				
Ethiopia*	X				

* The activity will be funded through the EC Programme for Support to the nutrition programme and food security information system.