

Food Security and Nutrition Working Group Meeting Notes
Thursday, 9 October 2008
2:00 pm, OCHA Regional Office

Participants

NAME	ORGANISATION	NAME	ORGANISATION
John Anderson	FAO -REOA	Ira Frydman	UNDP - DDC
Cyril Ferrand	FAO-REOA	Lisa Parrott	Save the Children USA
Joseph Matere	FAO Kenya	Genevieve Chicoine	WFP Somalia
Sophie Bruas	ACF Kenya	Mohammed Khaled	CARE International
Getachew Demesa	ACF Kenya	Carrie Howard	OCHA Regional
Suleiman Mohamed	FEWS NET	Laurent Dufour	OCHA Regional
Ahono Burih	FSAU		

Agenda

1. Introduction, review of agenda items, review of action items from September meeting
2. Overview and results of the Regional Cassava Initiative Workshop, held in Bukavu, DRC from September 9 to 11
3. Overview and results of the Regional IPC Technical Workshop, held in Nairobi from September 23 to 26
4. Overview and results of the Regional Workshop on Dryland Farming Practices, held in Nairobi October 6 and 7
5. Brief update on the food security situation in the Horn of Africa

Agenda 1: Introduction, review of agenda items, review of action items from September meeting
Facilitated by John Anderson (FAO REOA)

The meeting was opened by John Anderson. The following action points from the September meeting were reviewed:

Action Points			
1	Food security outlook and regional nutrition situation presentations		
	Distribute presentations to FSNWG	FSNWG Secretariat	Completed with the minutes
2	Provide update on high-level meeting on drought and food prices		
	Present information on updated timing of workshop	FSNWG Secretariat	No update available
3	Provide update on IPC NGO training		
	Draft TOR being finalized; tentative dates November 25 to 27		

Regarding the high-level meeting on drought and food prices, OCHA presented updated information about recent discussions that the workshop is expected to be held in early 2009. This workshop would then be more forward-looking and focus on the lessons learned from this experience with drought and soaring food prices in the region; the same group of people would be targeted, with more focus on policy issues. There are also discussions underway between UNICEF and WFP regarding hosting a more operational workshop in the coming weeks, which could serve as a preliminary event to the full one now planned for early 2009, but this is still under discussion.

Additional upcoming workshops mentioned include:

- A World Food Day event in Karen on October 16 that will include focus on soaring food prices

- The Assessment and Clarification of Emergencies (ACE) workshop hosted by OCHA November 11 and 12 considering the possibility of common assessment approaches for humanitarian sectors
- The IPC Regional Lessons Learning Workshop hosted by the FSNWG on November 13 and 14 gathering lessons learned through regional IPC implementation to date, specifically through the Regional IPC Project
- The IPC NGO Training Workshop, scheduled for November 25 to 27. The Interagency Working Group will be sending out an invitation shortly.

Agenda 2: Overview and results of the Regional Cassava Initiative Workshop

Presentation by Cyril Ferrand (FAO REOA)

In response to the spread of diseases affecting cassava throughout the region, FAO and CRS held a regional workshop in Bukavu, DRC from September 9 to 11 including the participation of six countries: Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, Tanzania, and Kenya. Main points raised and conclusions reached by the workshop include:

- Cassava mosaic disease continues to pose a major threat to cassava production in central, eastern and central Africa, and the disease is progressing southwards.
- Cassava brown streak viral disease poses a new threat to cassava production, and there are suspicions of presence of the disease in all countries in the region.
- Improved cassava varieties tolerant to brown streak disease are not yet released by research; an additional 24 months will be required in most of the countries.
- Awareness of all stakeholders involved in cassava production is lacking.
- There is a need for harmonized tools to control disease spread in the region, including a baseline survey; a tracking system for vegetative material; a model of diffusion of different varieties through farmer-to-farmer distribution; and a dynamic atlas.
- There is a sense of urgency to disease control, since the response community is running out of new varieties to multiply.

The four next steps agreed upon at the workshop to control disease spread include:

1. Prevention: current responses are more reactive instead of preventive. There is a need to establish a corridor to replace varieties and prevent the disease from spreading.
2. Early warning: additional research is needed, and there is a need to promote a cross-border mechanism for disease control and surveillance.
3. Coordination: a coordination committee in countries throughout the region is needed. FAO is leading this process, but significant organizational buy-in is needed.
4. Certification: minimum quality standards for new vegetative materials are needed, which does not currently exist. FAO is working to develop minimum standards.

In response to questions, Cyril Ferrand clarified:

- Cassava mosaic disease does not make the cassava produce toxic. It attacks the leaves, which limits photosynthesis and reduces yields.
- Cassava brown streak disease makes the roots bitter and inedible.
- There is currently no mechanism in place for coordinated early warning and surveillance. Response implementers also need to carefully monitor whether one disease is being spread in trying to prevent the spread of the other.
- Improved sanitation practices can help disease spread, but not enough is known yet about the brown streak disease and the vector that carries it, which makes the disease difficult to monitor.

Agenda 3: Overview and results of the Regional IPC Technical Workshop

Presented by John Anderson (FAO REOA)

John Anderson presented an overview of the Regional IPC Technical Workshop held in Nairobi from September 23 to 26. The workshop was the culminating analytical workshop of the Regional IPC Project ongoing in the region since mid-2007, and included participants from 11 countries in the region and the regional level.

The objectives of the workshop were to a) develop a prototype IPC regional map; b) support regional coordination and sharing of food security information; and c) strengthen capacity in food security analysis and explore IPC technical issues. All three objectives were accomplished through technical presentations and discussions, regional cross-border analytical discussions, and analytical work done in country break-out groups.

The next steps moving forward include:

- The provisional country analyses conducted at the workshop will be discussed and refined at the country level
- Food security practitioners will focus on continuing cross-border discussions through different venues
- The workshop outputs will be distributed to the FSNWG, which will include the full workshop proceedings and the provisional workshop map
- A regional lessons-learning workshop will be held in mid-November to document lessons learned and best practices established to support future IPC activities
- Additional funding is expected to enable continued support for IPC activities and further development in the region

Through questions and discussion, the following points were raised and clarified:

- Nutrition data is used heavily in the IPC analysis. It was also discussed significantly at the workshop related to the technical issue of deciding what proportion of the population is needed to be in a particular phase of food insecurity to classify the entire area as that phase. Nutrition is one of the only indicators with actual population thresholds and thus is significantly used in making the phase classification; the goal is to establish thresholds for other indicators that are as useful.
- Population density is considered in the analysis in terms of both depth and magnitude. The phase shown for a particular area represents the most severe phase faced by any segment of the population, but the proportion of people in different phases and total number of people in crisis phases are both communicated through the call-out boxes on the map.
- The Somalia map currently included shows the food insecurity of the rural population only, not the combined urban and rural, as was discussed at the workshop.

Agenda 4: Overview and results of the Regional Workshop on Dryland Farming Practices

Presented by Cyril Ferrand (FAO REOA)

Cyril Ferrand presented an overview of the Regional Workshop on Dryland Farming Practices, held in Nairobi October 6 and 7. This workshop is part of an overall call within the agricultural response community for more regular technical meetings on agricultural issues.

The workshop consisted of technical presentations on improving dryland farming practices, which are particularly important given the prevalence of dryland areas throughout sub-Saharan Africa; their prominence in providing livelihood for many of the vulnerable rural poor; the increasing pressure and degradability of such land resources; international soaring food prices; and more frequent extreme weather events associated with increasing climate variability.

The workshop noted the importance of better understanding livelihood transition and adaptation to achieve more sustainable livelihoods, and to focus on strengthening coping and livelihood strategies of farmers that rely on drylands for their livelihood.

There is an ongoing consultation led by a steering group consisting of Coopi, Greentree, IUCN, IIRR, FAO, and the CGIAR Alliance/ICRISAT as an observer. The objectives of the group are to establish:

- An agreed upon analysis of key problems facing farmers in arid regions
- An agreed upon analysis of key problems facing farmers in complex emergency contexts
- A documented synthesis of farming practices with positive impact on productions in arid land
- A roadmap to develop a joint regional program

This workshop contributed to these objectives, identifying reducing crop failure risk; increasing sustainability; reducing post-harvest losses; and supporting the service-provision sector as key topics. By the end of January, this process of identifying key problems and practices related to dryland farming will be finished, and a programmatic approach should be fully laid out.

Through discussion, the following points were raised and clarified:

- Shapefiles with metadata area available for the geographic data shown in the presentation about farming areas, although the data sets are global and the detail is not too great.
- Property rights, communal land rights, resource conflicts, and the interaction between agriculturalists and pastoralists were acknowledged by the workshop as important issues, and further coordination with pastoral activities will occur moving forward.
- USAID is moving forward with programmatic opportunities in dryland areas, and there should be overlap between the two initiatives.
- Significant work has been done in Mali on this issue, especially regarding resource issues and reducing the risk of crop failure. The work in this region will be linked to that work, specifically through common networks of organizations operating in the thematic area in the different regions.

Agenda 5: Brief update on the food security situation in the Horn of Africa

Presented by Suleiman Mohamed (FEWS NET)

Suleiman Mohamed presented a brief presentation to give an update and refresher on the current food security situation in the Horn of Africa. The main regional points included:

- Below-average 2008 harvests and pasture regeneration due to drought and conflict continue to cause food insecurity
- Food and fuel prices remain high and increasing
- The hunger season is beginning in many areas
- The October to December rainy season is beginning. The forecast for the season is mixed; the COF forecast indicates an increased likelihood of below-normal rainfall in the main pastoral areas
- PPR continues to affect the pastoral livelihood, and some climatic conditions suggest the possibility of risk of Rift Valley Fever outbreak
- Malnutrition levels remain very critical in parts of the region and continue to rapidly deteriorate in others
- More than 17 million in the Greater Horn of Africa urgently need emergency assistance, including 3 million children
- 15 to 18 million pastoralists in the region face precarious food security due to the multiple shocks

A question was raised about the indicators used for livestock mortality. Unfortunately, a good indicator for livestock death throughout the region does not exist. However, local cases of livestock death and other anecdotal evidence suggest that the situation is bad, specifically in the Horn. Better indicators of these conditions are needed, and this is an important area for analysts to focus on; even assessments on livestock body conditions and milk production would be helpful.