

Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM)

Meeting of the Thematic Working Group on Food Security

Food Security Coordination Meeting

Date: 22nd May 2013

Venue: FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa,

Agencies attended: ESCWA, WFP, UNDP, UN OCHA, UNFPA, and FAO

Minutes of the Meeting

1. Opening of the Meeting

The regional thematic meeting was officially opened by, Mr. Abdessalam OuldAhmed the FAO Assistant Direct General & Regional Representative for the Near East and North Africa. In his opening statement the ADG welcomed participants and highlighted the role of UN and NGOs in advising and supporting countries on food security and nutrition policies and programs. The ADG also highlighted the variations within the countries in the Near East and North Africa Region in terms of their natural, human resources and economic development, although they face common challenges in agriculture and food security. Some of the limiting factors include dry land environment with limited and fragile natural resource base, particularly water, high population growth and frequent incidence of natural disasters (drought, desertification, desert locust, floods), aggravated by the impact of climate change, continue to push a significant number of the rural population into a state of food insecurity.

He also indicated the need to use the regional thematic platform to fill up the gaps on food security issues. Thus, emphasizing the link between regional processes and regional bodies for common agendas which could include knowledge products, as well as post-2015 Sustainable Development goals.

2. Latest on food production and food prices in the region (FAO)

Mr. Mohamed Aw-Dahir, the FAO Regional Food Systems Economist, who is the convener of the Thematic Working Group on Food Security meeting provided a presentation, where he noted that the overall food security situation continues to be impacted by the lingering effect of the political and social transition process in the region, as well as continued conflicts and civil insecurity in many parts of the region. For instance, in Syria 4 million people are food insecure, while the crisis continues to have a wider effect on the neighboring countries.

At the global level, cereal production has been forecasted to increase by 6% from last year's production, due to an increase in crop planting and recovery of yield in some drought affected areas. Within the region, good harvest in Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Tunisia and Iran are expected to partly offset declines in Iraq, and Morocco. In Egypt, the 2013 wheat crop is officially forecast to reach a record 9.4 million tonnes. However, the overall import requirements in the region are still expected to remain high. During the discussion, the role of food subsidies and its effect on malnutrition and obesity was emphasized as crucial areas that need to be addressed. At a consumer level, the increase in prices of fruit, pulses, vegetables, meat and dairy products is expensive and thus making them less affordable, hence resulting in an unbalanced diet and malnutrition. High-energy foods are increasingly being consumed by low-income groups, at the expense of foods with important micronutrients. Coinciding with economic growth in the region is also a high rate of stunting of growth in some countries, which is extremely worrying. Without underestimating the importance of staples, poor segments of the population are having very low diversity

diets, lacking in nutrition. In Egypt for instance, calorie intake is about 4000cal/person/day. However, the level of stunting is equal to that occurring in Sub-Saharan Africa. The participants agreed the need to go beyond the staples and take a holistic approach to address the impact of an unbalanced diet, especially on women and children at a household level. Overtime, it has been observed that prices in local markets in the region have increased over and above global market price increases. The group agreed on the need for joint efforts to enhance monitoring food security in the region.

3. *Food Security Monitoring and Nutrition in WFP (WFP)*

WFP's monitoring of food security is currently focusing on (i) food security/nutrition situation and whether it is improving or deteriorating (ii) what are the driving factors of the change (iii) which groups are mostly affected (iv) what are potential future risks. It was noted that, improving monitoring and evaluation in the region will help to better understand the situation. During the discussion, information sharing was raised as among the factors to be improved. There is currently a food commodity database that can be used for timely decision making, by automating an early warning indicator, it is available online (<http://foodprices.vam.wfp.org>). This can be used for early warning purposes, to give an alert before a price crisis.

On the Syrian crisis WFP continues to provide food and vouchers to support Syrian refugees in host communities throughout Lebanon, Jordan and the poorest areas of Egypt. The WFP and UNHCR provides support to refugees accommodated in refugee camps in Iraq and Jordan, through local and international NGOs and in Turkey through the Turkish Red Crescent.

In February of 2012, the WFP's Executive board approved the nutrition policy, which was explained during this meeting. The WFP's Nutrition Policy focuses on 5 pillars: prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition, prevention of stunting, addressing micronutrient deficiencies and ensuring that other interventions contribute to improved nutrition outcomes. The policy translates important program shifts: from treatment to prevention & treatment; from a focus on energy requirements to energy & micronutrients (through the right food at the right time approach); to special attention to the 1000 days (children 6-23 months and pregnant/lactating women); to further emphasis to ensure that other WFP interventions are nutrition-sensitive and to better analysis of diets and barriers to adequate dietary intake and follow-ups. The roll-out of the policy is underway through the regional bureaus and will use the following channels: national capacity building & partnerships; enhanced internal capacity (skills, processes & systems) through training and lessons learned; improved nutrition situation analysis; reliable and innovative product delivery mechanisms and improved monitoring and evaluation as well as through operational research.

4. *Arab SPATIAL (IFPRI)*

The Arab SPATIAL is a development and food security tool to be used in support of decision and policy making for a food-secure Arab world, covering the 22 member countries of the Arab League of Nations. The data is organized in categories of various indicators at national and sub-national levels. The participants were given a brief overview of the website and how data is displayed. The online tool provides credible information as well as the possibility to download data. Users can choose and build maps based on indicators they select. It was mentioned that country specific SPATIAL can be developed, for example in Iraq and Egypt where FAO, EU and GIZ are working together with countries. As a conclusion to the discussion, a request was put forward on the need to explore how the data can be shared in Arabic to make it more user-friendly. Participants informed the meeting of the need to update data with qualitative inputs, and also link SPATIAL with other online databases such as GIEWS. Validation of information as well as sensitivity of information was mentioned as a challenge.

5. *Humanitarian crisis and the ongoing responses in the Region (UNOCHA)*

The UNOCHA highlighted that the humanitarian situation in the region continues to be affected by factors of conflict and natural disasters. The participants were informed of the situation in Libya, Iran, Iraq, Yemen and Syria. In Libya, the government is working with UN agencies to resettle the 56, 544 IDP's. The government has limited the request to technical support only. In Yemen 45% of the population is food insecure and 431,000 people are IDPs. The total amount of Yemen's Humanitarian Response Plan is US\$716 M; 22 % higher than 2012 and only 27% is funded. In Syria, 4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. UN inter-agency humanitarian hubs are opened in Homs and Tartous. Other hubs are planned for Qamishly, Dar'a and Aleppo. CERF has allocated US\$20 million to the Syrian crisis. Its focus is on reaching areas and beneficiaries that have not been adequately accessed, including across lines of conflict.

On the impact of the Syrian crisis on the region, an overview of the impact on trade with neighboring countries was mentioned. Information from the FAO assessment looking at the impact of the crisis to food and agriculture in surrounding countries of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey highlighted the changes in the trade routes, as well as reduced quantity of trade. Further it was noted that the Syrian crisis has heavily affected food security in hosting countries, especially in small economies such as Jordan and Lebanon.

In Iran on the 9th and 16th April, two earthquakes measuring 6.3 and 7.8 on the Richter scale killed 36 people and injured 820 in Bushehr and Sistan-o-Balochestan provinces. A total of 177 villages were affected and, Iran Red Crescent provided 13,700 people with humanitarian aid. No international assistance was requested.

6. *Food security dynamic mapping tool (UNDP)*

Is an online presentation of a mapping tool that can be used to get an overview of specific countries against other countries. The data allows for comparison in areas covered under the MDGs, food security, migration etc. The data is updated and managed by the UNDP.

7. *Update on the status of the knowledge products on food security in the region (ESCWA) – Via video*

A suggestion was made by ESCWA, for the group to step up the level of engagement in the region to build momentum in providing advice to policy makers. One area is to collaboratively produce a knowledge product on *Food Security in the Arab World: From analysis to policy change*. The aim is not only to provide more recommendations, but rather the policy advice should offer a blueprint for implementing changes, backed up by necessary new evidence, and linked with clear goals. In addition, this would also build on and advance the analytical framework agreed on by Member States, called Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition. The methodology will include 50% of lessons learned, the papers will provide policy guidance and recommendations to Arab policy makers, and wherever possible, papers are to be authored by experts from two or more agencies or organizations. The publication will be implemented within the RCM Thematic Working Group for Food Security.

ESCWA shared its plan to update the 2009 document by WB, FAO and IFAD (*Improving food security in Arab countries*). The steering committee members include FAO, IFPRI, World Bank and ESCWA. It was also agreed that nutrition should be included in the document. Eight areas of intervention were outlined, which will be carried out as study papers, however agencies were requested to express interest in partnering on specific topics of choice and feedback will be shared within a week. It was agreed that this knowledge product would be aimed at influencing policy decision. In general, the meeting was in agreement to support the undertaking. Furthermore it was emphasized that the main reason for updating the document, were the driving issues that the region is facing in relation to the food security issues. The paper will cover demographics, urbanization, drivers of food consumption and nutrition. Other points will also

include trends in the region such as governance, subsidies, policies, budgets, dependence on imports, production losses and management of supplies. The group agreed that before publication, the document would go for peer review.

8. *Follow-up on RCM recommendation to merge FS -TWG and Climate change TWG*

The group agreed that merging two groups would not be ideal, as each group has its specific TOR. It was agreed that a mechanism for sharing information should be explored. The group recommended that the name of the Thematic Working Group should be changed to '**Thematic Working Group on Food Security and Nutrition**'.

9. *Wrap up/key messages of the meeting*

The chair of the meeting summarized the key messages of the TWG on Food Security to the forthcoming RCM as being: -

- To highlight the high malnutrition in the region, advocate for access to diversity of food at household level in the post MDG, its implication on maternal health, address nutrition with the right resources and including policy change. Address the double burden of nutrition.
- To look at the correlation of areas affecting food security e.g. conflict, diversity, governance and climate change in post MDG.
- Availability of food and its relevance as an indicator, other issues such as dependence on imports and its effect on other food items, such as vegetables.
- Provide support to countries and institutions on food security information systems, for analysis at a national level. Linking data, information to knowledge products developed in order to influence policy decision and fill in the gaps.
- The group should support contingency planning with regards to emergency and conflict in line with food security.
- Resource funding for humanitarian issues remains minimal, while the region continues to suffer from many conflict situations.
- The name of the group to be changed to Food Security and Nutrition –TWG.

Closing: - The meeting was adjourned and the UNDP offered to host the next meeting at their office in Cairo.

Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM)
Meeting of the Thematic Working Group on Food Security
Food Security Coordination Meeting
Cairo, Egypt, 22nd May 2013
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

UNDP

Mr. Marawan Abisamra
Governance Practice Leader
UNDP/RCC - RBAS
Cairo, Egypt
Tel: +2-02- 22561796 -756
Email: marawanabisamra@undp.org

Ms. Nathalie Milbach-Bouche
Poverty Practice Leader
UNDP Regional Center Cairo RBAS
Cairo, Egypt
Mobile:+ 2-01008185003
Email: nathalie.bouche@undp.org

ESCWA

Mr. Nadim Khouri
Deputy Executive Secretary
UN-ESCWA
Beirut, Lebanon
Tel: 961-1-978805
Fax: 961-1-981510
Email: khourin@un.org

Ms. Ivana Brnovic
UN-ESCWA
Beirut, Lebanon
Tel: 00961-3702947
Email: brnovic@un.org

Mr. Vito Intini
First Economic Affairs Officer
UN-ESCWA
Beirut, Lebanon Tel: +961-1-978618
Mobile:+ 961-71420477
Email: intini@un.org

WFP

Mr. Carlo Scaramella
Deputy Regional Director
World Food Programme
E-mail: carlo.scaramella@wfp.org

Ms. Michele Doura
Nutrition Programme Advisor
World Food Programme
Cairo, Egypt
Tel : +25281730 Ext: 2451
Mobile:+ 2-01017616387
Email: michele.doura@wfp.org

Ms. Gihan El-Hossiny
VAM Officer of Cairo Bureau
World Food Programme
Cairo, Egypt
Tel:+2-02-25281730-4 Ext :2442
Fax:+ 2-02-25281735
Mobile:+ 2-01023984825
Email: gehan.alhossiny@wfp.org

UNFPA

Mr. Mostafa Kharoufi
Programme Advisor
UNFPA Arab States Regional Office
Cairo, Egypt
Tel: +2-02-2277067040 – 25174511
Fax: +2-02-25174434
Mobile: +2 -01018358743
E-mail: mkharoufi@unfpa.org

OCHA

Mr. Zaki Othman
Humanitarian Affairs Officer
OCHA Regional Office
Cairo, Egypt
Mobile: +2-01066650626
E-mail: othman@un.org

IFPRI

Ms. Perihan Al Riffai
Sr. Research Analyst
IFPRI
Tel: +2-02-28626469
Email: p.al-riffai@cgiak.org

Mr. Clemens Breisinger
Research Fellow
IFPRI
Tel: +2-02-28624638
Email: c.breisinger@cgiar.org

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS, POLIS

Mr. Ray Bush
Professor
University of Leeds, Polis
London, Great Britain
Tel: +447753985571
E-mail: r.c.bush@leeds.ac.uk

FAO/RNE

Mr. Abdessalam OuldAhmed
Assistant Direct General & Regional
Representative for the Near East
FAO/RNE
Cairo, Egypt
Tel: +2-02-33316000
Fax: +2-02-37495981
E-mail: RNE-ADG@fao.org

Mr. Moujahed Achouri
Deputy Regional Representative/ FAO
Representative in Egypt
Cairo, Egypt
Tel: +2-02-33316000
Fax: +2-02-37495981
E-mail: Moujahed.Achouri@fao.org

Mr. Nasredin Elamin
Senior Policy Officer
FAO/RNE
Cairo, Egypt
Tel: +2-02-33316000
Fax: +2-02-37495981

E-mail: Nasredin.Elamin@fao.org

Mr. Mohamed AwDahir

Food Systems Economist

FAO/RNE

Cairo, Egypt

Tel: +2-02-33316000

Fax: +2-02-37495981

E-mail: Mohamed.AwDahir@fao.org

Ms. Fatima Hachem

Senior Nutrition and Consumer Protection Officer

FAO/RNE

Cairo, Egypt

Tel: +2-02-33316000

Fax: +2-02-37495981

E-mail: Fatima.Hachem@fao.org

Mr. Dost Muhammad

Regional Plant Production Officer

FAO/RNE

Cairo, Egypt

Tel: +2-02-33316000

Fax: +2-02-37495981

Mobile ; +2-01001782408

Email: Dost.Muhammad@fao.org

Ms. Tanja Popovic

Emergency Officer

FAO/RNE

Cairo, Egypt

Tel:+2-02-33316000

Fax:+2- 02-37495981

Email: Tanja.Popovic@fao.org

Ms. Irene Omondi

Programme Officer

FAO/RNE

Cairo, Egypt

Tel: +2-02-33316000

Fax: +2-02-37495981

E-mail: Irene.Omondi@fao.org

Mr. Panos Konandreas

FAO Consultant

FAO/RNE

Geneva, Switzerland

Tel : +41-797405869

Email: pkonandreas@yahoo.com

Ms. Lori Curtis

FAO Consultant

FAO/RNE

Cairo, Egypt

Tel: +2-02-33316000

Fax: +2-02-37495981

E-mail: Lori.Curtis@fao.org

Mr. Perri PirroThomaso

Policy Officer

FAO/ SNG

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Tel: +971-24493248

Email: PirroTomaso.Perri@fao.org