

**ASSURING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN AFRICA BY 2020:
Prioritizing Action, Strengthening Actors, and Facilitating Partnerships**
April 1–3, 2004, Kampala, Uganda

SUMMARY NOTE

Parallel Session: **Implementing Actions in Key Areas: Building Human Capacity**

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INTRODUCTION

The CTA's current approach to food security and nutrition has been heavily influenced by recent advances in the analysis of famine (the most extreme form of food insecurity), which recognize that they are also social phenomena. It may seem somewhat pedantic to start with definitional problems but too narrow a definition as occurred in the past rules out solutions by ignoring one or more dimensions of possible intervention whereas too wide a definition leaves us confronted with problems of operational manageability. The definition of food security now requires us to go beyond availability and geography and to take account of influences, which had hitherto been seen, as tangential. As a consequence attention, is being paid to social forces and the role they play in exposing the resource poor and the institutionally disadvantaged to the risk of malnutrition and food insecurity.

WHAT DOES NOT WORK

It is widely assumed, erroneously, that since the work of Sen et al. most problems of definition, analysis and scope have been resolved. However, recent work undertaken for the FAO found that national analyses, as reflected in 25 Common Country Assessment (CCA) reports and 50 PRSPs, were deficient on a variety of fundamental fronts. On the basis of that work it can be concluded that measures aimed at addressing food security will fail if the analysis on which it is based, like the cases studies, is partial (WUR 2003). CTA's own findings support much of their conclusions. More specifically, it can be argued that measures will not be effective if they:

- are not underpinned by the identification of poverty-specific groups;
- do not identify the causes & extent of insecurity and vulnerability;
- do not take proper account of institutional capacity and its key role;
- do not provide for a meaningful degree of participation by 'interested' parties;
- priority setting is flawed; and
- fail to take account of policies with strategic influences on F&N security, e.g. impact of the suppression of traditional plant varieties; WTO/trade policies.

The study also pointed to another important cause of ineffectual measures, namely the frequent failure to adhere to the priorities yielded by the analysis. At the same time, the identification of 'at risk' and interested parties depends on the collection and analysis of data, appropriately stratified and dis-aggregated. Such analysis should in turn highlight the need for appropriate indicators. The necessary data is, however, often not available (WDR 1997 and 1998).

The nutritional status of the young in particular, and food security in general, are dependent on the situation of women. This importance is attributable to women's role in the traditional gender division of labor in Africa (child rearing, transport of water and fuel-wood, allocation of food, etc). That workload is compounded by the impact of HIV/AIDS on the quantity and nature of the physical labor they are forced to undertake on farms. Improving this situation requires direct policies that directly address the rural health services, water utilities/infrastructure provision as well as on-farm food processing and mechanization.

Frequently however, it is easier to implement, if not, fashion policies within a single sector or area of administrative competence. This temptation is encouraged by the preference for wide sector programs by donors. Failure to implement policies consistent with analysis is a guarantee of failure but the additional issue of the ability of uneducated women, or of those especially at risk and disadvantaged, to benefit from attention may be very limited.

The same dilemma is posed by the call for participatory approaches. The right to participate ought to be supported by the ability to contribute meaningfully to decision-making. Resolving this dilemma is the purview of capacity building. All

of these issues have therefore a capacity development dimension. Thus, capacity-building will need to take several forms including addressing the needs of those such as women and the youths, who constitute structurally constrained rural households or those who may be handicapped by being resource poor, for example.

Distribution and marketing are old culprits in the co-existence of feast and famine within Africa’s borders and subregions. Marketing is now being recognized as similarly culpable in the context of poor nutrition among the higher income groups in the same manner that poor female education is associated with malnutrition among the poor. This problem, in so far as it is associated most prominently with the power of TNCs, has been described as ‘forming a second regulatory challenge still to be addressed’ (Without Waiting). Meeting the regulatory challenge is also (partly) a matter of capacity development. This issue also highlights the fact that the different players have different interests and objectives. The prayer of 18th century English farmers was said to be ‘a wet harvest and a bloody war’!! This needs to be borne in mind.

All of the foregoing also have implications for information and information communication management, one of the CTA’s niches.

THE CTA MISSION UNDER COTONOU

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) seeks to pursue its mission, set out in the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement under which it operates, by way of three programs premised on the construction of an ACP agricultural knowledge network.

Mission: Support ACP rural and agricultural development by the provision of information and to develop the ICM capacity of ACP organizations and actors.

Programs: The mission has been seen as requiring the Centre to work closely with the civil society as well as state and local government organizations and more particularly with the intention of having the following as beneficiaries and or partners: **farmers associations, women ad youth organizations, cooperatives, extension services, research institutes, commodity producers and exporters, input suppliers, policymakers, etc.**

The programs employ three means:

1. the provision of information products and services in a variety of forms aimed at raising awareness;
2. the development of a variety of platforms for communication to intensify contacts and facilitate information exchange and the development of ideas via regional and national networks, face to face exchanges, study visits, etc.; and
3. strengthening partner capacity, developing partnerships, and participative processes, including raising awareness of the import of science and technology in agricultural development and encouraging the development of appropriate science and technology cum y/innovation policies.

In looking at food security the Centre has, in fashioning its projects, already devoted much attention to seeking a deeper understanding of the structural causes of poverty and identifying the vulnerable. Alongside this has been an attempt to help fashion appropriate means of supporting the various categories of players as well as enabling them and determining appropriate systems for meeting their information needs.

WHAT IS NEEDED?

Recent analysis of food and nutrition security yielded a number of recommendations (WUR 2003), which have implications regarding approach, namely:

- the need for specific and targeted measures which suggests multi-level (individual, farm-firm, local community, national, etc.) measures;
- the need for improved data collection with special attention to geographical, temporal, and social disaggregation. This broader definition points to the need for a multi-disciplinary approach;
- the need to take account of a wider range of policies which can be shown to impinge on nutrition and health points to multisectoral approaches; and
- the involvement of more and informed actors with different goals. This means that attention needs to be paid to institutional dimension including process, decision-making and rules.

An understanding of how the Centre has tried to marry capacity building to the ICM perspective is provided below. First, the approach could be tiered according to whether it addresses individual and where the latter refers to the rules and processes as well as organizations.

ICM for CAPACITY BUILDING AND FOOD SECURITY	
1. INDIVIDUAL	a. Awareness raising
	b. Skill-building
	c. Utilizing platforms for dialogue
2. INSTITUTIONAL	a. Networking & platforms for exchange of experience & ideas
	b. Institution building

In this framework CTA has provide support to ACP actors and organisations as shown below.

CTA INTERVENTIONS

1. INDIVIDUAL		
1a. Awareness Raising	SPORE Articles with issues on:	Direct food security & other related activities
		Seed security for small holders
		Intensification & optimization of agricultural production
	Supporting publications on food security prepared by ACP & EU partners	
	ICT UPDATE (CTA PORTAL)	Developments in ICT & their potential wrt food security
AGRICTA	Regional agricultural trade	
1b. Building skills		
Training Courses & Projects	Food Security Links	
Market Information Systems Analysis (MIS)	Facilitating the establishment and understanding of real and virtual commodity markets (local, national and international). Developing relationships with food and early warning systems	
Production of Extension Materials	Improvement in productivity and production	
Production of Rural Radio Programs		
Question & Answer Services		
Scientific Writing		
Biometry		
Scientific Data Management		
ICT Sensitization/Web Management		
Public Awareness for Farmers' Associations	Institutional promotion and advocacy for more prominent profile of the agricultural sector	
Annual Report Writing/Interviewing		
Other Activities/Local Partnerships		
Management of Seed Banks	Enhancing production	

Platforms for dialogue facilitate both individuals and institutions and are provided under the following CTA programmes:

1c. PLATFORMS FOR DIALOGUE

Networks supported:

- National Partnerships
- Local, regional and horizontal networks
- Agricultural policy networks

2a. INDIVIDUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL

PLATFORMS FOR DIALOGUE	Seminars, workshops and study visits – (THEMES):
	food insecurity in ACP countries: policy and programme interventions affecting vulnerable groups
	sustaining soil productivity in intensive agriculture
	role of smallholder farmers in seed production systems
	economic role of women in agricultural and rural development:
	promoting income generation activities

2a. INDIVIDUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL

PLATFORMS FOR DIALOGUE	Seminars, workshops and study visits – (THEMES):
	economic role of women in agricultural and rural development: revisiting the legal environment
	reducing poverty through agricultural sector strategies in eastern and southern Africa
	Sustainable agro-pisciculture systems in ACP countries
	ICT development
	Trade and MIS

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

2b. The most direct means of enhancing food security is to establish specialised information systems. The Centre can and does extensively support such bodies as well as providing support to facilitate D-led science and innovation policies.

- Raising awareness of the importance of S&T/innovation in agricultural productivity and supporting policy-making on science and technology
- Facilitating the exchange of experience, provision of information on /and support to SPECIALISED INFORMATION SYSTEMS :
 - Early warning systems
 - MIS

CONCLUSION

The challenge of attaining the MD goal of food and nutritional security by the deadline is a very steep one for Africa and its collaborators. The chances of achieving them will be considerably improved with the aid of systematic and comprehensive/integrated approaches to capacity development of the rural sector and related agricultural actors. All the institutions charged with this task need to constantly review the evolving scenario in order to ensure that their interventions are relevant and effective. ICM can play a major role in this regard by assisting in the awareness raising, planning, facilitating the deepening of social capital etc. A number of institutions at the national and regional levels as well as the AU need to cooperate in this endeavour. Under its mandate the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation, (CTA) is ideally placed to support the efforts of African states to pursue such matters. It has already established for itself niches in the spheres which are crucial in both ICM and capacity building. It will work with African states and civil society and farmers organisations, in particular, to approach the challenge in an imaginative, effective and expeditious manner.

REFERENCE

WUR (2003) Focus on food insecurity and vulnerability. A review of the UN system and Common Country Assessments and World Bank Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. Report of the FIVIMS/CCA Integration Project. FAO. Rome.
World Development Reports 1997 and 1998
CTA Annual Reports (2000-2003)

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