

Food security

Food security is the economic and physical access, now and in the future, to sufficient locally appropriate, safe and nutritious food.

Any intervention to meet food security needs should:

- consider how different groups among the affected populations normally obtain and use food, and the coping strategies used during shortages
- consider short-term (acute) and longer-term (chronic) food insecurity issues
- avoid negative effects on local economy, social networks, livelihoods, environment
- Consider the role of markets to ensure access to food.

What affects food security?

Availability	Access	Utilisation
<p>Natural disaster - affects production and harvests e.g. drought, pest and disease outbreaks, floods</p> <p>Conflict - affects food importation, causes population movements, interferes with harvest and planting seasons</p> <p>Agricultural labour - affected by HIV/AIDS, migration, temporary displacement etc.</p> <p>Agricultural inputs - insufficient or inadequate seed, fertiliser, tools, loss of productive land etc.</p>	<p>Physical barriers - e.g. insecurity, poor roads or lack of transport, ill health, disability, older population</p> <p>Market price - lack of functioning markets, increasing food prices or fall in income from sale of other goods affects ability to buy or exchange goods or services for food</p> <p>Land - people have limited or no access to land to grow food</p> <p>Income - unemployment or rising costs affect household income levels</p>	<p>Ill health - many diseases, e.g. HIV/AIDS, affect absorption of nutrients so improved dietary requirements are needed</p> <p>Food storage and preparation - can affect the quality and nutritional value of food</p> <p>Culture, norms, beliefs - can affect the use and acceptance of some foods and who has access to certain foods</p> <p>Lack of potable water - resulting in diarrhoea and loss of nutrients</p>

Faced with these challenges, people's coping strategies include:

- Reduce the amount, diversity and frequency of food eaten
- Gather wild food (fruits, roots etc.) and consume seeds and immature produce
- Reduce expenditure on non-essential and non-food items
- Borrow money or sell other productive assets and services, including livestock
- Sell or hire out productive land, tools, or livestock to others
- Send family members out to waged employment, including children

Assessing food security

To understand the severity of the situation, and the reasons, consider:

- what the immediate and underlying causes are and the impact on people
- how widespread and severe food insecurity is and is it temporary or not
- how available are resources e.g. land, labour, knowledge
- who can access these resources and how
- what 'normal' food security situation is; how it has changed over time: why.

See also 'Needs Assessments' and 'Nutrition' pages and Sphere Handbook.



Photo: Irin News

Food security interventions include:

- Food aid
- Institutional and school feeding programmes
- Food or cash transfer schemes
- Home based care and food aid for people living with HIV/AIDS
- Support to boost agricultural production e.g. irrigation, seeds, production techniques
- Livestock support programmes
- Microfinance
- Vocational training and education
- Market mapping, analysis and development and value chain development

Global Food Security Cluster is co-led by FAO and WFP:
<http://foodsecuritycluster.net>

Additional resources on All In Diary web site:

Food Security and nutrition in emergencies © 2016 IFRC/J Hopkins Key Recommendation for improving nutrition through agriculture and food systems, UN Steering Committee on Nutrition, 2015
 Developing Response Analysis Framework, © FAO, 2011

Web links for further information

<http://www.fao.org/emergencies/resources/tools/en/>
<http://www.enonline.net/resources/search?tag=17>
<http://www.wfp.org/food-security>
www.fsnetnetwork.org