Regional Policy Dialogue
on
Early Warning Early Action Mechanisms for the Prevention of Food Crises
Accra, Ghana
5 September 2019
10:30 am – 1:00 pm
Meeting room 4 (room 218), Accra International Conference Centre

Background

The 2019 Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) found that more than 113 million people across 53 countries experienced acute hunger in 2018. The main drivers of this include conflict and insecurity, climate shocks, and economic shocks. To navigate these increasingly complex, interlinked causes of food crises, it is important that governments and other stakeholders have timely, high-quality country-level information to increase the resilience of food systems and cope with future crises.

Currently, the standard for identifying food crises and their drivers is based on the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) and the Cadre Harmonisé (CH) and measures acute food insecurity using on the ground quantitative and qualitative information. It serves to inform the early warning systems for food crisis of FAO, WFP, CILSS and several other organizations as well as governments which form part of the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC). The IPC/CH operates alongside other early warning tools, such as IFPRI’s excess price volatility tool and WFP’s Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM).

While the quality of such early warning systems has improved, there remain important information gaps that hamper timely responses to actual and potential food crises. The EC-funded Food Security Portal (FSP) and the Africa south of the Sahara Food Security Portal (FSP-SSA) seek to help improve the ability of governments to respond to and prevent food crises by bringing together policy-relevant tools and information in one place.

Much of West Africa’s population relies on rainfed agriculture. Continued climate variability and change could intensify sea level rise in coastal areas, drought conditions in the Sahel, and excessive flooding during the rainy season. Political instability and conflict also contribute to food insecurity and humanitarian crises in the region. Much can be learned from international and regional agencies to promote early warning mechanisms and early action to ensure that food security needs are met in the region.

In order to achieve the broader goal of improving the availability of data and analysis, a better understanding of regional and country-level demands for policy support to address food crises is needed. To address this gap, this policy dialogue has been organized by the FSP will bring together key stakeholders in the region to share challenges, lessons learned, and potential solutions for building resilience to shocks and addressing food crises.
Objectives

The policy theme of the dialogue is addressing and preventing food crises, with special focus on the role of Early Warning Systems (EWS). Specific objectives include the following:

- Facilitate the exchange of experiences and views (challenges, successes, lessons) in the design and implementation of policies for addressing food insecurity and preventing/responding to food crisis in the region.
- Knowledge sharing about available EWS employed in the region, their current use, and challenges for improving them.
- Identify the technical and policy support required at the regional level to enhance the capacity of countries to produce and apply early warning information in order to strengthen resilience to shocks and preventing food crises.

Some key questions to be addressed at the FSP regional policy dialogue include:

- Is there a need to improve the current early warning, early action (EWEA) systems to prevent and address food crises? Would it be feasible and desirable to invest in real-time monitoring instruments that make use of new digital technology, including satellite images and AI to identify food crisis risk factors?
- How are existing EWEA systems currently used in food crisis-affected countries? Are they serving to provide timely and adequate responses?
- Is there a need to tailor the international EWEA systems to country needs? If so how and what should donors and international organizations do? How could the Food Security Portal support such efforts?

Organization

The regional dialogue will take place as an invitation-only event during the African Green Revolution Forum 2019 (AGRF) on September 5, 2019 in Accra, Ghana at meeting room 4 (room 218) of the Accra International Conference Centre. The AGRF brings together key stakeholders involved in African agriculture to discuss and commit to programs, investments, and policies designed to achieve inclusive and sustainable agricultural transformation in the continent. With this year’s thematic focus on “Leveraging Digital Transformation to Drive Sustainable Food Systems in Africa,” the AGRF 2019 provides a highly suitable venue for this regional dialogue, which will contribute to recommendations for addressing the most pressing needs/challenges in analyzing and predicting food crises and the development of FSP tools, including the Excessive Food Price Variability tool, the Early Warning Hub, and other policy analysis tools.

The 2.5-hour event (10:30am – 1:00pm, September 5, 2019) will include a short introduction to FSP’s hub for early warning systems and to the work of the Global Network Against Food Crises (20 minutes), followed by 5-10 minute presentations by key stakeholders from the region on the importance and current relevance of existing EWEA systems for their national contexts and needs for improvement. The presentations will be followed by a moderated roundtable discussion. The policy dialogue will conclude with a 10-minute wrap-up/summary session.

Individuals attending this event may be audio taped, videotaped, or photographed during the course of the event, and by attending grant permission for their likenesses and the content of their comments, if any, to be broadcast, webcast, published, or otherwise reported or recorded.