

Appendix 2. Research Questions

RCSA Food Security Strategic Objective: Proposed Research Questions

A. The following lines of inquiry and related questions are proposed by the Food Security Strategic Option Team to guide preparation of a draft “Technical Analysis for a Proposed Food Security Strategic Option” report for RCSA.

They are intended to guide elaboration on issues related to three thematic lines of inquiry:

1. What is the state of food insecurity and of rural livelihood security in the Southern Africa Region and who are the food insecure? What are principal causes, and recent trends in food insecurity in the region? Is there a major food crisis developing in the region?
2. What is being done, has been done, and should be done (in agriculture/agribusiness, livelihood strengthening and diversification, health and nutrition, improving governance, gender-specific activities, risk and vulnerability reduction and better monitoring and measuring of development program effectiveness) to improve livelihood security and reduce the numbers of food insecure?
3. For RCSO: What are the tasks needing to be undertaken to strengthen rural livelihood security and improve food security in the region that fall within the natural purview of the regional office and its 2004-2010 Strategic Plan?

B. The areas of proposed inquiry within each of these themes are:

1. *What is the state of food insecurity and of rural livelihood security in the Southern Africa Region and who are the food insecure? What are principal causes, and recent trends in food insecurity in the region? Is there a major food crisis developing in the region?* The more detailed areas of inquiry may, possibly, include:

- Who and where are the food insecure poor in Southern Africa and what is known about trends in distribution, duration and intensity of chronic, episodic and acute food insecurity in the region and the causes of inadequate *availability* of food at the household, local (e.g. “district”), sub-regional, national and region-wide. The literature reviewed is likely to include data/information analysis relating to: i) food security assessments; ii) trends in agricultural and food production (absolute and per capita) and the determinants of those trends, iii) the nature and magnitude of food carry-over stocks (including issues of national and regional “strategic”

food reserves); iii) the magnitude, direction and variance in food and agricultural trade within the region and with the outside world and a synthesis of what are believed to be the causes of these trends; iv) issues related to local market performance and producer prices; v) food transport issues; vi) policy issues; and vii) the role of food aid within the region.

- Causes of impaired household-level *access*. In this category, the literature reviewed will discuss: i) reviews of livelihood systems (and trends therein); ii) determinates of poverty and household income and expenditure trends; iii) marketing issues that affect consumer food prices (including seasonality issues, i.e., “hungry seasons”); iv) allocative issues at local, community and household level; v) a synthesis of methodological problems relating to the collection and analysis of data relevant to access-type issues; vi) the impact of the “policy” environment of impaired access; and vii) the state of “safety nets,” mitigation, and coping/adaptation programs and strategies.
- Causes of impaired *utilization* (involving appropriateness of food consumed, issues of health and nutrition and health/nutrition knowledge and practice at the household level). In this category, the literature will deal with: i) the state of mal- and under-nutrition in the region and trends therein; ii) health issues (Note: the role of HIV/AIDS has an impact on all three—availability, access, utilization. The final report will probably have a separate section discussing the impact of HIV/AIDS on each); iii) the state of community-based maternal education/training in issues dealing with maternal and child health and the role of basic nutritional practices; iv) the adequacy of health (and nutrition) outreach.
- The state of thinking about the importance of “*risk*” and “*vulnerability*” in the food security equation. Recent analytical work related to food insecurity has increasingly been focused on either the “in” in food *in*security or the “*security*” side of the term “food security.” This is particularly relevant in situations where natural or human-caused “shocks” and emergencies cause rapid deterioration in the ability of households to retain adequate levels of food consumption, (i.e. Southern Africa). The issues, abstracted from the literature review to be summarized include: i) what are the principal food security “risk” factors in Southern Africa (e.g., increased likelihood of drought, climatologically-caused increased variance in food availability, conflict and its food security impact in the region); ii) what are the principal “vulnerability” factors (e.g., decreased effectiveness of traditional coping strategies, resilience and recover rates at the household and community level, changes in rates of household asset depletion).

The importance of a rural “livelihood security” strategic focus as a means of securing improved household food security. The literature review will focus on the relationships between livelihood and food security and

2. What is being done, has been done, and should be done (in agriculture/agribusiness, livelihood strengthening and diversification, health and nutrition, improving governance, gender-specific activities, risk and vulnerability reduction and better monitoring and measuring of development program effectiveness) to improve livelihood security and reduce the numbers of food insecure?

This will at the same time be the most difficult and, possibly, the most useful of the thematic lines of inquiry in the report. The proposed specific areas of possible inquiry include:

- What is the priority of the goal of improving food security in guiding government development policies in the region, donor resource allocation, and evaluation of program effectiveness?
- What, specifically, are the food security interventions in relevant sub-sectors of the economy, disaster mitigation and preparedness, in public policy, and in specific social service areas, and how closely tied are they to the real determinants of household food insecurity in the region?
- What is known about the overall effectiveness of these development programs in addressing the causes of food insecurity and their actual relationships to changes in food security status? Note: the issue of adequacy of linking hypotheses, data gathering methods, and statistical validity of indicators of progress will be addressed here.
- What is being thought about regarding performance in improving food security status in the region over the next several years? Is there any consensus about what needs to be accomplished—and at what level—if acceptable and sustainable levels of food security is the objective?

3. For RCSO: What are the tasks needing to be undertaken to strengthen rural livelihood security and improve food security in the region that fall within the natural purview of the regional office and its 2004-2010 Strategic Plan?

This, in effect, will be in the section of our team's report that provides guidance specifically to RCSO. The issues and questions to be investigated and summarized in the body of the Report include:

- What are the food security issues in the region that are best attuned to regional—as opposed to national or sub-national—responses? What is the role of a regional strategy as an overlay to country strategies?
- What are the regional organizations that impact food security and what do they do, what should they do to help set the enabling environment for improved household food security among poor rural and urban Southern African citizens?
- Is there a role for strengthened regional centers of excellence in: i) improved data gathering and analysis, ii) technical issues related to improved availability, access utilization and risk reduction—all specific to Southern Africa's particular context; iii) a food security training center for national officials and staffs of local NGOs (attempting to get all the players on the same “food security page”).
- Given all the above: what should RCSO—a regional organization with a proposed strategic plan focused on areas of regional concern –do, specifically to combat the nexus of causality creating and perpetuating high levels of household food insecurity in the region?