1. Definition of Food Security

According to the 1996 World Food Summit, Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. According to the EC Food Security Policy food security involves three dimensions:

- **Availability of food at regional and national levels:** Availability relates to the supply of food at the national level from production, stocks and imports. The functioning of markets and transport systems also affects availability;
- **Access to food by households:** Lack of access to food at the household level, whether transitory or chronic, is basically an outcome of poverty. It is therefore necessary to consider food security in the broader context of poverty reduction strategies;
- **Food use and nutritional adequacy at individual level:** This dimension is linked to the adequacy of food intake which such as: intra-household distribution of food, mother-child feeding practices, food preparation, food quality and safety.

An external thematic evaluation in 2004 confirmed the validity and value added of the EC Food Security policy framework that therefore applies to the next programming cycle of EC external assistance.

2. Taking Food Security into account in the analysis of the country situation

Food Security is multi-dimensional and therefore requires that the following elements are taken into account:

- **Demographic/Poverty data:** such as poverty indicators, trends and dynamics, urban and rural, inequality of income distribution;
- **Social assets:** socio-economic patterns, gender, civil society and private sector, social services and safety nets etc;
- **Macroeconomic data and Institutional environment:** Local political/administrative structures, devolution of power, taxation, import-export, markets etc;
- **Financial assets:** financial services, farm and non-farm incomes, wages, remittances etc;
- **Physical assets:** infrastructure, including energy and water; machinery and technology etc;
- **Natural assets:** crop land, fish stocks, pastures, forests; land tenure; sustainable use etc;
- **Vulnerability/risks and crisis management:** climatic instability and natural disasters, seasonality of hunger, incidence of HIV/AIDS and endemic/enzootic/zoonotic diseases; food crisis management capability (institutions, mechanisms), impacts of price variation and fluctuation of food and cash crops as well as agricultural inputs.

3. Taking Food Security into account in the Community response strategy

Considering that in developing countries over 900 million people are currently undernourished, a figure still on the increase particularly after 2008 food and financial crises, food security must remain high on the international agenda. The “EU Consensus on Development”, reaffirming the EU commitments to poverty eradication and MDGs,
explicitly indicates Food Security as a priority field of Community intervention. The new EU Strategic Partnership with Africa focuses in particular on poverty reduction and pro-poor growth, by boosting agriculture to raise rural income and ensuring food security.

The EC response strategy will have to be based on i) the **situation analysis and lessons learnt**; ii) the **ensuing priorities**; iii) **other donors’ support** and iv) on the EC comparative advantage and experience.

To implement the EC food security strategy in a given country or region, a set of geographic, humanitarian and thematic instruments might be used depending on circumstances. As from 2007, the geographic instrument option will be the norm whenever an operational cooperation framework exists between the EC and a government. In its absence, or in particular situations of state fragility and instability, the new Food Security Thematic Programme will be able to operate in situations and transitions from crises to a more stable environment conducive to development. Humanitarian aid addressing food insecurity will be the option in acute crisis situations. Appropriate linking of relief, rehabilitation and development interventions (LRRD) must be considered.

- **If Food Security is chosen as a focal area of intervention**

National governments are primarily responsible for food security in their countries. Therefore, the EC food security policy puts a particular emphasis on the need to support national food security strategies and programmes, which are owned by stakeholders (with a particular focus on civil society and private sector, namely farmers’ organizations) and reflected in state budgets. Those strategies should be embedded in PRSPs and linked to Rural Development policies, given the prevalence of food insecurity in rural areas, but without forgetting urban poverty. The following key elements should be taken into account in devising the main axes of intervention:

1. **Food Availability:** Improvement of food production and increase in the productive capacity (investment, land access, inputs, credit…), improvement of import capacity and reduction of barriers to trade, intra-regional trade issues; **market infrastructure** (transport, storage and processing);
2. **Access to food:** Increase of the purchasing power of the poor and of **income generation** opportunities for food insecure populations; **diversification of livelihoods** into the non-farm sector, rural in particular; **safety nets** for vulnerable groups; **development of food markets**, i.e. better linking supply and demand;
3. **Food use and nutritional adequacy:** Legislative framework and capacity to control the quality of food (crops and livestock products) whether produced or imported; issues of **intra-household food distribution; health issues** (including access to water and sanitation); **improved nutrition** through food diversification and balancing of diet; existence and effectiveness of a national system (whether public or private) for targeted supplementary feeding; **(4) Prevention and management of food crises:** Establishment of a **food security information system** including an **early warning** system; existence of **food reserves** and insurance systems; **food aid** adequate targeting and management once needs have been properly assessed. The EC policy on food aid envisages its utilisation only for humanitarian purposes and its procurement should be preferably done at local and regional levels.

- **If Food Security is chosen as a non-focal area**

A non-focal FS intervention, with a limited financial envelope, could actually be designed as a **precursor to a future national strategy and sector approach**, as well as to **strengthen the food security focus of PRSPs**.
The multi-sector nature of FS allows for a broad range of complementarity/synergy options, depending on situations and the selected sectors/areas of concentration. As an example, the FS programme could complement social programmes by enhancing the focus on the poorest and most vulnerable groups (e.g. HIV/AIDS affected groups).

- **If Food Security is a cross-cutting issue**

Food security is an objective rather than a sector. In case there is no financial envelope available, it nevertheless needs to be taken into account in every area of intervention and/or macro-economic support. Specific food security indicators need to be included in case general budget support is chosen as aid modality. In the programming exercise, the choice of priorities for focal and non focal areas should be checked against the following questions: does the intervention envisaged strengthen food security overall? Are particularly vulnerable groups going to profit from it or will they be negatively affected?

4. Useful links for further reference

- Information on food security and relevant documentation in: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/theme/food_security/index_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/theme/food_security/index_en.htm)
- COM(2001)153 on Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development
- Links to political, social and economic areas relevant to food security within the respective fiches (e.g. health, education, water, energy, territorial development, agriculture, fisheries etc).

Links for information on other organisations

- **FAO and food security**
- **FIVIMS** - Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems
- **WFP home page**
- **WFP INTERFAIS** - International Food Aid Information System
- **IFAD** - International fund for agricultural development
- **IFPRI** - International food policy research institute
- **CONCORD** - European NGO confederation for relief and development

5. Indicators

The following three indicators relevant to poverty and food security are MDGs indicators adopted also by the Commission: proportion of population below 1 USD/day; prevalence of malnutrition among children under five (underweight, wasting, stunting). The proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption is to be added.