Main Findings

- All of the 16 planned sentinel sites were covered in February 2011.
- Data collection was carried out in mid-February 2011, which is considered to be the harvest season.
- Findings indicated that the overall food security situation has slightly deteriorated in rural areas compared to November 2010. The food security situation for refugees and IDPs has also deteriorated with the percentage of food secure households decreasing to 48 and 58 percent respectively. Nevertheless, the majority of the households remain food secure.
- The cost of the minimum healthy food basket (MHFB) in February 2011 was SDG 1.40/person/day, an increase of 12.7 percent compared to November 2010.
- Sorghum prices decreased at the beginning of 2011 leading to an improvement in the Terms of Trade (ToT) in favor of livestock owners.
- In urban areas, the most important income source was found to be salaried labour (28 percent), while in rural areas, waged labor remained the main income source (30 percent).
- Food consumption has improved in urban areas, where 100 percent currently have an acceptable food consumption score. In rural areas, there has been a slight increase in households with a poor (four percent) and borderline (eight percent) food consumption score compared to November 2010.
- The percentage of households who were forced to use high risk coping strategies has increased to 26 percent in urban areas and to 33 percent in rural areas.
- Two percent of children in rural areas and one percent of IDP children are severely malnourished. The situation for IDP children has deteriorated from November 2010 with 15 percent who are currently moderately malnourished.
- The percentage of households who received food assistance has decreased in February 2011 to 16 percent compared to 27 percent in November 2010.
1. FOOD SECURITY

The general food security situation was good in Kassala State in February. The situation has improved in urban areas compared to June and November 2010 as the percentage of those who were food secure has increased to 96 percent, and there were no households found to be severely food insecure.

In rural areas, however, the situation has deteriorated slightly from November 2010, but remained similar to July 2010. This was mainly attributed to the incompletion of the summer crop harvest. Households in refugee camps experienced a deterioration in food security levels, as the percentage of food secure households was only 48 percent, with an increase in the percentage of severely food insecure to 14 percent from 3 and 8 percent in November 2010 and June 2010. This was attributed to the termination of food assistance after November.

Furthermore, households in IDP camps have experienced a significant deterioration in the food security situation, and there has been a reduction in food secure households from 90 percent in November 2010 to 58 percent in February 2011. Eight percent of IDP households are severely food insecure. This is due to poor rainfall in these areas and long dry spells which have affected cereal production and pasture situation.

When assessing food security by location, results showed that all areas are situated above the lower threshold (food insecure) except a refugee camp in Hadalya which has deteriorated compared to the November 2010 Round. The situation has also deteriorated in Amdam and refugee camps in Shagrab. Highest scores were recorded in Wahid Arab and Halfa.

The food security indicator consists of the following: market situation and cost of minimum healthy food basket; income sources; expenditure; and food consumption.

Market situation and cost of minimum healthy food basket

Trading in Kassala market decreased remarkably in total quantities of cereals marketed during February 2011 compared to November 2011. This decrease in cereal trading volume was due to the incompletion of summer crop harvesting as well as the decrease in supplies from last year’s stocks. Furthermore, the Strategic Reserve has created expectations to price increases following their purchasing of surplus sorghum and thus opened up for exportation. Consequently, the size of wholesalers’ stock was negatively affected by a significant decrease of 81 percent in the size of cereal trading during February 2011 compared to November 2010. Based on interviews with traders in regards to marketing of cereals in Kassala market, it was found that increase in cereal prices and distance to the new market were the main challenges reported during this round. Sorghum prices in this market recorded a remarkable decrease at the beginning of 2011 due to the fact that it has coincided with the harvest season. Although the expected seasonal production was above average, sorghum prices continued to be above average and this was mainly linked to incompletion of harvest in many mechanized agricultural projects and to the entry of the Strategic Reserve as a buyer at a minimum price of SDG 70/bag. The significant decrease in sorghum prices has led to Terms of Trade (ToT) in favor of livestock owners. The cost of the minimum healthy food basket (MHF) in February 2011 was SDG 1.40/person/day, an increase of 12.7 percent compared to November 2010 (SDG 1.14/person/day). In urban areas, as many as 94 percent of the households can afford more than two baskets and all households can afford at least one basket. In rural areas, the situation has deteriorated compared to November 2010 but was similar to the situation of June 2010, with seven percent of the households unable to afford even one food basket.
In February 2011, the main income source in urban areas was salaried work which has increased significantly to 28 percent, and replaced wage labour as the most important income source (20 percent). One reason for this was the increased reliance on gold mining and gardening. The second most important income source was small-scale trading with 27 percent, a remarkable increase compared to November 2010 (16 percent). In rural areas, wage labor continues to be the main source of income (30 percent). Although this period was the harvest period, the percentage of cereal sale as income source was lower than in June 2010 and November 2010 due to incompletion of harvest.

**Expenditure**

Of the total household expenditure, 43 percent was spent on food commodities. This represented a slight improvement from November 2010 (44 percent) which can be attributed to the decrease of sorghum and animal product prices. Despite the decrease in sorghum prices, expenditure on cereals represented the highest food item expenditure (nine percent), slightly less than November 2010 (12 percent). This can be attributed to the increase of wheat prices.

For non-food items, the largest proportion was spent on health and debt (both eight percent), the latter might be attributed to payment of agricultural obligations. Expenditure on animal feed has increased from zero percent in November 2010 to three percent in February, mainly due to the increase in fodder prices.

Analysis of the situation by location showed that all locations were situated above the lower threshold and could afford one MHB. However, the situation had deteriorated in some locations, most notably in Shagrab and Hadalya camps, as well as in Amadam and Tahday compared to November 2010.
Food Consumption

Analysis of food consumption indicated that the majority of households had an acceptable food consumption score. The situation has improved in urban areas, and has slightly deteriorated in rural areas with 4 percent of the households having a poor food consumption score and 8 percent a borderline food consumption score. It was also found that 82 percent and 98 percent of households in rural and urban areas respectively depended on markets as their main source of sorghum. Analysis of food consumption score by location showed that all locations are above the highest threshold. The highest score was recorded in Halfa and the lowest in Hadalya.

2. Agriculture

In the 2010/2011 season, the northern areas were affected by poor rainfalls combined with long dry spells which affected the pasture and crop production in these parts of the state.

In mechanized farming areas in the southern part of the state, traditional areas and irrigated agriculture, rainfall levels were satisfactory.

Total sorghum cultivated area this season in the different sectors was 1.956 thousand feddans with an estimated production of 495,000 MT.

According to the sample, the average sorghum cultivated area by household in rural areas in the 2010/2011 season was 18 feddans, similar to the 2009/2010 season. In urban areas, the average was one feddan in both seasons. The average household production of sorghum in rural areas was 23 bags, however, it was only two bags in urban areas.
3. Coping Strategy Index

The Coping Strategies Index (CSI) is used to assess how households cope when they do not have enough food or do not have enough money to purchase food commodities. The higher CSI indicates a higher level of vulnerability. The CSI is classified into four categories: no need to use coping, low risk coping, medium risk coping and high risk coping.

In February 2011, there has been an increase in the percentage of households who were forced to engage in high risk coping strategies, with 26 percent in urban areas and 33 percent in rural areas. This can be explained by the increase in the price of various food commodities.

4. Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC)

Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) was measured on 469 children in the age between 6 and 59 months. For children in urban households, there has been an improvement and none of the children were severely malnourished in February 2011, however, 5 percent were moderately malnourished. For children in rural areas, the situation has also improved, with two percent being severely malnourished and 12 percent moderately malnourished. In refugee camps, the situation has also slightly improved, with no children being severely malnourished and 14 percent moderately malnourished.

In IDP camps, the situation has deteriorated, with one percent being severely malnourished and 15 percent moderately malnourished.
5. Child Health and Dietary Diversity

In February 2011, there has been an improvement regarding child dietary diversity. Data was collected for 147 children aged between 6 and 23 months. In urban areas, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of children who eat food from four food groups or more (53 percent). The situation has also improved in rural areas where the percentage of children eating four or more food groups increased from 24 to 37 percent in February 2011. However, as many as 63 percent of children in rural areas do not consume enough nutrients required for growth. In February 2011, 46 percent of IDP children have suffered from ARI during the two weeks prior to the assessment. In urban areas, 20 percent of the children have had fever, ARI or diarrhea.

6. Population Movement

Kassala State borders Eritrea and receives immigrants from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. An overwhelming majority of those who cross the border into Sudan merely transit on their way to Europe and Australia. There are 12 refugee camps in Kassala State with an estimated population of some 62,000 of whom around 37 percent receive assistance from WFP, through general food distribution, and hosting communities. Currently, there is no population movement in Kassala State. Population movement in the state is a seasonal phenomenon mainly as a result of floods and other seasonal factors.

7. Food Assistance

The percentage of households who received food assistance in the last three months (November, December and January) decreased to 16 percent, compared 27 percent in November 2010. The main reasons for selling food aid was to cover other basic needs such as health services, water and other food items.