



Household Dietary Diversity Score and Food Consumption Score: A Joint Statement of FAO and WFP May 2012¹

1. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) have collaboratively developed a Joint Strategy on Information Systems for Food and Nutrition Security (ISFNS) (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/024/mc147e.pdf>). This Joint Strategy aims to formalize and strengthen the collaborative roles of WFP and FAO in supporting worldwide ISFNS work and related initiatives and facilitate partnership with food security stakeholders. The strategy is structured along four key pillars; capacity development; standards, methods and tools; monitoring and in-country assessments and statistics, information and analysis. Part of the activities within the work related to standards, methods and tools is the development of standard methods and tools for data collection and analysis relevant to food security monitoring. FAO and WFP each have an interest in food and nutrition security indicators, however the mandates of the organizations' are distinctly different and so too are the ultimate aims of data collection and use of various food and nutrition security indicators. This joint statement explains reasons for which FAO and WFP suggest using different methods for measuring household-level food consumption and dietary diversity and addresses any misperceptions that this brings.
2. WFP carries out food security analysis in the 70 countries in which it operates through its Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping unit (VAM). The assessments are often undertaken jointly with government institutions. The type of food security assessment can be categorized into Emergency Assessments (EFSA), Comprehensive vulnerability assessments (CFSVA) and Food Security Monitoring (FSMS). Market analysis is an essential aspect of assessments and nutritional analyses form an integral part of emergency and baseline assessments. The approach can be adapted depending on the context, resources and time available. The WFP Food and Nutrition Security Conceptual Framework underpins the approach.
3. As an organization, FAO does not carry out systematic food security assessments nor does it manage food security information systems in countries or regions. FAO has primarily an information broker and knowledge sharing role. FAO convenes experts to discuss merits and further thinking on the most appropriate choice and use of indicators. FAO develops long-term government capacity in the collection, analysis and dissemination of data and statistics on food and nutrition security, working through regional organizations and with governments to provide appropriate methods and tools for capacity development. FAO also responds to requests from Member Countries for assistance on selection of nutrition indicators for project monitoring and evaluation.
4. The Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division (AGN), FAO has upon request by stakeholders for advice on measurement of dietary diversity at household level, suggested the use of a tool developed by the FANTA Project called the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS). This indicator uses a standard list of 16 food groups, for all countries and contexts. Information for each group is of a bivariate type (yes/no). To calculate the HDDS, the 16 food groups are aggregated

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into 12 main groups. All food groups have the same importance (relative weights equal to 1), with each group consumed providing 1 point. The HDDS is the simple sum of the number of consumed food groups (it goes theoretically from 0 to 12). For analytical purposes, the HDDS is often ranked into thirds or quartiles. Based on field experience in selected local projects, mainly in Africa, FAO has published operational guidelines for measuring dietary diversity in a standardized way (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/i1983e/i1983e00.pdf>).

5. Central to WFP's methodological approach is an understanding of households' food consumption patterns as well as their access to food and livelihood strategies. An indicator which is key to WFP's analytical approach is the Food Consumption Score (FCS) – a composite score based on dietary diversity, food frequency and relative nutritional importance of the various food groups consumed by households. The FCS is a composite score of food consumption at the household level as recorded from a 7-day recall and is based on 8 weighted food groups (usually aggregated from a more extensive country-specific list). Quantities of food are not included in the score, although foods eaten in very small quantities are excluded. Food Consumption Groups (FCGs) are created by applying a standard threshold to the FCS and calculating a prevalence (proportion of households) that belong to one of three groups: 'poor' food consumption, 'borderline' food consumption, and 'acceptable' food consumption. Detailed guidance on collecting the data and constructing the score is available (<http://www.wfp.org/content/technical-guidance-sheet-food-consumption-analysis-calculation-and-use-food-consumption-score-food-s>).
6. Both the FCS and HDDS are used as proxy indicators of household access to food. Data collected for both indicators can also be used to analyse dietary patterns and the consumption of specific food groups. FAO and WFP published a joint analysis based on the performance of the scores in three countries². The authors indicated that the choice between the two indicators depends on the time and resources available for data collection and the needs of the data user. The HDD tool provides a useful snapshot of the situation at population level and is an attractive choice for measuring change in situations where time and resources for data collection and analysis are limited. The FCS, due to the combination of a longer reference period and incorporation of frequency of consumption provides a more complete picture of consumption which may be more appropriate for in-depth food security assessments. The authors concluded that the indicators are not interchangeable, therefore the indicator chosen, either HDDS or FCS, should be used consistently to allow tracking of trends over time and comparison across locations.
7. When the decision on indicator choice in a country falls outside the operational mandate of WFP VAM, information on both indicators should be provided in a transparent manner to allow countries to make an informed choice. FAO and WFP agree to respect the choice of country-level decision makers and multi-sectoral actors regarding the most appropriate indicator for a given context.

² Kennedy *et al.* 2010. "Proxy measures of household food consumption for food security assessment and surveillance: comparison of the household dietary diversity and food consumption scores". *Public Health Nutrition* 13(12).