

Action brief

# Food and nutrition security monitoring system in response to COVID-19

**Country:** Ghana

**Themes:** Information systems

**Sub-themes:** Data exploitation

**Date:** November 2022



## Overview



The advent of COVID-19 galvanized Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) stakeholders and other partners in Ghana to establish a reporting system that integrates routine data from multiple sectors, including health, agriculture, trade and others, for decision-making.



## Objectives of the action brief

The objective of this brief is to share the process of creating a food security and nutrition monitoring system in Ghana.



## Period covered

The timeline covered is April 2020 to the present.



## What action was taken?

Prior to 2020, Ghana had no nutrition monitoring and reporting system in place. In early 2020, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, stakeholders working on nutrition developed a programme to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on food and nutrition outcomes. The key stakeholders involved were agencies from the United Nations - World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF - and the Government (Ghana Health Services, Ministry of Food and Agriculture). The food security and nutrition monitoring system was conceived through the SUN platform, convened by UNICEF, which was meeting regularly prior to COVID-19. Among the platform's early responses to COVID-19 was the conception of an interagency COVID-19 nutrition response plan. The food security and nutrition monitoring system was designed as a component of this response plan to provide information on progress and impacts.

Although there was no previous food security and nutrition monitoring system, various government agencies were collecting and collating data relevant to the planned monitoring system. Thus, a pragmatic approach was adopted to focus on the health system, which collects data on health-related aspects of nutrition, and the agriculture sector, which collects data on food production and food security. UNICEF and the WFP then worked with government agencies within their core mandates to gather technical and financial assistance in developing quarterly monitoring reports. The reports rely on information from several of the 261 districts in Ghana.

The food security and nutrition monitoring system has four objectives:

- I. Monitor and analyse trends of food availability, access and utilization.
- II. Identify and monitor risks and opportunities for household food security.
- III. Collect and analyse key nutrition indicators for trend analysis.
- IV. Provide timely and relevant information for decision-making.

This system was put in place in the second quarter of 2020. The initiative is led by the Ghana Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and analysis and reporting are implemented to produce a quarterly report. Other agencies involved in development are the Ghana Health Service, WFP and UNICEF. The food security and nutrition monitoring system utilizes existing institutional and household-level data, including:

1. Health and nutrition data collected by the Ghana Health Service from 50 districts throughout all 16 regions, including data on access to health facilities, child weight status, infant and young child feeding and micronutrient supplementation.
2. Food and agriculture data from 32 districts throughout all 16 regions provided by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, including data on food security (based on the Food Consumption Score), coping strategies, food availability (crop productivity), sources of food, access to agriculture inputs, market function, food prices, and household sources of income.
3. Economic and expenditure/consumption data, including gross domestic product, inflation and others. This information is provided by the Ghana Statistical Service.
4. Climate data from the Ghana Meteorological Service, including rainfall data.
5. Hazard information from the Ghana Fire Service related to fire outbreaks.
6. Governance data to demonstrate political stability or instability.







## What would the country do differently?

The food security and nutrition monitoring system currently operates only in selected districts, and there is a need to scale up. Both WFP and UNICEF have indicated a desire to scale up this initiative to 100 districts and, later, to add even more districts. The strategy to use

existing data sources increases sustainability and reduces dependence on external resources. However, some aspects of food security data are gathered as primary data that requires external data. Currently, this aspect remains a challenge that is yet to be resolved.



## Adaptation and applicability

- This simple process is based mainly on existing data and can be easily adapted and scaled up, given that most lower-middle-income countries have existing data systems, even if they are not integrated. Using a data value chain approach, other countries can develop their own food security and nutrition monitoring systems that are based on existing data systems.
- A key first step in the data value chain is the identification and prioritization of relevant data systems and their associated indicators related to food security and nutrition systems. Where there are adequate minimum sets of indicators, these sets can serve as seeds for the commencement of analysis and the synthesis of data for decision-making. Where there are no or limited data systems relevant for food security and nutrition, decisions can be made regarding developing such systems or building on existing systems to incorporate data that reports on nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive policies and interventions. In making decisions on data prioritization, it is important to focus on data useful for decision-making.



## Next steps

As part of the next phase of this monitoring system, the aim is to improve geographical coverage and expand the number of indicators and themes covered in the food security and nutrition monitoring system.

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