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Enabling the rural poor
to overcome poverty

Cooperation among the three Rome-based agencies

Directors are kindly requested to find herewith attached a joint letter by the three heads of the Rome agencies to the Secretary-General on cooperation in the field of food security theme groups. This represents one dimension of ongoing cooperation among the three Rome-based agencies

Executive Board — Ninetieth Session
Rome, 17-18 April 2007

For: **Information**



TCO-DG/07/ 3517

Dear Secretary-General,

We have pleasure in informing you of the establishment of joint Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)/World Food Programme (WFP)/ International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Food Security Theme Groups at country level based on the proposal brought to the attention of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on 27 October 2006. Our respective country offices and representations have already been requested to proceed with the establishment of these groups.

Our decision is motivated by the high priority attached by partner countries to intensify our efforts towards achieving Millennium Development Goal 1 (MDG-1) and the World Food Summit goal of halving the number of hungry people by 2015. Recognizing that progress towards these goals so far has been slow, we have agreed to combine at country-level our mutually reinforcing technical and outreach capabilities in the related areas of food security, agriculture and rural development, in line with the twin-track approach. This decision is also in line with one of the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on System Wide Coherence which suggested that to build long-term food security and break the cycle of recurring famine, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, FAO, IFAD and WFP should review their respective approaches and enhance their interagency coordination.

As per the attached Terms of Reference, the food security theme groups will enhance interagency collaboration and coordination in the above areas within the framework of the "One Team/One Programme" approach. Depending on the specific country situation, the food security theme groups will support the inclusion of these goals into the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) or other relevant government strategic processes, in cases where they may not already be well reflected. Such country led processes may offer opportunities to the proposed food security theme groups for translating national food security policies and strategies into action through various means, such as National Programmes for Food Security.

Jointly led by FAO, WFP and IFAD, as appropriate, the food security theme groups will seek to work with national governments, civil society organizations and development partners, including other UN agencies. They will collaborate with the "National Alliances against Hunger" and may build on the work undertaken by the "National Thematic Groups" of the UN System Network on Rural Development and Food Security, where these exist. They may also collaborate on elaborating a common approach to classifying food security in developing countries.

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Mr Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General
United Nations
New York

The theme groups should play a central role in ensuring that food security and hunger reduction are adequately addressed by the UN Country Team (UNCT) in its contribution to national development plans, including through harmonized programming instruments such as the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). It is expected that other UN agencies like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) may also be interested to participate in the food security theme groups with their own specific capabilities. FAO, WFP and IFAD will encourage the widest possible engagement of relevant UNCT members in the work of the theme groups, in the spirit of UN reform and working together to achieve the MDGs.

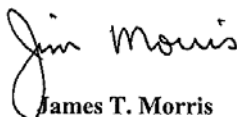
It is acknowledged that some countries may already have well functioning mechanisms for interagency cooperation and coordination on food security, such as food security clusters for humanitarian response. In these situations, the main ideas underlying the food security theme group concept will be incorporated into these existing structures, rather than create a new food security theme group.

In conclusion, we anticipate that the Food Security Theme Groups will enhance the collaboration among FAO, WFP and IFAD and will provide the basis for intensified UN-wide action towards halving the number of hungry people by 2015.

Yours sincerely,



Jacques Diouf
Director-General
Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



James T. Morris
Executive Director
World Food Programme



Lennart Båge
President
International Fund for
Agricultural Development

Date..... 21. III. 2007

Date... 27/3/2007

Date.. 23/3/07

Food Security Theme Groups

Terms of Reference

Following an interagency meeting held in Rome on 10 April 2006, FAO, IFAD and WFP have decided to jointly establish Food Security Theme Groups at country level. This decision is motivated by the high priority attached by partner countries to intensify UN efforts towards achieving MDG-1 and the World Food Summit goal of halving the number of hungry people by 2015. Recognizing that progress towards these goals so far has been slow, the purpose of the Theme Groups is to combine at country-level the mutually reinforcing technical and outreach capabilities of the three agencies.

The Theme Groups will be jointly led by FAO, IFAD and WFP, as appropriate, and operate within the framework of the "One Team/One Programme" approach. The Theme Groups will meet regularly, at least twice a year. The Theme Groups will report on their work to the UN Resident Coordinator and to the Heads of the participating Agencies. The Chair will rotate on a six-month basis between FAO, IFAD and WFP, as appropriate.

While FAO, IFAD and WFP will form the core of the Theme Groups, other UN Agencies should be encouraged to participate as appropriate. The Theme Groups should invite national institutions, civil society organizations and development partners to contribute to its work.

The Theme Groups will collaborate with the National Alliances Against Hunger (NAAH), already established in a number of countries, and may build on the work undertaken by the "Thematic Groups" of the UN System Network on Rural Development and Food Security, where these exist. It is recommended that as a first activity of the Theme Groups a review be carried out of the work and achievements of the Thematic Groups and Alliances Against Hunger in order to learn lessons and guide the Theme Groups in their work.

In line with the twin-track approach to food security, the main purpose of the Theme Groups is to enhance interagency collaboration and coordination in direct support of the countries' own development efforts under the interrelated areas of food security, agriculture and rural development. More specifically, the terms of reference of the Theme Groups are:

1. Prepare an inventory and review, on a regular basis, past, existing and projected country policies and programmes in terms of their contribution towards achieving country-specific MDG-1 and WFS related goals.
2. Based on the review under item 1, support the full inclusion of food security, agriculture, rural development and the twin-track approach into the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and other relevant policy formulation, programming and strategic processes.
3. Ensure that food security, agriculture and rural development issues and strategic objectives are adequately reflected in the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and other country assessment and programming instruments where appropriate.
4. Support the translation of national food security, agriculture and rural development policies and strategies into action through various means, including the development and implementation of National Programmes for Food Security (NPFS).
5. Review, on a regular basis, whether the efforts of the three agencies and the UN system at large are fully mobilized and integrated towards assisting government

and development partners at all levels in the implementation of food security, agriculture and rural development policies and programmes.

6. Based on the review under item 4, take initiatives towards achieving greater complementarity and coordination among the three agencies and the UN system at large in terms of resource allocation and strategic direction, scale and coherence of national programmes that address the country's food security problems.
7. Provide support to a cross-sectoral analysis and monitoring of the country's food security situation and the main factors affecting the livelihoods of food insecure and vulnerable households, drawing on existing information and analytical capacity at country level, and of the three agencies.
8. Arrange for regular information exchange, consultation and coordination of action with other agencies from within and outside the UN as appropriate and ensure that full use is made of their combined capabilities for tackling the country's food security problems.