

Initiative on Food Soaring Prices Burkina Faso- End-of mission brief and lessons learnt

Mission took place between 7 to 18 April 2008. Major tasks included (i) consultations with Government and stakeholders; (ii) Assess the situation and the needs to respond to SFP; (iii) Elaborate a possible framework of Actions plan.

1. Consultations. They aimed to assess perception and priorities of all concerned and covered:

(i) The Ministry of Agriculture (MAHRH). The mission was twice received by the Minister. Its direct counterpart was the Permanent Secretary of the PS/CPSA¹ (Focal point for ISFP) and various working sessions were organized with the technical departments, the DGPSA² and advisers to the minister. The main Government priority is to quickly boost local rice production and finance short terms (next campaign) measures identified to increase rice production.

(ii) Civil society such as producers' organizations and unions, consumers, traders, importers, input suppliers and NGOs. The concerns include: soaring price of farm inputs, the need to translate increased food price into increased farm incomes, etc.

(iii) International and regional partners such as WFP (which was full part of the mission), the WB, IFAD, CILSS, CEDEAO, UEMOA, NEPAD, UNDP, ECHO who all are also concerned about the situation and develop their initiatives.

(iv) Donors which are organized into a "Technical and Financial Partners Group [PTF³] currently led by Denmark. At the invitation of the Ambassador of Denmark, mission had a working session with the members of the PTF's concertation group where the subject of agricultural subsidies was at the centre of debates, most of donors being not favourable to this option except (eventually) for urgent, well targeted and very short term activities in view of recent increased prices of inputs. While mission introduced the concept of productive safety nets, most donors would accept social safety nets (food/cash aid, food for work), but remain reluctant to free distribution of seeds, fertilizers and others agricultural inputs or investment. They also tend to downplay FSP situation in Burkina which is seen less dramatic than the one often presented in the media.

2. Needs Assessment. The mission conducted an assessment of the SFP situation in country shared with most of stakeholders showing globally that FSP is primarily affecting rice (mainly consumed in urban area and representing 15% of the country grain balance) and fertilizers. Local cereals such as maize, sorghum are only traded in the sub-region and therefore have little contact with international market. Their price increased, influenced by local demand/supply situation and regional trade. Finally, in contrast, stagnating cotton prices might have an extremely negative impact on the sub-sector in view of higher input prices and higher prices of competing crops.

3. Possible Action Plan. Most partners (including Government) recommended to distinguish the short from the medium/long term. For each of these two terms, the mission elaborated 3 sets of possible actions and measures: (i) social safety nets (prepared by WFP) in support of vulnerable consumers fragilized by SFP; (ii) improving production and productivity through productive safety nets and longer term investment; (iii) policy measures. Short terms actions and measures are the (only) priority of the Government at this stage. They have been designed and budgeted to support vulnerable groups through (i) food/cash aid and food for work; (ii) boost rice production in addition to the operation already scheduled by FAO and WB on local cereals; (iii) guarantee a minimum price for rice to secure/encourage local producers during next season; (iv) reduce costs and increase accessibility of fertilizers.

Report and follow-up: Follow-up contacts will be conducted with the government by the FAO Representation to assist government in identifying source of financing for urgent actions identified; and to confirm government interest to prepare a medium / long term actions plan. Government of Burkina Faso is heavily expecting that FAO and the others Agencies will assist in identifying financing. Mission will prepare an End-of-mission Report to be circulated to the Task Force for approval. In the short term and to respond to the Government priority, the mission proposes to urgently launch an appeal to boost the next rice production season. The mission has enough elements to prepare a proposal (estimated at US\$ 7 million).

¹ Secrétariat Permanent de Coordination des Politiques sectorielles Agricoles.

² Direction Générale des Statistiques et des Prospectives Agricoles

³ Cadre de concertation des Partenaires techniques et financiers.

Lessons learnt and recommendations for future mission:

- **Better focus the objectives and outcomes of the mission:** Replace the terminology “Inter-Agency Consultation and Identification Mission” into “Inter-Agency (Joint) Assessment mission” and refocuses the objectives of the mission on (i) assessing FSP situation in the country, and (ii) identify short term needs, actions and measures. Mentioning in TORs “identify technical assistance needed” might be seen as a FAO tentative to “position” itself for future technical assistance, which might reduce mission credibility. In the case of Burkina “preparing TORs for a future formulation mission to prepare detailed actions plan” was not appropriately responding to short term government priorities. Medium/Long Term actions should aim to take advantage of the unique opportunity offered by more favourable producers’ price to boost local agricultural production through private and public investments.
- **Revisit the concept of joint mission:** the concept of joint mission should be materialized with a physical and full time participation of all partners to be inserted into TORs. Otherwise, mission can be seen by the Government and others stakeholders as an FAO-only initiative. When agencies participation is provided through staff based in country, a full time participation should be ensured, including through contribution to Aide-mémoire and End-of-Mission Report. In the case of Burkina, the mission received a full participation and support from the WFP, which will also contribute to the End-of-Mission Report. WB was only participating in several meetings. Ref IFAD, mission was only able to liaise with a mission that was present at the same time. The cooperation spirit prevailing between the Head of Agencies (FAO, WB, IFAD, WFP) to support countries needs to transferred to working level staff at country level.
- **Focus on preparation of set of actions and measures and not on projects and programmes formulation:** It is not only a question of terminology but also a question of approach. In the case of Burkina, the mandate to “propose project/programme to address the issue” has been wrongly interpreted as a possible duplication or/and as an initiative not being integrated (or taking enough account) into existing strategies, projects and programmes. Preparation of well defined and well targeted (including in duration) actions and measures specifically addressing SFP in the framework of existing strategies and programmes should be privileged. In the case of Burkina, the mission received three clear messages: (i) distinguish between short term (next cropping campaign) and the longer term with very different issues at stake; (ii) FAO should not re-embark in preparing new projects and programmes (message from Government, donors, farmers’ organizations); (iii) The Government did not see the need for an additional structure (inter-ministerial committee) to deal with ISFP (e.g. one Inter-ministerial Committee was already existing at the SP/CPSA).
- **TCP and Spanish funding.** TCP and Spanish funding should come as a result/outcome of mission. Projects should be built upon mission findings. In the case of Burkina, the mission was left without leverage to respond to the Government priority to boost the next rice season.
- **Regional organization participation.** Consideration should be given for a direct involvement of Regional Organisation (in particular REC¹) into mission, including as mission member/leader. Some policy measures are to be taken at (sub)regional level and (normally) not at country level. In the case of Burkina, it was clear that stakeholders considered themselves as closer of UEMOA/CEDEAO than NEPAD. Unilateral decision to reduce border tariff may affect efforts carried out for many years in order to build regional integration. REC participation in the mission could help reinforcing regional integration.
- **Government request.** While Governments may be approached to discuss possibilities offered by the ISFP and possibility to field a mission, a formal request would strengthen the impact of the mission.

¹ Regional Economic Commission