

Posting Title : Expert on Food Security Monitoring  
Department/ Office : Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia  
Location : Home-based  
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Job Opening number : 16-Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia-  
63157-Consultant

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**United Nations Core Values: Integrity, Professionalism, Respect for Diversity**

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## **Duties And Responsibilities**

### **A. Background**

The concept of food security has evolved over the past decades, and its scope has widened. In 1996, the World Food Summit provided a definition of food security that has become widely accepted and used today: "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." Applicable at all levels or scales (individual, household, national, regional and global levels), the definition conceptualizes food security according to four main dimensions, namely: availability, access, utilization and stability over time.

This broad acceptance of the concept, has not translated into a consensus on how to measure food security. A myriad of metrics have been globally proposed that prioritize selected food security aspects, apply at specific scales, and serve a certain purpose. The Committee on World Food Security's suite of indicators, IFPRI's Global Hunger Index, the Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Food Security Index, and FAO's Food Insecurity Experience Scale are just a few examples of available metrics.

More recently, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was globally adopted and includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG2, in particular, amalgamates a number of related issues: it aims at ending hunger (with its direct links to food access and poverty reduction), achieving food security (with its broad cross cutting nature), improving nutrition (with its links to health improvements), and promoting sustainable agriculture (with its links to production and productivity factors). SDG2 includes 8 targets for which a set of 14 indicators have been proposed. Moreover, some of the targets and indicators under other SDGs are also strongly linked to food security issues. While all countries are required to report on these indicators, it is expected that the global indicator framework shall be complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels to be developed by Member States, taking into account national circumstances.

Regionally, the "Strategy for Sustainable Arab Agricultural Development for the Next Two Decades (2005–2025)", prepared by the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) upon the request of the 2005 Arab Summit, had acknowledged that the focus of food security in the Arab region has so far been limited to self-sufficiency, without visible linkages to other dimensions, especially those related to food quality and safety, the extent of supply stability of food in Arab markets, or the ability of the poor and vulnerable segments of the population to access food. It recognized that this narrow view of food security led a number of Arab countries to adopt national policies that potentially damaged their resource base and diverted investments from programmes that could have effectively contributed to improving Arab food security at the local and regional levels. The strategy took a welcome step of calling for a broader and more integrated regional perspective on food security.

Despite the call for broadening the regional perspective on food security, it did not effectively move out of the realm of agriculture: The Arab region continued to center its public food security action on increasing agricultural production, while understating other dimensions. This can be seen clearly, for example, in the focus of the Riyadh Declaration to Enhance Arab Cooperation to Face World Food Crises (2008) and the Emergency Arab Food Security Programme (2009). In the same vein, monitoring of food security in the Arab region remained confined mostly to agricultural indicators, disregarding other food security concerns.

Measuring food security is challenging in the region given the large disparities between Arab countries in terms of socio-economic characteristics and natural endowments. A rigid set of indicators that is limited in scope cannot give clarity about the level of food security in all the Arab countries. It is therefore important to develop a regional food security monitoring system, including a set of regional/sub-regional/national indicators, that is customized according to regional specificities, while taking into consideration ongoing global directions.

Within this context, ESCWA included in its project on "Promoting food and water security through cooperation and capacity development in the Arab region" a component that aims to enhance capacity in the Arab countries to assess the status of food security. Information from the enhanced monitoring system is expected to guide policymaking and contribute to identifying food insecurity hotspots at the sub-national, national or regional levels.

## B. Scope and methodology of work

This consultancy aims at developing a detailed proposal for an enhanced monitoring system for food security in the Arab region that is highly relevant to policymaking. As a prerequisite, a region-specific perception of food security would need to be formulated and agreed upon that builds on an accurate and deep understanding of regional food security priorities and how they have been pursued through policy. As such, this consultancy is envisaged to be conducted in three consecutive phases as described below:

### Phase I: Review and analysis

The consultant will review how, and the degree to which, Arab countries have pursued food security through their various socioeconomic development plans and programmes. He/she will identify the food security dimensions that countries have prioritized, and study the monitoring and other institutional arrangements they have devised to follow-up on food security. A similar review is to be undertaken at the regional level, by analyzing the regional

understanding of food security and assessing established monitoring arrangements. The regional review will include cross-border elements that can contribute to higher food security levels, such as coordinated investment, trade and labor directives and policies. The results of the national and regional reviews will be analyzed and benchmarked against global, mainstream food security conceptualizations and monitoring best practices in other countries or regions.

## Phase II: Regional proposal

Based on the results of the first phase, the consultant will propose an enhanced regional food security monitoring system that is tailored according to regional specificities and responds to current and projected priority concerns. The proposal could comprise a single system for the entire Arab region. Alternatively, it could have a multi-tier architecture, with multiple sub-regional systems covering country groupings with similar characteristics or concerns, or even multiple country-level specific systems. The proposed system should be feasible to implement within the available data collection and analysis resources in the region. The proposal will undergo a consultation and vetting process facilitated by ESCWA, prior to its finalization.

While monitoring SDG2 and other food security-related targets under the SDGs should not equate to monitoring food security in the region, it is in the countries' best interest to have the two indicator sets be mutually supportive. As such, the possibility of incorporating selected global SDG indicators within the proposed regional/sub-regional/national food security monitoring system should be fully explored, with due considerations for specificities, constraints and environmental conditions of the Arab region. At the same time, the consultant will identify from the proposed regional/sub-regional/national indicators those which constitute suitable complements to the global SDG indicator set.

## Phase III: Implementation and capacity-building

Phase III will develop the implementation modalities for the enhanced regional food security monitoring system. Issues to be clarified in this phase include national and regional level institutional arrangements for operationalizing the monitoring system, data collection methodologies, frequency of reporting, and the basis for setting benchmarks. This phase also includes the preparation of related training manuals and the organization of training workshops to be facilitated by ESCWA. Proposed implementation modalities will undergo a consultation and vetting process facilitated by ESCWA, prior to their finalization.

## C. Main tasks to be undertaken by the consultant

Based on the scope and phased methodology of work detailed above, the consultant is expected to undertake the following tasks in close coordination with the ESCWA team:

For phase I:

1. Review food security policies and programmes at the Arab national and regional levels and analyze prevailing perceptions of food security, while benchmarking against widely accepted global conceptualizations.
2. Review and analyze existing food security monitoring programs/systems/initiatives at the Arab national and regional levels, and related institutional arrangements.

3. Review and assess the currently used food security indicators.
4. Review successful food security monitoring experiences in other regions/countries.

For phase II:

5. Undertake consultations with various national and regional level stakeholders to validate the results of phase I, and seek views regarding the possibility of adopting a multi-tier regional/sub-regional/national approach for monitoring food security.
6. On the basis of tasks 1 to 5 above, develop a detailed proposal of an enhanced food security monitoring system, including a set of region-specific indicators that embody an integrated rethinking of food security concerns in the region.
7. Compare the proposed set against SDG indicators and identify potential complementarities.
8. Participate in, and contribute to, ESCWA-organized expert group meeting/inter-governmental meeting for discussing/vetting the proposal and finalize accordingly.

For Phase III:

9. Based on the results of phase II, develop a proposal of an appropriate institutional arrangement for the implementation of the proposed monitoring system, including information system setup and national-regional coordination modality.
10. Prepare a training manual on the monitoring system, including methodology for data collection, data analysis, indicators' calculation, etc.
11. Participate in, and contribute to, ESCWA-organized expert group meeting/inter-governmental meeting for discussing/vetting the proposed institutional arrangement and training manual and finalize accordingly.
12. Act as trainer during ESCWA-organized training workshops (2-3 workshops).

### **Work Location**

Home-based

### **Expected Duration**

This is a deliverable-based consultancy to be completed over a period of around six months spanning the period September 2016-March 2017, with an estimated 60 working days.

### **Result Of Service**

- To assess the degree to which an integrated perspective on food security is established and mainstreamed within the development policy setting regionally and nationally in the Arab countries, and support a regional rethinking of this multi-dimensional concept.
- To enhance the current food security monitoring system and support informed and integrated policy-making in the area of food security in the region.
- To enhance synergies between regional and global-level food security monitoring, notably that undertaken within the context of the Agenda 2030/SDGs follow-up and review process.

### **Qualifications/Special Skills**

Skills: Excellent analytical, research, writing and communication skills; Computer literacy.

Academic Qualifications: A Master's, or higher degree in food security, statistics, public

administration, economics, agriculture, environment, or any other relevant field.

Experience: 10 years knowledge and demonstrated experience in the multidisciplinary area of food security monitoring, part of which is preferably in the Arab region.

Language: Fluency in written and spoken Arabic and English.

### **United Nations Considerations**

The United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs. (Charter of the United Nations - Chapter 3, article 8). The United Nations Secretariat is a non-smoking environment.

As per UN policy, Consultants and Individual Contractors may not apply for or be appointed to any position in the Professional or above categories and for positions at the FS-6 and FS-7 levels in the Field Service category within six months of the end of their current or most recent service. This restriction does not apply to associate experts (Junior Professional Officers) appointed under the Staff Rules.

### **No Fee**

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