



AN ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH NEEDS FOR FOOD SECURITY IN BANGLADESH AND GUIDELINES FOR AWARDING RESEARCH GRANTS



Proceedings of the Consultative Workshop

February 2007



National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme

The National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFPCSP) was initiated to enhance national capacity to implement the National Food Policy and the ensuing Plan of Action.

The NFPCSP is implemented jointly by the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU) under the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management (MoFDM), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GoB) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with financial assistance from the European Commission (EC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The programme aims at strengthening the capacity of the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit and the members of the policy wings and planning units in partner ministries to effectively implement and monitor the National Food Policy in order to improve food availability, enhance physical, social and economic access to food, and ensure safe and nutritious food. It also aims at expanding and deepening the civil society capacity to conduct high quality research on food security, and to establish an effective platform for dialogue between government policy officials and civil society researchers to better inform the elaboration and implementation of the NFP as well as its Plan of Action plan.

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Organized by

Food Planning and Monitoring Unit, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management
and
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
with the Financial Support of
USAID and the European Commission

Proceedings of the Consultative Workshop

26 February 2007

**National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme
Dhaka, Bangladesh**

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‘The food policy analysts and researchers must look ahead through continued research and analysis, to predict what kind of information policy-makers are likely to need several years into the future’.

The National Food Policy, 2006

1. Introduction

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU) of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management (MoFDM) organized a Consultative Workshop on An Assessment of Research Needs for Food Security in Bangladesh and Guidelines for Awarding Research Grants under the National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFPCSP), with financial support from USAID and the EC on 26 February, 2007. The NFPCSP has been assessing the needs for food security related research that can inform decision making by policy makers in line with government determination to pursue the Millennium Development Goals and World Food Summit objectives.

As part of the activities of Component 2 of National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFPCSP), a Research Needs Digest (RND) has been prepared which is intended to serve as a basis for inviting research proposals under the NFPCSP research grant award initiative. The research grant award initiative aims at increasing civil society’s involvement in producing action-oriented research on food policy and food security issues, including availability, access, and utilization for nutrition, as well as cross-cutting issues (gender, governance, environment, infrastructure). It consists of two facilities: the Programme Research (PR), which is geared towards supporting long-term substantive research by eligible institutions, organizations and centers and the Challenge Fund (CF), which will support complementary short-term research work on existing specific policy interventions and practices, including options for scaling-up best practices.

The RND is the reference for identifying a list of research priorities relevant to policy-making for food security and consistent with the National Food Policy approved on 14 August 2006. The RND includes new questions on important issues that have been previously studied but still require revisiting or updating. It was developed based on extensive consultations with a broad range of stakeholders, including, government, academia and research institutions, universities, international organizations, as well as civil society representatives.

This workshop was the final step in this consultative process. The methodology and preliminary findings of the opinion survey conducted by the NFPCSP team, through face-to-face interviews and questionnaires were presented and discussed in the workshop held on November 29, 2006. The workshop provided a platform to elicit additional views from a broader audience and a wider perspective. It also contributed to build a consensus on the set of research priorities to be considered for eligibility under the research grant initiative. The workshop was also an occasion for participants to learn more about opportunities available under the aforementioned PR and CF facilities of the National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme.

Following the workshop held on November 29, 2006 the final draft of the RND on food security was prepared incorporating the opinions and suggestions of the workshop participants. The workshop on February 26, 2007 shared the draft RND with participants and comments and suggestion were elicited. This was to be incorporated in final version of the RND to be used for selecting researchable issues/topics to invite research proposals.

Additionally, the guidelines and modalities of submitting the research proposals along with selection criteria and necessary formats have been introduced to the participants.

Objectives:

1. To present the final version of the RND on food security in the areas of availability, access, and utilization for nutrition, as well as cross-cutting issues (gender, governance, environment, and infrastructure) and receive comments from the participants in view of the RND finalization.
2. To receive specific comments on each thematic area identified in the RND of food security dimensions and elicit participants' views through group discussions on priority to be considered for inviting research proposals.
3. To introduce the participants to the research grant award application guidelines and selection criteria.

Expected outcomes:

- ✓ The RND is presented to stakeholders and feedback received in view of its finalization.
- ✓ Participants contribute to identify research priorities for each food security dimension.
- ✓ Stakeholders are informed on guidelines, for submission of research proposals and selection criteria for assigning grants.

The Programme of the Consultative Workshop is given in Annex 1.

The workshop was attended by close to 200 participants (Annex 2) from government ministries and agencies, academia, NGOs and other civil society organizations. The workshop elicited inputs from the participants on areas and topics around setting the agenda for priority research on food security policy. Mr. Dhiraj Malakar, Secretary, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management (MoFDM) was the Chief Guest and Mr. Ad Spijkers, FAO Representative in Bangladesh was the special Guest. Also present as Guests of Honor at the Workshop were representatives from the donor agencies Mr. Gene V. George, Mission Director, USAID and Ms Françoise Collet, First Secretary, European Commission, Bangladesh. Mr. Abdul Bari Khan, Additional Secretary, MoFDM and Acting Director General, FPMU Chaired the Inaugural Session. Mr. Kostas Stamoulis, Chief ESAE, FAO, HQ, Rome Chaired the Technical Session.

2. Session 1: Inaugural Session

The following includes the summarization of the Inaugural session which was chaired by Mr. Abdul Bari Khan, Additional Secretary, MoFDM and Acting DG, FPMU, MoFDM.

The welcome address was given by Mr. Ruhul Amin, Deputy Chief (Marketing and Public Food Operations), FPMU, MoFDM. He welcomed the participants who had come to the workshop to discuss and deliberate on an important component of NFPCSP: the research needs assessment, which aims to inform and support policy. He emphasized that while Bangladesh has achieved near self sufficiency in food (rice) production, there is a need for a

diversified food basket to be made available to all. Protein energy malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies are the main problems among children in Bangladesh and there is a need to have an effective food policy that could address these problems. Strengthening research capacity on an informed basis to support policy was one of the central components of the NFPCSP. The full text of Mr. Ruhul Amin's speech is given in Annex 3.

Mr. Ciro Fiorillo, Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) of the NFPCSP, presented the objectives of the workshop within the framework of the NFPCSP commitment to support policy makers in the fight against food insecurity. He pointed out that research on food security as envisaged in Component II (Research) of the project would encompass research on socio economic analysis related issues of the main dimensions of food security. Submission of proposals would be invited by mid year based on RGP guidelines and research work was expected to commence sometime before the end of the year.

Mr. Gene V. George, Mission Director, USAID/Bangladesh and Guest of Honor, pointed to Bangladesh's accomplishments in agriculture and food security in the last three and half decades which are recognized as a major development success story around the world. A wide range of food and agricultural policies and programs have been implemented to address issues of food availability, access, utilization and nutrition. Since Independence, USAID has been a long standing partner with the Government of Bangladesh in the development of agriculture and food sectors. Recent involvement in agriculture has shifted to a focus on agribusiness and value added initiatives with continued involvement at the policy level. USAID is extremely pleased to be a part of the joint effort on the NFPCSP which is expected to enhance the capacity of the Government of Bangladesh to research, formulate, review and implement the National Food Policy which is a comprehensive, equitable, gender-sensitive, and pro-poor. The program strives to improve implementation of the food security policy framework in Bangladesh. This will be done through enhanced capacity, coordination of Government agencies, improved research, and increased civil society dialogue. In particular, the program will benefit those sections of the population most vulnerable to food insecurity: landless poor in rural areas, women-headed households, the urban poor, women and children. The full text of Mr. George's speech is given in Annex 4.

Ms Françoise Collet, First Counsellor, EC Delegation, Guest of Honor reiterated that food security, translated into the Millennium Development Goal 1, is among the most challenging issues since it is a human right, as foreseen in the Universal Declaration and which remains far from being granted to each and everyone. The European Community, through its Member States and the European Commission, has a long experience of fighting hunger. Since the beginning of its partnership with Bangladesh, EC is fighting hunger and poverty in collaboration with the Government and of the Civil Society. Specific interventions under the food security program of the European Commission are part of a coherent development cooperation in Bangladesh. Beyond the food security program and the food sector, the EC is heavily investing in sectors areas that are very relevant to the short and long term sustainability of food security: health and education. With regard to the food security program, the EC supports interventions in safety nets, agriculture, rural development, and enabling policies. Ms Collet remarked that this workshop is an important forum by which NFPCSP is fostering dialogue and collaboration within and between the Government and the Civil Society. It is a platform for the Government and the Civil Society to build up a strategy and work together. The full text of Ms Collet's speech is given in Annex 5.

Mr. Ad Spijkers, FAO Representative and Special Guest on the occasion, emphasized the challenge for Bangladesh to halve the number of hungry people by 2015. The main objective of NFPCSP - FAO is to assist the Government of Bangladesh to achieve this. FAO has initiated a number of projects/programs in Bangladesh through its normative and field programs. The NFPCSP is a part of a new form of intervention, which aims at strengthening

the capacity of public institutions to fight hunger and malnutrition through the adoption of policy interventions based on technically sound information and analysis.

He was pleased that discussions on the results of the assessment of research needs on food security in Bangladesh would take place at this workshop. This will inform policy makers towards strengthening and supporting policy development and its implementation as well as the project in calling for research proposals to be funded under the NFPCSP. The draft guidelines for awarding research grants on undertaking action-oriented research on food policy and food security issues were to be presented in this regard. Mr. Spijkers recommended that NFPCSP in collaboration with the civil society and the Government identify genuine research needs to help identify and address the key issues for food security in the country. The full text of the speech is given in Annex 6

Mr. Dhiraj Malakar, Secretary, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management and Chief Guest on the occasion emphasized that the Government of Bangladesh is firmly committed to achieve food security for all as defined at the 1996 World Food Summit (WFS) and the 2002 WFS: five years later, this provision is reflected in all the development plans of the Government. It is indeed appropriate, that the present National Food Policy 2006 has been developed in the light of the recently adopted Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and also within the broader perspective of the definition of food security as adopted in the WFS. He recognized that NFPCSP is doing a commendable job in strengthening the capacity of the FPMU and the related ministries of the government in analyzing food security issues, assisting in policy making and preparing the NFP Plan of Action for improving the food security situation in the country. He was pleased that the project had completed a Preliminary Intensive Training Programme (PITP) consisting of four courses and that courses in Nutrition, Price, and Monitoring and Evaluation are also underway. As part of the capacity strengthening program, some of the government personnel were to be sent for training courses abroad so as to strengthen the analytical capacities of the FPMU and other related ministries of the government.

The Secretary pointed out that assessing research needs and taking stock of research appropriate to enhancing food security in Bangladesh is critical as it helps to inform decisions about setting research priorities by policy-makers, researchers and civil society. He was particularly gratified that NFPCSP has the provision of supporting some research activities on food security in Bangladesh. There would be need to set some level of prioritization, and the workshop had charted out its agenda and the next course of activities in this context. He congratulated FAO's efforts in eliciting involvement of a broad range of stakeholders including, government, academia and research institutions, universities, international organizations, as well as civil society representatives in the process of producing action-oriented research on food policy and food security issues.

Mr. Abdul Bari Khan, Additional Secretary, MoFDM and Acting Director General, FPMU, MoFDM who Chaired the inaugural session of the Workshop, while giving his address, stated that in the agro-based economy of Bangladesh, where a large proportion of the income of the population is allocated to food, the prime responsibility of the State is to ensure an uninterrupted supply of food to all people at all times. He quoted the Article-15 (a) of the Constitution of Bangladesh, which states that it shall be a fundamental responsibility of the State to secure its citizens to the provision of basic necessities of food. As per Government's Allocation of Business, it is the duty of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management to establish a dependable food security system for the nation. Ensuring food security for all was one of the major challenges that Bangladesh faces today. On the issue of food accessibility, he said that a large fraction of Bangladesh's population suffers from chronic food insecurity which is fundamentally related to poverty. This insecurity occurs in spite of the existence of a number of safety net programs. Transitory food insecurity arising from seasonality, natural disasters and other shocks adds to the scale of the problem. While

much is known about existing safety net programs, more needs to be known, especially if transitory and chronic food insecurity is to be prevented. Food security policies and programs must also be concerned with food diversification rather than mere crop diversification if it is to achieve the aim of providing a 'balanced diet' for all. Policies should pay specific attention to the interactions between domestic production and international trade in ensuring the availability of a desirable national food basket.

While average energy intake had slightly improved over the past years, the overall energy and nutrient intake continues to remain inadequate and fails to meet the recommended nutrient intake. Eighty percent of dietary energy supply of Bangladeshis still comes from cereals. This coupled with low intake of pulses and animal-based protein results in high levels of protein-energy mal nutrition and anemia and other micronutrient (vitamins and minerals) deficiencies. He was confident that the workshop will serve to indicate priorities for research areas to be considered for research activities in the country and, more specifically, for eligibility under the research grant initiative. It will also be an occasion for participants to learn more about the opportunities available under the Programme Related Fund and Challenge Fund of the NFPCSP. The full text of the Chairperson's Speech is given in Annex 7.

3. Session II: Technical Session

The technical session was chaired by Mr. Kostas Stamoulis, Chief, ESAE, FAO, HQ, Rome.

3.1 'Guidelines for awarding research grants' by Mr. Nur A. Khondaker, Research Grants Administrator, NFPCSP

Mr. Nur A. Khondaker, the National Research Grant Administrator (RGA) of NFPCSP, presented the guidelines for awarding research grants under the project. Component II of NFPCSP is designed to improving research and dialogue in civil society to inform and enrich the implementation of the National Food Policy. It has been designed to expand and strengthen the capacity to conduct food security related research, and to promote linkages between the policy analysts in the Government of Bangladesh and the researchers in civil society (CS) as well as within the CS, in support of the elaboration and implementation of the National Food Policy.

The NFPCSP Research Grant Scheme has two components. The Challenge Fund (CF) provides grants to conduct short term research, including research that seeks to analyze and distill the experiences related to specific interventions or actions by Government or Civil Society Organization (CSO) and analyses of options for scaling up best practices. The CF will award grants range from US\$ 2000 to US\$ 10,000 per approved research proposal, to be completed within 12 months from the date of the award. In response to each call for proposals, institutions are allowed to submit a maximum of four proposals, at least three of which must involve collaboration with other institutions. Only one proposal that involves no collaboration can be submitted. Also, no institutions will be allowed to hold more than two grants under the CF at any given time. If any institution is considered for the award of two grants, then at least one must be for a proposal involving collaboration with other institutions.

The Programme Research (PR) provides grants to conduct longer term and more substantive research. The PR component will involve grants ranging from US\$ 30,000 to

US\$ 50,000 per approved research proposal, to be completed within 18 months from the date of the award. In response to each call for proposals, no institution will be allowed to submit more than two grants under the PR at any given time. If any institution is considered for the award of two grants, then at least one must involve collaboration with other institutions. Also, no institutions will be allowed to hold more than two grants under the PR at any given time. Preference will be given to research proposals that propose a multi disciplinary program and involve researchers from other institutions in addressing different aspects of food security. In selecting the set of research proposals for funding under both CF and PR attention will be paid to ensuring that financed research will represent a broad range of topics covering each of the four dimensions of food security (availability, physical and social access, economic access and utilization of food for nutrition) as well as cross cutting issues. However, studies with a clear relevance to food security in Bangladesh will also be considered.

Separate calls for proposals will be issued for the CF and PR proposals through announcements in major national dailies and other means as appropriate. Calls for research proposals under PR will also be sent to research institutions.

Mr. Khondaker also highlighted the criteria for selection and evaluation of admissible research proposals. On the evaluation of proposals he pointed to the criteria that included: relevance of the research proposal in terms of originality or value addition, usefulness of expected results, technical soundness of the proposal and the appropriateness of the proposed methodology, technical competence and capacity of the institution(s)/individual(s), feasibility and consistency of the proposed work plan. Details of sample research proposal formats, the appraisal and award and the steps involved in the research proposal implementation were also discussed.

3.2 'Towards a Research Needs Digest: key clusters & research themes' by Prof Mohan Rao, Advisor to FAO

Professor Mohan Rao presented the Research Needs Digest (RND) that was a key output of the participatory exercise on assessment of research needs (ARN) on food security to the participants. He highlighted that the RND is devoted to assessing research needs and to taking stock of research appropriate to enhancing food security in Bangladesh. Its main aims were to help inform decisions about setting research priorities by policy-makers, researchers and civil society and to inform decisions by NFPCSP about setting a research agenda for technical assistance and awarding grants.

The RND provides the main substantive findings based on the detailed discussions and recommendations on research priorities identified by the civil society. There are outlined in the form of selected 'Key Clusters' further divided into priority 'Research Themes' which reflect: (1) priorities under each of the four main dimensions of food security; (2) a parallel set of priorities judged to be important under the cross-cutting dimensions; (3) 'interactions' across dimensions i.e., clusters that fall under some other dimension but are rated to be vital to a given dimension; and (4) research themes relating to empirical measurement and valuation issues of overarching significance for food security objectives. Prof. Rao then presented the sections of the RND.

First is an overview that is supported by two defining matrices – *Priorities* and *Overview* – giving handy abstracts of the main findings followed by a bird's eye-view of research priorities and intermediate findings from stages prior to the RND exercise.

Prof. Rao discussed the parameters of the RND: its objectives, the process within which its production is embedded, the choice criteria and rules that were used in constructing it, and the intermediate findings that form its basis. He pointed out that both the process and intermediate findings highlighted how the final outcomes emerged from a process of sifting priorities. The RND also included the Key Clusters and Research Themes that are laid out for each of the four food security dimensions with a detailed discussion of the substantive findings as well as the choices and judgments made. He recalled the thematic research priorities on the basis of the raw results of a bibliographic search, an interview survey, and a participatory ranking of priority clusters conducted during the First Consultative Workshop in November 2006. The November workshop provided the rationale for the dimension-specific priorities. The RND provided the underlying judgments to prevalent gaps in knowledge and to the present position and trends in the national food security situation.

Prof Rao emphasized that the RND and its findings were truly the collective product of a wide range of national stakeholders; they were based on technical inputs and a participatory process providing a menu of options for pursuing food policy related research and that policy-makers can focus the community of researchers and available resources by prioritizing the Research Themes on the basis of their importance and urgency.

3.3. Open Discussion: Technical Session

Participants' questions and discussion issues arising from presentation on awarding research grants

A comment was made that inviting a large number of research proposals directly may not be a good proposition. It may be a better option to initially call for concept note which could be short listed and this could be followed by a call for full length research proposal at a later stage.

Response: The idea of concept note was discussed during preparation of the guidelines, and it was abandoned because of the concern that it would cause delay in the assessment process. Calls for research proposals would be invited through open participation according to the detailed and clear guidelines established by NFPCSP, endorsed by the Research Grants Panel and approved by the Steering Committee. It was clear that institutions that fulfilled the criteria according to the guidelines could apply and that a full proposal would be solicited from each applicant.

A point was made on considering the involvement of outside experts in addition to the RGP in the assessment of the Research Proposals. It was also suggested that a participatory monitoring and evaluation could be considered during the process of monitoring the research activities.

Response: The RGP was the ultimate body constituted in collaboration with the GoB in accordance with the guidelines.

Another question was asked if international NGOs could apply for the research grant.

Response: International NGOs having established office in Bangladesh could apply for the grant, however, the money would have to be received and spent within Bangladesh in the local currency, Taka.

To the question on whether a Ph.D. student (enrolled for three years) can use funds from a research project which is for a maximum period of 18 months, it was remarked that grants will not be given to fund a full Ph.D. program. However, the principal investigator could only involve the Ph.D. students for data collection or any part of Ph D research during the life of the project.

Participants' comments on Issues Arising from Presentation on Research Needs Digest

Comments were made on the ranking of research themes. It was not surprising that 'transparency' ranked the top most. Many food and safety net programs in Bangladesh are not rightly targeted and lot of leakage is found that is inherent to many of the food and safety net programs.

Ranking of environment in the fourth position may not have reflected its true importance because there are many important environmental issues such as soil degradation and loss of biodiversity.

It was also disappointing that 'disadvantaged regions, disabled and elderly' theme was ranked last as targeted interventions towards these regions are often highlighted as a priority issue in the area of food security.

Regarding intra-group consensus in ranking, it was observed (from Mr. Ciro Fiorillo's calculation) that the 'utilization and nutrition' group had relatively more consensus in their ranking. The social access group, on the other hand, had more differentiated views in their ranking. These differences would need to be taken into account in making use of the ranking results.

4. Session III: Technical Session - Group Discussions and Preparation of Group Recommendations

Four working group sessions were concurrently held as part of the Technical and Plenary Session of the Workshop. The sessions were each chaired by the Directors of the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU) with facilitation inputs from the TAT National Advisors and the TAT International Experts. Support inputs from the Chairperson¹ of the Workshop's Technical Session and the Adviser to FAO² were provided as necessary. The number of participants in each group ranged from 27 to 34 and represented government research agencies and institutes, academia and NGOs.

An interactive and participatory process was followed in all the group discussions. The four working groups reiterated the importance of the group discussion, identified priority research themes presented, and elicited ranking inputs from the participants for picking up the most important research theme through a process of ranking and not scoring. This ranking exercise would determine the top priority research areas (themes) as well as cross cutting themes for which funding will be considered under the research opportunities of the

¹ Mr. Kostas Stamoulis, Chief, ESAE, FAO, HQ

² Prof Mohan Rao, Adviser to FAO

NFPCSP. A summarization of the group discussions and the consolidated outputs were presented in the Plenary.

5. Session IV: Plenary Session

This section presents the issues arising from the group discussions, summarization of discussions at the Plenary and consensus/collective thinking of the ranking of the research themes identified as part of the research needs assessment. It also provides the conclusions of the Chairperson, Mr. Kostas Stamoulis at the Plenary Session.

5.1 Group 1 – FS Dimension: Production and Availability

Chair: Mr. Md Abdur Rahman, Research Director, FPMU and Leader TRT A

Facilitator: Prof S. A. Sabur, TAT National Advisor, NFPCSP

Issues arising from Working Group Discussion

An 18 month time horizon was pointed out as being insufficient for undertaking certain kind of projects like research on technology including biotechnology. In the face of global climate change and also soil degradation, the environment cluster/theme should be widened to encompass: (i) new crops for changing/hostile environment, (ii) new, less irrigation – intensive crops, and (iii) new thrust on crop research.

Scope of Research Themes considered

1. While it was agreed that the scope of the research issues as dealt within the RND and within the Research Programme was confined to a focus on socioeconomic applications of technologies, it was also pointed out that existing production technologies will not prove sufficient in the face of future evolving challenges in agriculture. There is a need to include biotechnology as a long-term option. Further, apart from priority being given to the crop sector, research related to crop-livestock and fisheries sectors/systems also needs to be considered. The group discussed that an 18 month time horizon may be insufficient for undertaking certain kinds of projects like research on technology including biotechnology, but it was pointed out by the facilitator that direct research related to experimental work in biotechnology would not be considered under the research grant provision of NFPCSP.

2. On the subject of Research Themes, the participants proposed another option for a set of research themes. It was suggested that Research Theme 2 (Specialization vs. Diversification in Food Production and the Role of Trade and Trade Policy) be merged with Research Theme 5 (Value Chain Analysis in Output Markets). Given the changing situation in the global scenario as well as that in global trade and competitiveness and Bangladesh's dependence on its neighbors, it is worthwhile considering crop diversification within a dynamic situation and context. The chain should be linked to international markets.

3. On the issue of integrated farming systems, there is also a need to address issues within the context of homestead systems. In particular, it would be necessary to promote

integration of technology and sustaining agriculture among subsistence-farm households. An integrated approach needs to be coordinated among these households. With a focus on addressing food production and availability issues of the ultra poor, there is an imperative need to consider integrated homestead development and promotion as a practical research issue, given that 34% of the rural Bangladesh population owns homestead land. Experience shows that past policies on crop diversification have not been very helpful, particularly with reference to the production of pulses and oilseeds.

4. Another important area of research priority for consideration is the impact of natural disasters. Strategic research issues for reducing agricultural vulnerability to disasters indicating actions would need to be considered within an overall framework for policy strategy.

5.2. Group 2 - FS Dimension: Physical and Social Access

Chair: Mr. Ruhul Amin, Deputy Chief, FPMU and Leader TRT B

Facilitator: Prof Rezaul Karim Talukder, TAT National Advisor, NFPCSP

Issues arising from the Working Group Discussion

Refinement of the definitions was an important outcome in this Working Group Session with reconsideration of the way to envision certain themes. For example, it was pointed out that in the definition of *Targeting Methodologies for Food Security Safety Net Programs*, the focus was uniquely on targeting *criteria and yet*, many issues exist over targeting *implementation* which needs to be seriously considered.

Summarization of Discussion

1. *Social Access to Food in Monga Affected Areas*: In spite of the existence of safety nets, monga-related hunger still occurs every year. There is a need to look at ways to address the monga problem permanently. Safety nets are a temporary solution to solve food insecurity. In this dimension, the focus has been mainly on non-market mechanisms to tackle the problem of food insecurity linked to monga, but it was suggested that the actual means to tackle monga also needs to be given due research attention. There is a clear need to view the problem in its entirety, in particular the unemployment and poverty situation which would be well covered under the economic access dimension. It should be noted that, two out of the seven themes prioritized under the Economic Access dimension deal with certain aspects of monga. Also, particular aspects of monga with reference to the nutrition situation can be looked at under the Availability and Nutrition dimension.

2. Issues regarding the theme *Involving Communities and Local Power Structures in Safety Nets*: Local communities need to be mobilized in the mechanism of local organization of safety net arrangements. This includes local media personnel who can be useful in ensuring a better flow of information to safety net beneficiaries. Access to information is vital to the proper implementation of safety nets. For example, media people could inform safety net stakeholders on the availability of food stocks and help them understand whether food crises are being artificially created and why. However, such a role envisaged for media personnel is merely one of information dissemination and does not justify involving them as such in the design and implementation of safety nets. There is also need for a clear definition of what is

meant by 'local power structures': it should not only consist of *union parishads* but should also include elites, local leaders, teachers, etc.

3. *Targeting Methodologies for Food Security Safety Nets*: A representative from BRAC drew attention to the BRAC program for the Ultra Poor and emphasized the fact that development organizations targeting the same type of people need to think about their targeting criteria together to ensure they do not miss anyone from their coverage. However, one must also be forewarned about the risk of having uniform targeting criteria. Beneficiaries with different characteristics, even if with minor differences only, might require different selection criteria. There are experiences from WFP in this regard, on implementation of Beneficiary Review of all criteria that have been used by a host of development programs.

4. *Missing themes*: All agreed that corruption is a very important factor in explaining deficiencies in safety nets and that this should be closely examined. This aspect is indeed very pertinent and thus, has been included as a cross cutting theme. However, it should also be noted that issues pertaining to corruption and more generally governance also appear under some of the proposed themes such as targeting methodologies (leakage, quality degradation, and adulteration).

In the *Relief and Food Delivery Processes in Vulnerable Regions and Seasons*, it was pointed out that the management of food distribution in natural calamities and disasters which are essential for Bangladesh was omitted. It was even suggested that the themes *Relief and Food Delivery Processes in Vulnerable Regions and Seasons* and *Social Access to Food in Monga Affected Areas* be merged so as to have a topic which would focus on the *Management of Food in Disaster Situations*.

The question of how to inform policy makers so that they can take action based on the results of research was raised. For this purpose, it was suggested that there was need to consider adding *Monitoring and Evaluation* and *Forecasting* themes under Overarching Themes.

5. *Ranking*: The most striking feature of the ranking of the themes proposed under Physical and Social Access is the extremely limited spread of the total ranks. This clearly pointed to a lack of consensus on what themes should be given priority under this theme and called for caution in the way the results of this exercise should be used.

5.3. Group 3 - FS Dimension: Economic Access

Chair: Ms Shoheli Shirin Ahmed, Research Director (Policy), FPMU and Leader TRT C
Facilitator: Prof Ferdous Alam, TAT National Advisor, NFPCSP

Issues arising from the Working Group Discussion

1. The proposed seven themes under Economic Access, all of which have a strong 'pro-poor' content, were generally endorsed by the participants. However, it was noted that some of the themes identified have already been addressed in the last several years (e.g. micro-credit, vulnerability, employment) and that their degree of relevance, priority and urgency from a policy viewpoint might require further probing in light of the most recent literature and food policy frameworks.

2. It was recalled that identification of the proposed research themes proceeded from a broad based scoring exercise (to identify key clusters) conducted among a wide range of government and non-government stakeholders, including academia, during the 29 November 2006 RNA workshop. Furthermore, relevance of research themes was also gauged against a comprehensive review of current food security policy frameworks and preliminary survey of the food security literature on Bangladesh.

3. Generally, most of the comments made during the open discussion provided support to the contents of the draft RND sections on Economic Access, in terms of both specific researchable queries under each theme and their methodological approaches. Participants also made valuable suggestions regarding key researchable questions under specific research themes:

- The need for clear definitions of ultra-poverty as opposed to moderate poverty, as well as exclusion.

Feedback from authors/facilitators: considering alternative measurements/dimensions of ultra-poverty was a key focus of proposed basic research under 'Livelihood Patterns and Coping Strategies of the Ultra-Poor'

- The related need for distinguishing between different segments of the ultra-poor/vulnerable population (e.g. disabled, ill, women, people living on char land etc...), and accounting for inequality among the poor, as well as different forms of exclusion, under all ultra-poverty/employment related themes (*Livelihoods Patterns and Coping Strategies of the Ultra-Poor* and *Ultra-Poverty and Micro- Credit, Links and Missing Links, Self Employment, Wage Employment and Income Generation*; access to common property resources and income generation). This is warranted on the ground that different segments do not have the same access to productive assets, income-generating activities and other opportunities and that, addressing their specific needs may subsequently require different mixes of market-based and public interventions.

From the RND-Economic Access perspective, disaggregation among different segments of the poor and vulnerable population, including disaggregation by gender and location is systematically recommended under priority research themes.

- The need to consider poverty, ultra-poverty, and their determinants from a dynamic perspective, with a particular focus on the reasons explaining why some poor/ultra-poor do escape the 'poverty trap' and some don't.

Feedback from authors/facilitators: The RND-Economic Access section actually pointed to the lack of emphasis on poverty and inequality dynamics in the current literature and calls for taking this dimension into account, especially with regard to the theme on micro-credit and ultra poverty

- The need to consider poverty from both a rural and urban perspective. Most of proposed research themes actually point to covering both rural and urban areas

4. Regarding specific research themes, valuable suggestions were made by participants in terms of additional research angles and queries. In particular:

- Under the Research Theme on *Micro-Credit and Ultra-Poverty Links and Missing Links*, research may consider giving further insight to the linkages between informal credit and micro-credit delivery mechanisms, as well as to linkages between micro-credit and other factor markets, including labor and agricultural input markets. Also, in considering the relationships between micro-credit and ultra-poverty reduction along with reasons for the under-representation of the ultra-poor, research should pay attention to the terms and conditions of micro-credit provision by different NGOs.
- Under the Research Theme on '*Self-Employment, Wage Employment and Income Generation*', it was suggested that further investigation be made on issues such as wage discrimination and differential wages rates across locations in considering relative returns to self-employment and wage employment opportunities. The changes in labor/factor market structures, (including migration pattern) would also merit much attention in research.
- Under the Research Theme '*Price Stabilization, Market Integration and Consumer Welfare*', it was suggested to consider the methodology used by the government for determining procurement prices and its incidence with respect to the effectiveness of stabilization policies.
- Others: some participants underscored globalization and trade liberalization policies' impact on food security.

It was concluded that most of the suggestions could be accommodated in finalizing the RND section on Economic Access Research Priorities.

5. Following the presentation of the above key discussion issues and results of ranking exercise, participants in the plenary session underscored:

- ✓ Taking disaggregated approaches to poverty/ultra-poverty research (hereby echoing the technical session).
- ✓ Emphasizing accessibility of the poor and vulnerable segments of the population to basic social services (health and education in particular) as a key determinant of access of the poor and vulnerable groups to income generating opportunities whether in the form of self employment or wage employment.
- ✓ The role of private sector agents in improving economic access to food.
- ✓ The potential role of micro-insurance schemes in promoting self-employment.

It was also mentioned that the private sector, and more generally non-government institutions are, by nature, a primary area of focus in research on economic access dimensions of food security (as distinct from social access dimensions which primarily refer to public support). The need for adopting a comprehensive approach to 'accessibility issues' and related inequality dimensions, in research on employment and income generation was fully acknowledged (by the authors). The case for such an emphasis is especially compelling in view of emerging definitions of poverty, as being primarily a 'lack of opportunities' (see World Bank definitions). Risk management/mitigation and insurance mechanisms at household level are virtually absent in Bangladesh and could indeed be considered as an additional entry-point for further research on self-employment prospects for poor households.

5.4. Group 4 - FS Dimension: Utilization/Nutrition

Chair: Mr. Md. Abdul Khaleque, Research Director, Nutrition, FPMU and Leader TRT D
Facilitator: Prof Harun Yusuf, TAT National Advisor, NFPCSP

Issues arising from the Working Group Discussion

1. Food composition tables: Food composition tables (FCT) in Bangladesh were first prepared by Dhaka University Department of Biochemistry/Institute of Nutrition and Food Science around 30 years ago. These have been in the process of revision with inclusion of new data generated by different organizations. However, inconsistencies exist in these tables. Also, food composition tables need to contain data on the anti-nutrient content of the foods, if any (e.g. lathyrus toxin in Khesari (*Lathyrus sativus*); protease inhibitors in pulses and soybeans etc.). The need to construct modern food composition tables for Bangladesh through systematic analysis keeping in view the evolving food chain scenario in both production and consumption perspectives in the country was recognized. The food composition tables should also be institutionalized.

2. Food contamination and adulteration: The emerging problem of food contamination and adulteration (to accelerate the ripening of fruit or to make it look fresher for example) raises questions about the quality of supply and effects on nutrition/utilization. Contamination of food along the entire food chain from farm to table should be taken into consideration when doing research on food contaminants and factors that affect utilization of food for nutrition.

A suggestion was made of the possibility of doing research on the use of the urease enzyme while using urea fertilizer, so that urea is broken down to ammonium ion (NH_4^+). This could then be used by the plants for protein synthesis. But the suggestion was not taken on board because of the hazards associated with too much urea in food production and because of the lack of feasibility at the field level.

Consensus was reached on the need to do research on arsenic intoxication and on the residual effects of chemical fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides and also on the effects of food contaminants (e.g. formalin in fish) and food adulterants (preservatives, colorants, sweeteners) on the utilization of nutrients in the body for nutrition. Indeed, arsenic contamination in the food chain (soil to food) affects a large part of the country (60 districts out of 64) through use of contaminated tube well water for irrigation and for drinking.

3. Micronutrient status studies: additional areas of focus- Strong emphasis should be given on the study of iodine deficiency in certain areas in the northern part of the country, although the overall situation has improved ever since iodized salt has been introduced in the country a decade ago. Studies should be done on improved monitoring mechanisms for the salt iodization program that is currently in place.

The issue of the incidence of rickets in Chakaria (near Cox's Bazar) and other parts of the country should also be given due attention. This rickets is not due to vitamin D deficiency but due to calcium deficiency, particularly among the poorer section of the population.

The role of zinc in human nutrition has not been given due attention in the past in Bangladesh. It is now realized that zinc is involved in growth and development of the children, with special reference to development of the immune system. Research should

therefore need to be done considering the deficiencies of multiple micronutrients, particularly in growing children and women of reproductive age.

4. Food safety and food quality: The entire issue of street food vending system, because of its importance in catering millions of urban as well as rural poor, should be thoroughly researched for it to be institutionalized and effective. This institutionalization should be in the perspective of quality control, infrastructure development as well as capacity building of the street food vendors.

Consensus was clearly seen on the need to research on the street food vending system for its institutionalization.

5.5. Summarization of discussion:

Concerns were raised about the ranking that the Research Theme 'Micronutrient status of vulnerable populations in geographically at risk areas' should have come last, as it is still a real problem. It was also pointed out that national reviews have shown that between 1973 and 1994, there has been an increase in stunting. Clinical deficiency of Zinc and Vitamin A are also prevalent in the country.

It was suggested that collaboration with ICDDR, B would be very helpful to those researchers who would be interested in pursuing research on the issue of rickets as they have an on-going program of Chakaria.

It was agreed that the utilization of food for nutrition is of great importance and interest to all. Yet there were no research themes pointing to the issues on intra household allocation and food fortification that closely deal with micronutrient malnutrition.

A need to carefully look at 'nutrition security' within the purview of food security was also highlighted. Agricultural produce is losing its nutritional value over the years. Food contamination is occurring right from the farms. While farmers are being encouraged to grow increasing quantities of food, they are indiscriminately using pesticides and fertilizers which are detrimental. Solar drying and post harvest processing related research that would serve to conserve nutrients and promote year long access were additional issues that need to be considered as part of food utilization and the nutrition dimension.

Food and Nutrition mapping needs to be undertaken if we are to address the nutritional problems affecting the poor in remote and spread out regions of the country. The FIVIMS initiative started out in the country needs to be followed up and strengthened. Food Composition tables were reiterated as being very crucial for having updated knowledge on the nutrient profile of foods being currently grown in the country and would also be a very valuable tool in food planning and setting food and nutrition standards for balanced nutrition.

If the three pillars of food security are considered, then it can be said that Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in the issues of availability and access, but is still very weak when it comes to nutrition. A lot of improvement still needs to be made. In this regard, particular concern was raised about the ranking of research themes in Nutrition by the Working Group. The highest ranking was given to the theme of *food contamination and food adulteration*. It was pointed out that while the safety and quality of food was indeed an issue of public health and research, it possibly centered around concerns of those people who already have something on their plate. In the context of the poor, it must be noted, that irrespective of the fact that food is contaminated, their sole need and worry is whether they

have food (rice) to eat. Lack of food is one of the main reasons why malnutrition (under nutrition) is so highly prevalent in Bangladesh.

The discussion issues under the utilization and nutrition dimension covered many technical issues specific to nutrition. The Chair of the Technical Session, Mr. Kostas Stamoulis, in conclusion wondered if this project should try to address all food security problems or should try to complement existing research. He felt the project should avoid creating expectations on matters that it would not be able to fulfill. He also queried whether the methodology used for deriving priorities was flawed, and if so, whether there existed a better way to arrive identify these priorities.

Ranking: The ranking exercise emerged as a strong positive feature of the research needs assessment as part of the group discussions and working group sessions. The wide differences in the ranking across the different themes reflected a sort of consensus in prioritization. It was clear that its outcome reflected the knowledge and experience of many experts, policy makers and other keen consumers or producers of research.

Table 1 lists the Research Themes in rank order, in the four FS dimensions.

Table 1: Research themes in rank order

Dimension	Research Themes
Production and Availability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accessibility of Inputs for Food Production 2. Land Use Patterns and their Long Term Implications for Food Security 3. Effectiveness of Extension Services in Promoting Technology Adoption 4. Economic Efficiency of Domestic Food Production 5. Specialization vs. Diversification in Food Production and the Role of Trade and Trade Policy 6. Technical Efficiency and Assessment of Post-Harvest and Other Losses 7. Value Chain Analysis in Output Markets
Physical and Social Access	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Involving Communities and Local Power Structures in Safety Net Provision 2. Best Practices in Food Distribution Programs 3. Storage Facilities: Options for Remote Areas and Poor Communities 4. Relief and Food Delivery Processes in Vulnerable Regions and Seasons 5. Targeting Methodologies for Food Security Safety Net Programs 6. Quality Degradation of Food Commodities in Storage: Economic Causes and Solutions 7. Social Access to Food in Monga-Affected Areas
Economic Access	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-Employment, Wage Employment and Income Generation 2. Livelihood Patterns and Coping Strategies of the Ultra-Poor including Disadvantaged Groups 3. Price Stabilization, Market Integration and Consumer Welfare 4. Access to Common Property Resources and Income Generation 5. Ultra-Poverty and Micro-Credit: Links and Missing Links 6. Non-Government Influences in Food Market Price Formation 7. Non-Rice Food Prices and Markets and Economic Access to a More Diversified Diet
Utilization and Nutrition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Food Contamination and Food Adulteration 2. Setting Food and Nutrition Standards for Balanced Nutrition 3. Food Composition Tables With Special Reference to Indigenous Foods 4. Institutionalization and Capacity Building of Street Food Systems 5. Dietary Diversity of the Ultra Poor, Including the Urban Poor 6. Promotion of Functional Foods for Additional Health Benefits 7. Micronutrient Status of Vulnerable Populations in Geographically At-Risk Areas

These rankings for the main-dimension Research Themes are quite robust given the unambiguous separation of the Themes by rank. The top two ranked themes for each of the food security dimensions are given in Table 2.

Table 2: The top two research themes

Dimension	Top two research themes
Production and Availability	Accessibility of Inputs for Food Production Land Use Patterns and their Long Term Implications for Food Security
Physical and Social Access	Involving Communities and Local Power Structures in Safety Net Provision Best Practices in Food Distribution Programs
Economic Access	Self-Employment, Wage Employment and Income Generation Livelihood Patterns & Coping Strategies of the Ultra-Poor inc. Disadvantaged Groups
Utilization and Nutrition	Food Contamination and Food Adulteration Setting Food and Nutrition Standards for Balanced Nutrition

The cross-cutting and over-arching Research Themes are listed in rank order below (Table 3).

Table 3: Cross cutting and overarching research themes in rank order

Dimension	Ranked Research Themes: Cross-cutting and over-arching
Governance and Institutions	Transparency of Policies and Accountability of Institutions Related to Food Security
Over-Arching Issue	Issues in Measurement of Food Security, Vulnerability and Poverty
Infrastructure	Power, Transport, Communication, Irrigation, Storage
Environment	Long-Term Environmental Degradation and Food Security
Over-Arching Issue	The Economic and Social Value of Nutrition and Food Security
Women and Other Disadvantaged Groups	Disadvantaged Regions, the Disabled, Elderly, Children and Ethnic Minorities

It was not a matter of surprise that the cross cutting theme of *Transparency of Policies and Accountability of Institutions* was ranked first, as it has been flagged in many instances. The theme of *Long-Term Environmental Degradation and Food Security Environment* only comes fourth which is disappointing in that there are many urgent environmental problems in Bangladesh such as soil degradation and contamination. It would be worthwhile thinking why the theme on *Issues in Measurement of Food Security, Vulnerability and Poverty* has displaced the environment issues theme.

It was disappointing to note that the theme on 'Disadvantaged Regions, the Disabled, Elderly, Children and Ethnic Minorities' theme was ranked last. Food security related concerns among this region and groups are an urgent priority and as such a ranking should be reconsidered.

Comments from BARC pointed to the issue that people go hungry because they cannot afford food and as such efforts should concentrate on increasing people's buying/purchasing capacity. In particular, a member from BARC commended and thanked FAO for its novel efforts and methodology in coming up with a meaningful way to address food security issues.

Mr. Ciro Fiorillo, CTA, NFPCSP remarked that according to his quick calculations, the nutrition group had an overall consensus on their ranking (although we may have issues with the results) and their research priorities seem to have collective thinking. On the other hand, the physical and social access group seems to have had very divergent views. This would need to be taken into consideration before decisions are taken on how to proceed with application or using the ranking results.

Biases would exist, and there is a need to know whether this is good or bad. Despite employing the participatory method/process, such a democratic inquiry may not necessarily be the best way. There is need to decide how to apply these results given the urgency and need to begin with financing research as quickly as possible. Stock taking would need to be done to first list the identified research themes and then reflect and maybe review the priorities. This exercise has not just been interesting, but it is quite unique.

The Adviser to FAO, Prof Rao, emphasized that the technical point made by the CTA cannot be disregarded. But any reference to rank correlations is likely to be misplaced. The point of this exercise is to arrive at a collective ranking and this does not mean consensus. There is need to know where the community of researchers stand collectively. This is what the ranking method has allowed. These rankings would need to be accepted, and these are very informative. These will stay and support the final conclusions to the RND. The Chair added that there was a need to think on the extent to which the results are in accordance with the National Food Policy agenda and view.

6. Conclusions

The ranking exercise emerged as being a positive one. The outcome is the result of people's knowledge and experience. An experimental process has been followed and everyone's contribution is very important to this experiment and learning. Indeed, it was felt that there was an overall agreement about the way the themes have been arrived at and ranked out.

There are obvious overlaps between themes but this is unavoidable since we are looking at food security which in itself is a very broad area. It was suggested that missing themes such as Monitoring and Evaluation of the quality of research could be included in the overarching issues. There was also a need to consider in more concrete and explicit terms the involvement of the private sector in the research themes. It was noted that while the discussions were very lively, especially in the parallel sessions, not enough time was given for people to articulate their points and for debate in the plenary session.

Some key questions were raised that might serve to guide decision-making on resource allocation for research that builds on the final findings of the technical-participatory assessment:

- ✓ **Concentration:** Should research funding be concentrated over several Research Themes or spread across the full range of the Themes? Our view is that initial-phase concentration on the criterion of urgency is advisable while the reach may be widened in later phases.

- ✓ **Specialization:** Should the Program Research and Challenge Fund awards be specialized to distinct sets of Research Themes or have no distinct domains? Perhaps, this is a bridge that needs to be crossed only after the first slate of candidate proposals has come in.
- ✓ **Influence:** Should there be a role for high-visibility (including multi-disciplinary) research projects in the funding programs? One argument in favor is that such projects can fulfill a useful function by signaling high quality, have an influential impact, and also help attract the top researchers and research bodies.

4. On the whole the discussions at the Workshop were very lively, especially in the group discussions (working group sessions). Participants felt there was not enough time to allow many to articulate their views or to debate issues that did come up. On the whole, however, there was overall agreement about the soundness of the route by which the Themes had been arrived at. The Workshop ended on a very encouraging note on participation in the Award of Research Grants of NFPCSP and with thanks to and from the Chair.

Annexes

Annex 1. Programme of the workshop

Date: 26 February 2007 (Monday)
Venue: SPECTRA Convention Center (House # 19, Road # 7 Gulshan -1, Dhaka 1212). Tel. 8852976, 8852794)
Time: 09 00 hrs to 17 00 hrs

09 00~09 20 Arrival and Registration
09 20~09 25 Guests take seats

Session I: Inaugural Session, Chair: Mr. Abdul Bari Khan, Additional Secretary and Acting Director General, FPMU, MoFDM
Venue: Queen's Hall, First Floor, SPECTRA Convention Center

09 25~ 09 30 Recitation from the Holy Quran
09 30 ~09 40 Welcome address by Mr. Ruhul Amin, Deputy Chief, FPMU, MoFDM
09 40~09 50 Workshop Objectives by the Chief Technical Advisor Mr. Ciro Fiorillo, NFPCSP, FAO
09 50~10 00 Address by the Guest of Honor Mr. Gene V. George, Mission Director, USAID, Dhaka, Bangladesh
10 00~10 10 Address by the Guest of Honor Ms. Francoise Collet, First Counselor and Head of Operations, European Commission, Dhaka
10 10~10 20 Address by the Special Guest Mr. Ad Spijkers, FAO Representative in Bangladesh
10 20~10 35 Address by the Chief Guest Mr. Dhiraj Malakar, Secretary In-Charge, MoFDM
10 35~10 45 Address by the Chair, Director General of FPMU, MoFDM

10 45 to 11 00: Tea

Session II: Technical Session, Chair: Mr. Kostas Stamoulis, Chief, ESAE, FAO, HQ, Rome, Italy
Venue: Queen's Hall, First Floor, SPECTRA Convention Center

11 00~11 15 Guidelines for Awarding Research Grants by Mr. Nur A. Khondaker, RGA, NFPCSP, FAO
11 15~11 25 Discussion
11 25~12 00 A Digest of Research Needs for Food Security in Bangladesh by Prof. Mohan Rao, Adviser to FAO

Session III: Group Discussion, Coordinator: Mr. Mohan Rao, Adviser to FAO

12 00~13 15 Group Discussion and Ranking Exercise.

- Group A: Food Availability, Chair: Research Director (EW), FPMU
Venue: King's Hall, Ground Floor
- Group B: Physical and Social Access to Food, Chair: Deputy Chief, FPMU
Venue: Queen's Hall, First Floor
- Group C: Economic Access to Food, Chair: Research Director (Policy), FPMU
Venue: Green Hall, Ground Floor
- Group D: Utilization of Food/Nutrition, Chair: Research Director (Nutrition), FPMU
Venue: Red Hall, First Floor

13 15~14 00: *Lunch ((Venue: King's Hall, Ground Floor, SPECTRA Convention Center) and PRAYER*

Session IV: Plenary Session, Chair: Mr. Kostas Stamoulis, Chief, ESAE, FAO HQ Rome, Italy
Venue: Queen's Hall, First Floor, SPECTRA Convention Center

- 14 00~ 14 15 Discussion on the Methodology (Issues and Questions arising from the morning presentation by M. Rao)
- 14 15 ~ 14 45 Summary Presentation and Open Discussion, Group A, Mr. S. A. Sabur, Adviser, NFPCSP
- 14 45~ 15 15 Summary Presentation and Open Discussion, Group B, Mr. R. K. Talukder, Adviser, NFPCSP

15 15 ~ 15 30 *Tea/Coffee (Venue: King's Hall, Ground Floor, SPECTRA Convention Center)*

- 15 30 ~ 16 00 Summary Presentation and Open Discussion, Group C, Mr F. Alam, Adviser, NFPCSP
- 16 00 ~ 16 30 Summary Presentation and Open Discussion, Group D, Mr. H. K. M. Yusuf, Adviser, NFPCSP
- 16 30 ~ 17:00 Summary Presentation of Cross Cutting Theme Ranking, and General Discussion
- 17:00 ~ 17:15 Closing Remarks by the Chair

Annex 2: List of Participants

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 1. **Mr. Dhiraj Malakar**
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 3. **Mr. Siddiqur Rahman**
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 4. **Mr. S. M. Abdur Rahman**
Senior Information Officer/Public Relations Officer
 5. **Mr. Olid- Bin- Ashad**
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 10. **Mr. Md. Ruhul Amin**
Research Director/ Deputy Chief

- 11. Mr. Hajiqul Islam**
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- 12. Mr. Md. Naser Farid**
Assistant Chief
- 13. Mr. Mostafa Faruq Al Banna**
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- 14. Mr. Feroz Al Mahmud**
Additional Director
- 15. Mr. Md. Mahbubur Rahman**
Additional Director
- 16. Ms. Ferdousi Ara**
Additional Director
- 17. Mr. Syed Amdadul Huq**
Additional Director
- 18. Mr. Md. Ruhul Amin Talukder**
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- 20. Ms. Alima Nusrat Jahan**
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- 21. Mr. Mujahed Ali**
PS to Director General
- 22. Mr. Md. Ismail Mia**
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- 23. Mr. Md. Nasiruddin**
Steno
- 24. Mr. S. K. Raha**
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- 25. Mr. Harunur Rashid**
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- 26. Mr. Md. Yunus**
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- 31. Mr. Salamot**
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Annex 3: Welcome Address by Mr. Md. Ruhul Amin, Deputy Chief (Market Monitoring and Public Food Operation Planning), FPMU

Honorable Chairman, Director General, Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU), Ministry of Food and Disaster Management

Honorable Chief Guest, Mr. Dhiraj Malakar, Secretary, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management

Special Guest, His Excellency Mr. Ad Spijkers, FAO Representative in Bangladesh

Guest of Honor, Mr. Françoise Collet, First Controller and Head of Operations, European Commission, Bangladesh

Guest of Honor, Mr. Gene George, Mission Director, USAID, Bangladesh

Representatives from International Organizations, Academia, NGOs and Government Ministries and agencies

Chief Technical Advisor of NFPCSP Mr. Ciro Fiorillo

Chief of Agriculture Sector in Economic Development Service (ESAE), FAO HQ, Rome Mr. Kostas Stamoulis

Professor Mohan Rao, FAO Expert on Research Needs Assessment

Distinguished members of the Technical Assistance Team from home and abroad

Members from the media

Dear Colleagues from the Ministries

Distinguished participants from Civil Society Organizations

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum, and a very good morning to you all.

I have the privilege of welcoming you all to this consultative Workshop on Assessment of Research Needs for Food Security in Bangladesh and Guidelines for Awarding Research Grants.

You will recollect that the first workshop on research needs assessment for informed policy making was held on 29 November 2006 in which the preliminary findings of the research needs assessment survey were shared with you. In today's workshop, a Research Needs Digest that has been prepared thereafter will be shared with you for consensus building in identifying the top priority research areas on food security. This is the main purpose of today's workshop. The guidelines for awarding research grants under the National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFPCSP) will also be presented to you for your comments and suggestions.

As you all know, Bangladesh has made an impressive achievement in food production, mainly the cereals, which has increased from 15 million metric tons to 30 million metric tons just within the last two decades. However, the production of the non-cereal food crops and non-crop foods – the animal products, has been far below the requirements. The national food basket is thus not only deficient in the needed nutrients, but also highly imbalanced, resulting in widespread protein-energy and micronutrient malnutrition. The worst sufferers are the people who live under poverty. The problem is enormous for the nation, because nearly half of the population lives under poverty line number one of 2122 kcal/day, with as much as one-quarter living under the had core poverty line of 1805 kcal/day. Food insecurity is a day to day phenomenon for this huge number of population of the country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you are aware, the National Food Policy of 2006 is a comprehensive, equitable gender-sensitive and pro-poor national policy formulated in line with the World Food Summit target

and the Millennium Development Goal, to establish a workable food security system in the country, so that a dependable sustained food security can be attained for all people of the country at all times. The National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFPCSP) has been initiated to assist in strengthening Bangladesh's capacity in implementing the objectives of the National Food Policy. This Programme is implemented jointly by the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU) under the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with financial assistance of the European Commission (EC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). We are highly grateful for their assistance.

Meeting the National Food Policy's overarching goal of '*ensuring food security for all people at all times*' calls for rigorous research on food policy and food security issues, which covers all dimensions of food security, namely availability of food, economic, physical and social access to food, and utilization of food for nutrition. Research is also needed on the dimensions that cut across all food policy and food security issues, such as gender, governance, environment, and physical and social infrastructure.

Sound policy-making decisions taken on the basis of proper scientific information are more desirable and effective than decision taken on an unformed basis. Research is thus a critical tool for informing decision-making process. Support with research grants in strengthening research capacity and research performance of the civil society organizations is one of the two inherent components of the NFPCSP programme.

As part of its Research Grants initiative, NFPCSP has conducted a Research Needs Assessment among a broad range of food stakeholders in Bangladesh to identify research priorities for food security. As mentioned before, the preliminary findings of this exercise were presented in the workshop held in November last year. A large number of research areas have been identified which are all important on a broader food security perspective, but given the limited opportunity of research fund available with the NFPCSP, we have to prioritize. Accordingly, a Research Needs Digest (RND) has been synthesized by Professor Mohan Rao in collaboration of the Technical Assistance Team of NFPCSP, based on the findings of the research needs assessment survey and also on the prioritization exercise conducted in that workshop. Professor Rao will present the Digest today for your valued inputs to further pinpointing the top priority research areas on food security. I trust that this workshop will build up a consensus on this issue of great national interest.

I gratefully thank the Hon'ble Secretary, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, Mr. Dhiraj Malakar, who, despite his heavy schedule, is honoring us with his presence as the chief guest in this very important event. I also wish to thank our partner implementing agency, the FAO, particularly our Special Guest Mr. Ad Spijkers, FAO Representative in Bangladesh for his kind presence and support. We also thank Mr. Françoise Collet of the European Commission and Mr. Gene George of the USAID for their kind presence here today and for their continued support to the program.

I also would like to thank our honorable DG, FPMU, for help in arranging this workshop and chairing the inaugural session. Mr. Kostas Stamoulis who will be chairing the technical session of the workshop, Professor Rao who will present the Research Needs Digest and Mr. Nur Khondaker, the Research Grant Administrator of NFPCSP who will present the guidelines for awarding the research grants in that session deserve special thanks and appreciation. My sincere thanks go to the Chief Technical Advisor of NFPCSP Mr. Ciro Fiorillo for successfully carrying out the activities of the NFPCSP program up to this point of time. I am confident the NFPCSP will be a successful program under his able guidance and leadership.

Distinguished participants! My heartfelt thanks are for you for taking trouble and giving time to attend this important workshop. I would particularly thank our friends from the media for coming to the workshop and would urge upon them to make a wide coverage of our today's event imprint and electronic media.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you again and thank you all for your kind presence in the workshop. Let me conclude my speech by expressing my deep confidence that your contribution to the discussion and brain storming will make the workshop a great success.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Allah Hafez.

Annex 4: Address by Mr. Gene V. George, Mission Director, USAID

Secretary-in-charge of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management Mr. Dhiraj Malakar
Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management Mr. Abdul Bari Khan
And other Government of Bangladesh high officials
FAO/Bangladesh Representative Mr. Ad Spijkers
Head of Operations, European Commission/Bangladesh Ms. Francoise Collet
Chief Technical Advisor of National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Program in Bangladesh Dr. Ciro Fiorillo
Distinguished guest, ladies and gentlemen,

Asalam uwalukhum, good morning and thank you for inviting me to say a few words at the Inaugural Session of the Workshop on 'An Assessment of Research Needs for Food Security in Bangladesh and Guidelines for Awarding Research Grants' of the National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Program.

Just after independence, the future for the new nation of Bangladesh looked pretty bleak. I recently came across a 1974 report that stated even if the country did everything right in controlling population growth and dealing with its food security situation, it would not be able to feed its population by the year 2000. To those with this doomsday vision, I say, look at the Bangladesh of today.

Bangladesh's accomplishments in agriculture and food security in the last three and half decades are recognized as a major development success story around the world. A wide range of food and agricultural policies and programs have been implemented to address issues of food availability, access, utilization and nutrition.

Since independence, USAID has been a willing and eager partner with the Government and people of this country in the development of Bangladesh's agriculture and food sectors. A few examples of where this cooperation has produced results include:

- USAID has played a major role in the development of Bangladesh's agricultural research system.
- We have supported institutions of higher education in general, but more importantly, agriculture.

- We supported liberalization of the agricultural input industry, agricultural trade and food management.
- USAID has promoted commercial agribusiness development, both to meet the growing domestic consumer demand for products and for export.

Though our recent involvement in agriculture has shifted to a focus on agribusiness and value added, we continue to stay involved at the policy level. For this are pleased to be a part of the joint effort on the National Food policy Capacity Strengthening Program. This policy program is expected to enhance the capacity of the Government of Bangladesh to research, formulate, review and implement a comprehensive, equitable, gender-sensitive, and pro-poor National Food Policy. While you may say this is an ambitious endeavor and we agree it is, at the same time the objectives are attainable.

The program strives to improve implementation of the food security policy framework in Bangladesh. This will be done through enhanced capacity, coordination of Government agencies, improved research, and increased civil society dialogue. The program will benefit especially those sections of the population most vulnerable to food insecurity: landless poor in rural areas, women-headed households, the urban poor, women and children.

The research component of this Food Policy Program aims at increasing civil society's involvement in action-oriented research on food policy and food security issues. I'm extremely happy to learn that this program has drafted a Research Needs Digest. The workshop will facilitate better understanding of the food security thematic research areas of:

- availability of food
- access-to-food and
- food utilization for nutrition.

The workshop will also contribute to building a consensus on the set of research priorities to be considered for eligibility under the research grant initiative of the program. I am to sure that this workshop will educate the professionals from GOB, research centers, universities, civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs about the National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Program's research grant award application modalities and selection criteria.

As I mentioned earlier, USAID feels honored to work together with the Government of Bangladesh, the FAO and the European Commission in the implementation of this program.

In closing, I wish the workshop every success and am positive you will identify the key research needs as well as you will develop a set of guidelines for research grants.

Thank you and Khodahafiz.

Annex 5: Speech of Ms Francoise Collet, First Counselor, EC Delegation

Honorable Secretary, Additional Secretary, Mister Chair, Guest of honor and Special guests,

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is my pleasure and honor to be invited at this important workshop where Government officials and key representatives and members of the Civil Society and Academics are meeting to discuss issues of common interest: the food security of Bangladesh.

Food security, translated into the Millennium Development Goal 1, is among the most challenging issues since it is a human right (as foreseen in the Universal Declaration) which remains far from being granted to each and everyone.

The European Community, through its Member States and the European Commission, has a long experience of fighting hunger. Since the beginning of its partnership with Bangladesh, EC is fighting hunger and poverty by the side of the Government and of the Civil Society.

I wish to stress that the specific interventions under the food security program of the European Community are part of a coherent development cooperation in Bangladesh. Beyond the food security program itself, the EC is heavily investing, with more than two hundred million euros, in two sectors very much relevant to short and long time sustainability of food security: Health and Education. Both sectors are tackled at national level, through sector wide programs, and at more local levels, involving both the Government and the civil society. In addition, the Community is also investing in Governance without which many of these efforts would be wasted. Promotion of Good Governance is done by strengthening Government agencies and encouraging a vibrant Civil Society which role in providing basic social services is also crucial for this country. EC is also very active in trade related technical assistance this including food related issues such as sanitary norms or development of agri-business.

With regard to the food security program itself, the European Community supports interventions in safety nets, agriculture, rural development, and enabling policies. These different interventions amount to some M€ 100 (or 900 crore taka). Again, the Community has chosen to involve all, the Government and the Civil Society. We do so because we believe that both have their respective roles and comparative advantages, but also because they are interdependent and therefore need each other.

This workshop is one of the many means by which NFPCSP is fostering dialogue and collaboration within and between the Government and the Civil Society. It is a platform for the Government and the Civil Society to build up a strategy and work together.

The large and active participation at the first workshop has been a clear encouragement. We do believe that this very one will also be very successful. It is only by embedding policies in sound and clear analysis, based on relevant research, that Bangladesh will be able to establish an enabling environment for a sustainable food security in Bangladesh.

I wish you all a fruitful workshop.

Thank you very much

Annex 6: Speech of Mr. Ad Spijkers, FAO Representative in Bangladesh

Mr Dhiraj Malakar, Chief Guest, Secretary, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, GoB
Guests of Honor, the Donor Representatives from EC and USAID (Gene George (USAID;
Francoise Collet, EC)

Chairperson, Director General Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU), Ministry of Food
and Disaster Management

Representatives from Government and Non Governmental Organizations, International
Organizations

Dear colleagues from FAO, HQ and projects

Distinguished Participants,

1. It is a great pleasure and honor for me to be present at this 2nd Workshop on 'Assessment of Research Needs for Food Security in Bangladesh and Guidelines for Awarding Research Grants' and share my views as Special Guest. I would like to thank the Government of Bangladesh for inviting FAO to say few words.

2. We wish to extend our greetings to all the Guests, our Donors, the Representatives from the Government and non Government agencies for having come here to collectively discuss this important issue on assessing food security research needs in Bangladesh.

3. The bottom line is that Bangladesh has to try hard to halve the number of hungry people by 2015. The main objective of the project is to how FAO could assist the people and Government of Bangladesh in this. FAO has initiated quite a good number of projects/programs in Bangladesh through its normative and field programs.

4. Among the various activities of FAO in Bangladesh, the National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFPCSP) is a part of new form of intervention, which aims at strengthening the capacity of public institutions to fight hunger and malnutrition through the adoption of policy interventions based on technically sound information and analysis.

5. We are pleased to know that today we will be discussing the results of the assessment of research needs on food security in Bangladesh that will inform policy makers towards strengthening and supporting policy development and its implementation as well as the project in calling for research proposals to be funded under the NFPCSP. In view of this, we will be presenting the draft guidelines for awarding research grants on undertaking action-oriented research on food policy and food security issues.

6. I came to know that for the first time FAO, in collaboration with the Government, is going to award research grant in this field. I hope will be able to identify genuine research needs and individuals that will help us to identify and address the key issues for food security in the country.

7. I express my sincere thanks to all the distinguished participants from academic institutions, civil society and government and non government agencies for taking part in the workshop, which was aimed at stimulating a participatory debate on the needs for further research on food security issues and policies in Bangladesh.

8. We express our gratitude to the European Commission and USAID for the continuous attention and support extended to FAO for implementing the National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme under which this workshop is taking place.

I would like thank all of you to provide support to efforts of FAO and the Government of Bangladesh in order to achieve WFS and MDGs targets in time and help this country to get rid of poverty by 2015.

Thank you.

Annex 7: Speech by Chairperson, Mr Abdul Bari Khan, Additional Secretary and Acting Director General, FPMU

Chief Guest, Secretary, MoFDM

Special Guest, the FAO Representative in Bangladesh, Mr. Ad Spijkers;

Guests of Honor, the Donor Representatives from EC and USAID

Representatives from international organizations, government and non governmental organizations

Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme, FAO

Chief, ESAE, FAO HQ, Rome;

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am honored to be in your midst this morning and share some views on the theme of today's workshop, 'An Assessment of Research Needs for Food Security in Bangladesh and Guidelines for Awarding Research Grants.'

2. I understand this workshop is the second of the series of events conducted as part of the research activities under the National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFPCSP), jointly implemented by the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management (MoFDM) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. I duly appreciate the inputs of the partner Ministries who have actively been involved in the implementation of the project, particularly through their participation in the Thematic Research Teams (TRTs) and in the Food Policy Working Group constituted over the past few months.

3. In the agro-based economy of Bangladesh, where a large proportion of the income of the population is allocated to food, the prime responsibility of the State is to ensure an uninterrupted supply of food to all people at all times. Accordingly, the Article-15 (a) of the Constitution of Bangladesh, states that it shall be a fundamental responsibility of the State to secure its citizens to the provision of basic necessities of food. As per Government's Allocation of Business, it is the duty of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management to establish a dependable food security system for the nation. The Government of Bangladesh is firmly committed to achieve food security for all as defined at the 1996 World Food Summit (WFS) and the 2002 WFS: Five Years Later and this provision is also reflected in all the development plans of the Government. It is indeed, appropriate, that the present National Food Policy 2006 has been developed in the light of the recently adopted Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and also within the broader perspective of the definition of food security as adopted in the WFS.

4. Ensuring food security for all is one of the major challenges that Bangladesh faces today. On the issue of food accessibility, a large fraction of Bangladesh's population suffers from chronic food insecurity which is fundamentally related to poverty. This insecurity occurs in spite of the existence of a number of safety net programs. Transitory food insecurity arising from seasonality, natural disasters and other shocks adds to the scale of the problem. While much is known about existing safety net programs, more needs to be known, especially if transitory and chronic food insecurity is to be prevented.

5. There is an increasing need to address issues related to *increasing the purchasing power and access to food of the people* which has rightly emerged as a core objective of National Food Policy (NFP) 2006. Food security policies and programs must also be concerned with food diversification rather than mere crop diversification if it is to achieve the aim of providing a 'balanced diet' for all. Policies should pay specific attention to the interactions between

domestic production and international trade in ensuring the availability of a desirable national food basket.

6. Despite the impressive achievements of Bangladesh in ensuring food availability during the last decades, food security at household and individual levels remains a major concern for the Government, because of the daunting question of economic accessibility of the poor who comprise almost half of the total population. Over 60 million people reportedly go hungry every day. This is primarily due to lack of purchasing power, and this needs to be addressed. Considerable intra-household disparity and discrimination in food consumption also persists. In 2005, almost 40% of preschool children and non-pregnant women were chronically malnourished in Bangladesh. Child and maternal mortality remain high with 77 children out of 1,000 live births dying before the age of five years and 380 mothers dying per 100,000 live births.

7. While average energy intake has slightly improved over the past years, the overall energy and nutrient intake continues to remain inadequate and fails to meet the recommended nutrient intakes. Eighty percent of dietary energy supply of Bangladeshis still comes from cereals. The per capita consumption of fish, meat and egg fall far short of the requirement. The high consumption of cereals coupled with low intake of pulses and animal-based protein result in high levels of anemia and other micronutrient (vitamins and minerals) deficiencies.

8. Indeed, nutrition and food security have high economic and social value. It has long been recognized that malnutrition retards the economic growth of a country. According to latest WB estimates, productivity losses to individuals can be more than 10 percent of lifetime earnings and gross domestic product (GDP) lost can be as high as 2 to 3 percent. Improving nutrition is therefore an issue of economics as much as it is of social protection, welfare and human rights. However, it has also to be reckoned, that the past 20 years have shown that in many developing countries where incomes have increased substantially, malnutrition has not declined correspondingly. This indicates that economic growth alone is not enough to address food security and malnutrition.

9. I am confident that today's meeting will serve to indicate priorities for research areas to be considered for research activities in the country and, more specifically, for eligibility under the research grant initiative. It will also be an occasion for participants to learn more about the opportunities available under the Programme Related Fund and Challenge Fund of the NFPCSP.

10. The NFPCSP is doing a commendable job in strengthening the capacity of the FPMU and the related ministries of the government in analyzing food security issues, assisting in policy making and preparing the Plan of Action for improving the food security situation in the country. The project has already completed a Preliminary Intensive Training Programme (PITP) consisting of four courses. I also understand that as part of the capacity strengthening program, some of the government personnel will be sent for training courses abroad so as to strengthen the analytical capacities of the FPMU and other related ministries of the government. I am told that courses in Nutrition, Price, and Monitoring and Evaluation are also underway. All this is indeed commendable.

11. Today's workshop is an important event, in that it sets out to address two major issues: *assessing research needs and awarding research grants*. Assessing research needs and taking stock of research appropriate to enhancing food security in Bangladesh is critical as it helps to inform decisions about setting research priorities by policy-makers, researchers and civil society. I am particularly gratified that NFPCSP has the provision of supporting some research activities on food security in Bangladesh. We will therefore need to set some level of prioritization, and it is in this context, that today's workshop has charted out its agenda and the next course of activities.

12. Eliciting involvement of a broad range of stakeholders including, government, academia and research institutions, universities, international organizations, as well as civil society representatives in producing action-oriented research on food policy and food security issues on the key aspects of food availability, access and utilization for nutrition, as well as cross-cutting issues (gender, governance, environment and infrastructure). The research grant award initiative is a welcome move, and I congratulate FAO for its efforts.

13. Given FAO's comparative advantage as a technical agency within its broad mandate for achieving food security, this initiative assumes immense significance for strengthening policy. I am confident that the RND prepared under the leadership of Prof. Rao by NFPCSP in collaboration with FPMU and other relevant ministries will serve as a valuable reference document for identifying research priorities relevant to policy-making for food security and consistent with the National Food Policy. New questions will need to be looked at, important issues that have been previously studied will require revisiting or updating.

14. In this regard, I would emphasize that consensus building through this initiative is central to the success of undertaking and promoting research. It is expected that a good deal of research will be done by the professionals and civil society organizations (CSOs) under this initiative. I look forward to the findings of this research initiative that will provide valuable inputs in support of the formulation and implementation of the policies towards enabling improvement of the food security situation in the country.

15. I am confident that today's workshop will provide important inputs in this process, so as to be able to accomplish the objectives of the project and, more broadly, to support government determination to fight food insecurity and malnutrition. I wish all success to this workshop and declare it open!

16. Thank you very much for your kind attention and Allah Hafez.