



Food Assistance Committee
Comité de l'assistance alimentaire

29 April 2013

Summary Record of the
1st Session of the Food Assistance Committee
London, 15 February 2013

Following the depositing of instruments of ratification of the Food Assistance Convention by six parties – namely Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Japan, Switzerland and the United States – as at 30 November 2012, the Food Assistance Convention entered into force on 1 January 2013.

The Food Assistance Committee convened for its 1st formal Session on 15 February 2013 at the Secretariat of the International Grains Council in London, under the newly-elected Chairmanship of Mr Kilian Greter, Federal Office for Agriculture, Switzerland. The Committee appointed Mr Roger Mireles, Assistant Deputy Administrator, FAS/Office of Capacity Building and Development, United States Department of Agriculture, as Vice-Chairman. The meeting was attended by all signatories to the new Convention and former members of the Food Aid Committee, while the government of Brazil was also present as an observer.

Members discussed a range of items, including Parties' minimum annual commitments under the new Convention. Details of Parties' annual commitments are available from the Food Assistance Convention Website, at the following link:
<http://www.foodassistanceconvention.org/en/commitments/commitments.aspx>.

It was agreed that there would not be a standardised approach to annual reporting in the first year of the new Convention, since the Rules of Procedure and Implementation provided sufficient guidance. Further discussions were set to take place ahead of publication of the first annual report in June 2014.

Members discussed the importance of communicating and sharing information about the new Convention with all stakeholders, other international organisations and potential Parties. In this regard, it was proposed that a side event should be held at the next World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Board meeting in June 2013 and at the next meeting of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), to be held in October 2013 to emphasise the importance of communication and information sharing under the FAC. It was also noted that reaching out to attract new FAC members would be vital – including communications with current IGC members, such as South Africa, the Republic of Korea, Russia and Saudi Arabia.

During the meeting, a thorough review of the new website and its content was undertaken (http://www.foodassistanceconvention.org/en/about_fac/about.aspx). Among items discussed, members agreed on the design of a new logo, together with the possibility of uploading documents in French and that, to the extent possible, documents would be translated into French.

A review of the current and prospective food situation in developing countries against the background of recent developments in world markets for grains, rice and oilseeds was undertaken. Members also provided detailed information on their responses to food emergencies, together with updates on planned operations and policy developments.

The EU was committed to providing food and nutrition assistance efficiently and effectively. In this context, the initial planned humanitarian budget for the EU, managed by the DG for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, is €893m, with more than half geared to Sub-Saharan Africa, including the Sahel. This response would take place against the background of the AGIR Initiative "Alliance Globale pour l'Initiative Résilience" in the Sahel. The Horn of Africa would remain a key area of intervention, a region where comprehensive resilience building efforts were continuing under the SHARE, "Supporting the Horn of Africa Resilience" initiative. A specific part of the annual budget is foreseen to address needs in the so-called "forgotten crises".

The US government was responding to food crisis emergencies in 30 countries, including in Sub-Saharan Africa and Near East Asia, particularly Syria. Since October 2012, US\$630m had been contributed as in-kind food aid, while US\$120m had been provided in market-based interventions. Around 87% of the interventions consisted of the local and regional purchase of commodities, with cash transfers and vouchers accounting for some 13%.

Canada provided a total of C\$386m in food assistance in calendar year 2012. In 2013, it had responded to a number of emergencies, notably in Africa, and expected to direct as much as two-thirds of its total assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa in the year ahead.

Since the expiration of the Food Aid Convention and the introduction of the new FAC, Japan had taken two cabinet decisions in November and December of 2012, to provide food aid projects for ¥10bn (approximately US\$122m), targeting vulnerable populations in Africa, as well as in the Middle East and Haiti. It had also provided humanitarian support in several areas, including food and nutrition interventions, namely in Syria, Haiti, Pakistan, the Philippines, Palestine and Indonesia.

Switzerland's focus was on three main crises, in Syria, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. In Syria, there was concern about the lack of access to those in need. Since the outbreak of the crisis, CHF30m had been allocated to assist the population in Syria and in neighbouring countries. Since the start of 2012, Switzerland had released CHF35m to tackle the food crises in the Sahel and the political crisis in Mali. In the Horn of Africa, Switzerland was shifting from purely emergency assistance to more resilience building.

With regard to planned operations, although the US government was not yet able to make a formal commitment under the FAC, it hoped that more than US\$2bn of food assistance would be provided in fiscal year 2013. This included US\$1.6bn of in-kind food aid for the emergency and development programme, US\$184m for school feeding programmes and US\$300m for local and regional procurement, vouchers and cash transfers.

Among those present, Austria, Canada and Switzerland also provided updates on planned operations, noting their concern about the situation in South Sudan.

Members also provided information on food assistance policy developments. In Switzerland, the parliament had adopted a framework governing the country's engagement in humanitarian aid and development co-operation over the period 2013-2016, while the EU was finalising its policy framework on enhancing maternal and child nutrition, accompanied by a Staff Working Document on Under-nutrition in Emergencies. The policy had been developed against the background of the EU's approach to resilience, adopted in October 2012.

The US Farm Bill had recently been extended for another year. Through this action, the Food for Peace Programme, the McGovern/Dole International Food for Education Child Nutrition Programme and the Food for Progress Programme had been authorised through September 2013. The Horn of Africa and the Sahel regions would remain priority areas for US assistance. In addition, members were also informed of the new alliance for food security and nutrition, launched at the Camp David Summit by G8 and African leaders in May 2012.

Brazil noted that food security and nutrition remained key priorities, placing great emphasis on the work of international organisations and the FAC in this regard. Brazil had increased the amount of humanitarian food assistance significantly over the years and was the eighth largest donor to the WFP in volume terms in 2012.

Concerning other items, it was agreed by members that the minutes of FAC meetings would be provided succinctly in both English and French.

Finally, the Chair noted that the next two meetings of the FAC would take place in November 2013 and June 2014. It was also agreed that international organisations would be invited to attend in future, also noting that other bodies and NGO's with specific expertise could be included.

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