MEASURING FOOD SECURITY USING HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE SURVEYS

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Content Summary

Brief Description: This technical guide presents an avenue for measuring food security for both small and large populations based on data collected as part of household expenditure surveys (HES) on the quantities of food acquired by households. It shows how to use these data to measure a variety of food security indicators, including the prevalence of food energy deficiency and indicators of dietary quality and economic vulnerability to food insecurity.

Uses: The primary objective in designing the food modules of a HES questionnaire is to collect data needed to compute the metric quantity and monetary value of all foods acquired by households over a specific time period. This data can answer a variety of questions including:

- Where are the food insecure?
- What are the most important foods in the diets of different sociodemographic groups?
- What is the nature of the food insecurity problem?
- How does food insecurity change over time?
- What are the causes of food insecurity?

Tool Components: The manual includes the following major components:

1. HES indicators of food security
2. Collecting food data from households
3. Gathering data for calculating metric weights of foods and their energy content
4. Processing and cleaning the data
5. Calculating indicators
6. Using indicators for food security analysis

Indicators of food security included in the manual include:

- Dietary energy availability per capita
- Percentage of people who are food-energy deficient
- Diet diversity
- Percentage of dietary energy derived from staples
- Quantities of individual foods consumed per capita
- Percentage of household expenditures devoted to food

OPERATIONS

Number of Staff Required: Not specified; this will likely be determined by the household expenditure survey objectives and budget.

Time: Not specified; data collected will form one component of a more comprehensive household survey.

Cost of Assessment: Not specified, as the manual focuses on incorporating a food module into an existing survey. However, research indicates that this method may give reasonably reliable estimates of food security indicators at lower cost than most other methods, particularly food consumption surveys.

Training: The manual does not address the topic of interviewer training but notes that a detailed discussion can be found in: *Designing Household Survey Questionnaires for Developing Countries: Lessons from 15 years of Living Standards and Measurement Study* (Grosh and Glewwe 2000).

Geographic Targeting: Targeting should be determined by the survey objectives. Details on sampling can be found in the reference mentioned above.

Type of Data Collection: This manual uses household surveys

Degree of Technical Difficulty: Enumerators will need comprehensive training to accurately gather the food quantity data. The manual presents a number of different methods of collecting data on food quantities, varying in difficulty. A staff member skilled in data analysis will be needed to process the data and calculate the indicators.

Complements other Resources: For a comprehensive food security analysis, additional data than typically collected in household expenditure surveys is needed. This may include data collected using qualitative techniques, a thorough review of previous literature, and analysis of secondary data. Further, comprehensive surveys include additional quantitative data that can potentially be collected in household expenditure surveys, for example, anthropometric nutritional status data, and information on food acquired through public assistance programs or nongovernmental organizations.