Food and Agriculture Sector Meeting Report

Minutes of 08 February 2018

**Chair:** Bernard MREWA and Joseph ONEKA  
**Venue:** UNRWA Compound, Mezzeh Highway - Syria - Damascus /8 February 2018 (10:00-12:00)

**Agenda:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Agency Presenting</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions (of agenda and participants)</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>5 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review and approval of previous minutes</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>5 min</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Alerts/ongoing emergency response:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Idleb (update and responses)</td>
<td>OCHA/Coordinators</td>
<td>20 min</td>
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<td>- Northwest Syria: Sector preparedness plan</td>
<td>OCHA/Coordinators</td>
<td>15 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>- East Ghouta update/situation and response/convoys</td>
<td>OCHA/Coordinators</td>
<td>10 min</td>
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<td><strong>Update on Consultations with line ministries on the Sector strategy update:</strong></td>
<td>Coordinators</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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<td>- MoLSA and MoLAE.</td>
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<td><strong>Sector update</strong></td>
<td>IMOs/All</td>
<td>10 min</td>
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<td>- January Actuals maps</td>
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<td>- February Plans</td>
<td>WoS</td>
<td>15 min</td>
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<td>- Integration strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CBT TORs and activities</strong></td>
<td>UNRWA</td>
<td>15 min</td>
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<td>- Update on the Task force meeting</td>
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**Action Points**
• Partners to share with the sector-on an ongoing basis- plans and actuals responses pertaining both the NW response and Afrin
• Sector to share minutes of the last Cash working Group meeting. As well, the ERL sector to extend the invitation to the cash based transfer meeting to ERL partners.
• Partners to share their 2018 plans for cash based transfers; so that the mapping of coverage and capacity can be updated.
• ICRC to share with the sector the plan for agriculture support once finalised.
• Sector to discuss with Aga Khan on the possibility of the partner making a presentation on the linkage of Agha Khan’s microfinance system and income generation activities. The main objective is to help other partners identify opportunities and gaps.

**Food and Agriculture Response and Plans Updates**

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<tr>
<th>AGENCY</th>
<th>Notes/highlights</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>January</strong></td>
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<td>ACF</td>
<td>Fodder (500 kg per household) were distributed in Hassakeh to 340 households, and it is expected to finalized February to reach 500 HHs. Fodder distribution was finalized in January to reach the target of 400 shares in Daraa and 100 in Aleppo.</td>
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<td><strong>February</strong></td>
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<td>In February, Training sessions are planned to target a total of 550 beneficiaries in 5 governorates. Topics cover “conservation agriculture, vegetable processing, dairy production, fodder production, organic manure production, and para-vet”. The sessions will include distribution of relevant set of kits.</td>
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<td><strong>March</strong></td>
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<td>500 home gardening kits are being prepared to be distributed in Rural Aleppo, (AL-Manb) and AL-Bab district, during February/March</td>
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<td>NRC</td>
<td>Initial rapid livelihoods assessments in As Zabdani and Deir Khebieh, in Rural Damascus, for coming Spring/Summer interventions.</td>
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<td>MSJN</td>
<td><strong>January 2018</strong></td>
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<td>Distributed 5,000 hot meals, around 31,554 individuals were served in Der Zor city funded by PLC. Distributed 1,000 RTE to 1,000 families (or 5,839 individuals) were served in Der Zor city funded by MSJM.</td>
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<td><strong>Plan for Feb and March 2018</strong></td>
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<td>Continue serve people via new Kitchen in Deir Ezzor</td>
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<td>A convoy to Hassakeh with a milk factory, 2,000 food parcels, Winterization, and 1,000 hygiene kits funded by a Swedish INGO’s</td>
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<td>AKF</td>
<td><strong>DECEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS</strong></td>
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<td>Provided technical training for 545 Farmer under Farmers Field Schools (FFSs) in Hama and Tartus.</td>
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<td>Provided VSL and EW services to 693 livestock farmers.</td>
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- Four Conservation Agriculture seeders were fabricated locally and made available for farmers in the district. 86 crop farmers used them and sowed 5,077 Dunum.
- Conducted 5 field days on using natural biogas, rabbits rising and quail raising (171 participants).
- Conducted awareness raising field day of biosecurity in animal to 35 livestock farmers and preventive veterinary campaign against internal parasites in livestock to 45 livestock farmers.
- Followed up agro- processing projects and 5 saving groups beneficiary women.

**PLANS FOR JANUARY TO MARCH**

- Activation of green fodder intensive production unit (hydroponic) in Hama and Tartous.
- Follow up of agro-processing, dairy, molasses and home and kitchen gardens and women saving groups.
- Carry on the activities of Farmer Field Schools in Hama and Tarots,
- Implementing of Cash for Work projects.
- Establish and follow up new Saving Groups

**November Achievements:**

- Distributed 3000 vegetable packages in Homs and Rural Damascus in cooperation with UNFPA.
- 2,700 HHs affected by the forest fires in 2016, were supported to restore their production and rehabilitate their damaged tree through provision of winter vegetable seeds packages as well as olive saplings and tools to produce compost (2700 HHs, sets of manual vegetable farming tools, olive saplings 70,000, and shredders for composting (1/District = 5 shredders)- irrigation kits for 44 HHs.

**Jan – Feb Plan:**

- Training on wheat production will be conducted in Rural Damascus.
- 500 households will have support and building capacity for beehive and honey production in Aleppo.
- 3,400 Households will be provided with Mushroom Production kits in Aleppo as income generating activities as well.
- 50 HHs will be provided with Soap production tools as an income generating activities.
- 35 Schools in Aleppo and Rural Damascus will have school gardening established to improve students’ knowledge about nutrition sensitive agriculture.

**January 2018 Update (ICRC-SARC joint activities)**

- In January, about 550,000 beneficiaries were reached with food parcels, canned food parcels, bulk food and bread packs.
- During the month of January, most of the cereal seeds and fertilizers were distributed in 7 governorates (targeting approximately 12,000 HHs)
- ICRC-SARC continued to engage in finalizing the relief and livelihood program for 2018
- Coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and its directorates across several governorates continues.
- In January, data collection for the Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) linked to the agro intervention (that targeted about 30,000 households during the 2017/18 winter season) has started.

**ICRC-SARC Plan for February 2018:**

- Cover about 750,000 beneficiaries with various food packages per month, increase response in the North East.
- Carry out Post Distribution Monitoring of Relief program.
- Supporting bakeries and flour mills with new production lines and generators - over 10 structural support (with Generators and production lines - Rural Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, Deir Ezzor etc.) continues.

**IFRC/SARC**

- Finalised the distribution of vegetable kits in Aleppo, Homs, Rural Damascus, Quneitra and Hama.
- Distribution of 1,100 sheep (500 sheep-250 families in Lattakia / 600 sheep-300 families in Hama) plus 55,000 kg of brand wheat and 55,000 kg of barley (100 Kg wheat/100 kg barley per family).
- Finalised the endline survey for the livelihoods projects in Homs and Lattakia (projects 2016).
- Distribution of 12,374 food parcels in Rural Damascus, Deir-Ez-Zor, Homs, As-Sweida.

**COOPI**

- Implement the second phase from COOPI ongoing project in qatana area.

**TDH**

- TdH is still implementing food vouchers distribution in Aleppo (510 FVs), for PwD, to be extended next month to Rural Damascus and to reach more beneficiaries in Aleppo. (may be also to Hama, Homs and Deir El Zor).
- Regarding the food parcels, we are in the final phase of the procurement of 18500 FP, to be distributed in Aleppo, Homs, Lattakia and Rural Damascus.

**UNRWA**

**Food assistance:** The 4th round of emergency food distribution started on 26 November 2017 and will be completed around 1st week of February 2018. Up to date 105,986 out of planned 110,786 Palestinian Refugees families received their food assistance.

**Cash Assistance:** The first cash round for 2018 started 14 January as planned. An estimated number of 408,000 refugees would receive cash assistance in the 1st cash round 2018. 209,233 individuals received cash assistance until 01 February 2018.

**WFP**

**December**

710,114 FRs distributed reaching 3,550,570 beneficiaries.

**January**

Dispatched 476,938 food rations enough to assist 2,384,690 Beneficiaries (81% of the plan). This includes 4,998 MT of WHF.

141,182 FR (included in the above figures): 67,000 FR from Turkey to Rural Idleb, 19,982 FR from Turkey to Rural Aleppo, and 54,200 FR from Jordan to Rural Dara’a and Qnitera.
February 2018

Feb Cycle deliveries started aiming to reach 3 million people without IACs. WFP delivered 2,000 bags of WHF to Al Miadeen/DZ and and 5 MT to the bakeries in the city of DZ.

WFP sent 6,000 RTEs to Aleppo to be distributed to displaced people from Afrin and West Aleppo rural areas, and 1,100 RTEs for IDPs from rural Hama to the city of Hama.

Overall 2018

The operational plan for 2018 is considered a resource-based plan reduced to 2.8 million people. However, this plan is currently covering around 3 million people due to some increases mentioned below.

Cross Borders allocation of Dara’a and Quneitra has been increased by 32,200 FR so as to also cater for beneficiaries reached via the previous FFP pipeline.

Starting Feb, the allocation of Idleb will be increased by 8,500 FR; as a response to the increased number of IDPs in camps due to ongoing displacement from Idleb, Aleppo and North Hama.

WFP started the roll-out of SCOPE to register beneficiaries and selection tool to verify beneficiary’s vulnerability.

North West (NW) and Afrin response plan

The information included here also pertains information received as follow up to the meeting discussions;

North West (NW)

- **Needs**
  An estimated 20,000 people are expected to be displaced to area around Northern Hama. Northern Hama Town (Soran, Talibat Al Imam, Maardes) Al Hamra Hama City and outskirts. A further 30,000 people are expected to be displaced from Afrin to three places in Aleppo (Nabul, Zahara and Aleppo City). Additionally, 70,000 – 100,000 people are expected to be displaced with Afrin district. The Inter-agency assessment mission report to Nubul of 28 January 2018 indicates that the Food markets are functioning; the road between Aleppo and the city is open and there is a good number of wholesalers who seem ready to increase the materials available for sale to meet the growing need. However, market prices were reported to have slightly increased. There are four functional bakeries; one of which is a spare governmental bakery with a production capacity of 10 MT tons and the rest are private bakeries producing an average of 1.5 MT per bakery.

- **Response**
  Aligned with south Turkey FSL cluster, the assistance from Syria will be sequenced by immediate food assistance with Ready to Eat Rations, followed by monthly Food Rations.
Additionally, supplementary food assistance through bread and collective kitchen will also be available in certain places. Furthermore, emergency quick impact livelihood support will be provided to ensure that coping mechanisms of IDPs and vulnerable host communities are not depleted further.

**Strategic objective 1:** Food Assistance for immediate needs with Ready to Eat Rations and for monthly needs with monthly Food Rations.

**Phase 1:** Food assistance targeting 50,000 people for 3 months (March – May)

In total, the sector needs 10,000 RTERs and 30,000 Food Rations to meet the immediate and regular monthly food needs of displaced people to Hama and Aleppo. In addition, 20,000 Food ration are planned/budgeted for possible IAC to Afrin.

- WFP has 10,000 RTERs are already in stock for both locations
- WFP also has a stock of 19,000 FRs, and a further 11,000 FRs available in pipeline to meet the expected needs of 30,000 FRs
- Bread and collective kitchen capacity available in Aleppo

**Afrin**

Response is planned through Inter Agency Convoy with Food baskets (including Wheat flour) sufficient for 100,000 people.

**Sector objective 2:** Quick impact livelihood interventions for ensuring adequate coping mechanisms for hosts and IDPs. The sector seeks to support IDP/host communities with livelihoods support. FAO plans to provide the following in both Aleppo and Hama.

**Aleppo**

- 10,000 pregnant sheep and 1,500MT of feeds
- 100,000 chicken and 1,000MT of poultry feeds
- 10MT of kits (vegetable seeds and accessories)
- 100,000 poultry vaccines and medicines

**Hama**

- 7,000 pregnant sheep and 1,050MT of feeds
- 70,000 chicken and 700MT of poultry feeds
- 10MT of kits (vegetable seeds and accessories)
- 70,000 poultry vaccines and medicines

**2018 HRP Sector Strategy:** Feedback on consultations with Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MOSAL) on 16th January and Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MOLAE) on the 5th February 2018.

**MOSAL**

- In general MOSAL was in agreeable with the FAS 2018 HRP strategy as some activities are of strategic interest to MOSAL and perfectly align with their new strategy (2018 HRP SO 2)
- The discussions focused on operationalization of the activities; including on partnership arrangements, coordination, use of Government facilities to support implementation in the rural areas (e.g. support rural development and training centers) and prioritization of the most vulnerable for SO1
- MOSAL will inform MOFA and other line ministries regarding their endorsement of the strategy.

**MOLAE**

- Need to include environment (including renewal energy and protection of natural resources components) as a cross cutting issues in the strategy.
- Number of PIN for SO2 & 3 needs to be discussed with MAAR.
- 1 million PIN mentioned in the strategy which is to be targeted outside the HRP could be dropped.
- Clarification about protection mainstreaming issues (cross cutting between the two ministries).

**MAAR**

- Sector again met with MAAR to consult on the feedback required but it was clarified that only acknowledgement required from the sector.

**Gaps/Coverage Analysis:**
Cash Strategy Working Group Meeting Summary Records, 5 February 2018

Following the CWG meeting that took place on 16 January, the partners agreed to have a focused discussion on Cash Strategy for Syria and appointed a smaller group to carry out this discussion. The meeting took place on 5 February and was attended by WFP, UNRWA, OCHA, COOPI, AAH, FAO, TdH and NRC.

The Discussion outlined the main opportunities and challenges that pertain to the cash-based response in Syria and the way-forward recommendations

**Opportunities**

1. The growing interest among humanitarian partners to introduce or expand both conditional and unconditional cash transfer programming to complement on-going in-kind assistance. For 2018, there are 12 projects proposals submitted under the Humanitarian Response plan
across sectors for Syria hub) with cash component of 45% on average. Additionally, the beneficiaries’ perception assessment conducted in the south revealed that 65-70% of the beneficiaries preferring cash modality. Moreover, some agencies including UNRWA, WFP and UNICEF are already implementing at scale or scaling up use of cash-based response compared to last year. On the other hand, other partners including INGOs are seeking to explore opportunities in this area.

2. Notably, WFP has successfully launched SCOPE platform, which is up running in Rural Damascus (Jaramana, Kisweh and Gazalania), Aleppo, Homs, Tartus, Lattakia and Hama. WFP is using SCOPE card for the redemption of the entitlement. The platform as well as the SCOPE card can be used by other agencies as well. Where the agencies are serving the same beneficiaries, the SCOPE card can hold up to 8 wallets, which can be used by other agencies apart from WFP. In other cases, where they are not serving the same beneficiaries, WFP SCOPE card can be used separately while sharing the same platform.

3. Partners in Syria should consider using the protocols already developed for/in Lebanon for multipurpose cash Programme.

4. Developing a robust strategy for cash-based response in Syria that outlines the potential risks associated with cash response and proposes mitigation measures for these risks will serve as a strong advocacy tool with various stakeholders. Such mitigation measures will demonstrate the commitment of partners to due diligence.

5. Physical cash transfers are possible through hawala agents.

6. The functioning markets in most areas offer an opportunity to do voucher and cash programmes.

Challenges

1. A few partners has the necessary approvals obtained to implement cash transfers namely UNRWA, UNHCR and UNICEF. UNRWA and UNHCR approvals are for purposes of responding to meet the needs of refugees since prior to the conflict. Post conflict, UNICEF managed to get approval to assist physically challenged children using cash transfers.

2. Certain conditions on the ground were noted as potential challenges; sanctions, financial service provider infrastructure including limited number of ATMs and issues related to financial institutions as it pertains electronic transfers. Hence, there is need for further guidance from the Central bank prior to scaling up cash activities. The only possible transfer mechanism is physical cash transfer through hawala which is being used by UNRWA.

3. **Lack of market assessments/ feasibilities:** The British Red Cross has conducted recently an assessment to explore the opportunities for introducing cash assistance modality by SARC in Government-controlled areas – the official report has not been released yet.
4. **Market functionality**: Cash transfer is facing some challenges related to market functionality in some areas and the inability to implement such programs in rural and remote areas. The prices fluctuation needs also to be carefully analysed and streamlined.

**Recommendations**

1. Developing a work plan informed by a strong analysis to determine whether scaling up cash response is feasible and appropriate in Syria while building on existing knowledge and the upcoming feasibility/ market assessment.

2. Forming taskforces within the CWG to focus on different themes and areas such as enabling / disabling factors including:
   a. Mapping and evaluation of financial service providers.
   b. Analysis of the regulatory process
   c. Evaluation of Humanitarian partner’s capacity to introduce/ scale up cash-based response program

3. Enhancing the coordination of cash-based response in Syria by:
   a. Establishing a strong linkage between cash WG and ISG (Inter-Sector Group).
   b. Establishing linkages for harmonization of practices specifically among cash partners who have same types of activities/ in the same geographical areas or supporting the same type of beneficiaries.
   c. Building partners’ capacity.

4. Enhance reporting on cash in a timely manner (4Ws) for better planning.

5. Having a joint position when advocating with the line ministries and MOFA. And developing evidence-based key messages to donors.

At the end of the meeting, the participants agreed to have the next meeting (for the Cash Based Transfer working Group) on the 5th of March to continue the discussion on strategy-related issues.

**Next Meeting: 8 March 2018**