Meeting Minutes

Location: Online, Microsoft Teams at 11:00AM
Date: 03/07/2020

Agenda

- WFP VAM: Market Update
- ZCC: Presentation on rural voucher assistance
- FSL Cluster: Updates from the field
- AOB

Participants

ACF, DCA, CBM, Mercy Corps, DFID, ZCC, British Red Cross, WFP-VAM, LEAD, Trócaire, FAO, OCHA, World Bank, OXFAM, GOAL, LEAD.

Discussion

1. WFP VAM: Market Update

Maize grain availability remains poor due to a combination of factors including the poor 2019/2020 harvest, lack of foreign currency to import adequate maize grain quantities and slow movement of trade due to COVID-19 pandemic and restrictive measures to contain the spread of the disease.

The year on year inflation increased from 766% in April to 787% in May 2020, while the month-on-month inflation decreased from the 18% in April to 15% in May 2020. Food remains the main driver of inflation estimated at 954% in May 2020, an indication of increased vulnerabilities.

Sugar beans availability increased over the month of June from 59% reported during the first week of the month to 73% in the last week. The increase could be attributed to the coming in of the harvest, a situation which is likely to continue into July 2020. Although production was reported to be low, households usually trade a portion of their harvest to obtain cash to cover other basic needs.

Vegetable oil availability was stable at an average of 91% across surveyed markets over the reporting month, a slight improvement from the 86% reported in May. The commodity was selling at an average price of $1.90/L, a price which is 7% higher than the $1.78/L reported in May 2020. In ZWL terms, bond notes price of ZWL 131.10/L during the last week of June.
which is 58% higher than the ZWL83.20/L reported during the last week of May 2020. The commodity was selling at ZWL150.70/L for mobile money payments during the last week of June, a price which is 15% higher than that of bond notes.

Q: According to 2nd crop small grain production increased by 103% compared to the year before, would you indicate what this means to the market?
A: VAM does track prices for small grains, the price has been increasing just like with the other commodities, being driven by the market forces. Reason for small grain production was due to government assisted program where farmers were provided with inputs. What that does to the market is that while there could be small grains, people still prefer to have the traditional maize even if the availability is low.

Action points
None.

2. ZCC: Presentation on rural voucher assistance

Food assistance has become more complex over the previous years with ever changing context. There has also been increased shift from the traditional in-kind distributions to increased usage of other delivery modalities such as the mobile cash transfers, food vouchers, cash in transit. The various options for provision of food now requires more systematic analysis and planning for an appropriate response.

Lessons learnt
- Unconditional food vouchers are appropriate to meet the food insecurity gaps for the targeted households as they have choice to select food commodities that they do not have access to.
- When the local markets are not able to replenish adequate stocks, traders (shops) with capacity to supply food commodities from the nearby urban areas should be considered for the food voucher system

Q: Thinking of distribute vouchers but do not have that in-country experience, what did you consider, how long did it take to identify traders to work with and what are some of the security precautions you took with the vouchers?
A: Do not only consider wholesalers but rather conduct an assessment and meet with other big supermarket chains if they were willing to supply.
Time taken was a matter of days and decided on who to use after the assessment on who was willing to supply and replenish the stock. Small vendors, retailer’s assessment was comprehensive and covered small traders in rural and urban areas. From the finding, small vendors were not able to replenish the stock.
The vouchers were printed in country working with a firm already worked with before in printing secure books. The key feature for the vouchers is that for each month a different security feature is applied thereby minimizing chances of reproduction.

Q: Was it easy to convince players to commit to prices for a long time?
A: Prices were pegged in US$ and were the same throughout during the project time. This is due to stability of US across the region.
Q: Compared to the markets, how are your deal compared to market process? Was there any difference and better price than market rates?
A: Negotiated in USD and therefore prices were the same as they would be on the supermarket shelves with no additional costs attached.

Q: Voucher printed in US$ and beneficiaries had to come back the next day, how did you deal with the fact that they did not exhaust the whole value in a single buying?
A: After redeeming, beneficiaries were given receipts and all the commodities were presented on the receipts and were left with the carbon copy of the voucher which was the used to reconcile the next day. Most of commodities prices were pegged such that there were no changes to e.g. with no cents and beneficiaries were able to balance off their prices. The team was present to verify that all were exhausting their vouchers. In extreme cases, there was provision for small items so that they could up something to exhaust the amount on their voucher, e.g. matches, candles etc.

Q: Looking at relationship between local traders and suppliers, how is that going to be without doing any harm to the community after extracting non-local to deliver the products?
A: The process was consultative and local traders fully consulted in term of challenges, discuses and traders acknowledged the challenges they were facing and gave alternatives as they were not able to restock and was agreed that might reconsider the local market when the markets get back to working normally.

**Action points**
Presentation to be shared.

3. FSL Cluster partners: Updates from the field

- **Red Cross**
  - The recent announcement on ban on mobile money bulk transfers makes BRC looking at voucher program in Mwenezi and Chipinge
  - Funding available for Chipinge to cover vulnerable population in the district. Coordinated with CBM and there is an agreement to take 600HH in ward 7. Currently doing documentation and hope to start first distribution in August.
  - Additional funding Chipinge district and open to be in contact with NGOs working there to cover another 400 HH.

- **ACF**
  - Continues with assessment in Quarantine facilities and the impression is that there indeed food is being distributed to the returnees. There is soap but water lacks in many facilities.

- **DCA**
  - Increasing caseloads from 51k to 82k beneficiaries in areas of operations. The donor to the project is WFP and modality is E-vouchers.

- **WFP**
  - Lean Season Assistance (LSA): June cycle distribution 97% in terms of reaching targeted 1,271,903 people.
o For July distribution cycle, WFP is targeting 1.8 million however based on available resources, will be able to reach to reach approximately around 41 - 42%

o Urban programme: 100,000 people reached for the June cycle. The June disbursement was the last to occur via Ecocash; as going forward, WFP will be scaling up the urban programme using e-vouchers, SCOPE cards and remittance-based modalities. The July cycle aim to reach 142,000 of beneficiaries.

AOB:

Map on collaboration between FSL and nutrition clusters shared and feedback is welcome by the cluster partners.

Partners presence interactive map also shared with the cluster partners.