



# Assessment of Early Warning Systems on Food Security in Africa

Luca Alinovi, FAO

# Assessment Objectives



- Review strengths and weaknesses of national and regional systems; credibility, cost-effectiveness and sustainability
- Distil lessons in order to strengthen systems for improved decision making

<i>West</i>	<i>Southern</i>	<i>Greater Horn</i>
CILSS	SADC	IGAD
Burkina Faso	Angola	Eritrea
Mauritania	Namibia	Ethiopia
Niger	Zambia	Kenya

# Synopsis of EWS Methods



- Most National EWS are effective in:
  - monitoring agro-climatic shocks and impacts on food production
  - establishing food balance sheets
  - estimating aggregate food aid needs
- Some systems conduct:
  - Geographic targeting of food insecure zones
  - Food needs' assessments
  - Livelihood approaches

# Areas needing improvement



- Methods: lack analytical rigor and multi-disciplinary orientation
- One-shot analysis with minimal monitoring
- Information transfer between EWS and line ministries and decentralized levels
- Political interference from both governments and donors
- Lack of timely, relevant communication
- Unresponsiveness to decision makers' needs

# Implications of EW deficiencies



- Reduces decision makers' confidence in national information
- Increases reliance on information from technical partners
- Late responses to emergencies
- Over-emphasis on food aid as a response

# Characteristics of effective systems



- Willingness of governments to operate a transparent system
- Closer collaboration between national governments and development partners
- Innovative partnerships and use of networks (overcome capacity constraints)
- External technical support is integrated, not separate; with 5-10 year commitment
- Proactive communication during crises
- Use of livelihoods' approach/triangulation

# Process is important



- The manner in which information is collected, analyzed and disseminated is critical to effective and timely national responses to transitory food and nutrition crises

Transparency, participation, partnership  
→ consensus → timely response

# Institutional setting and procedures affect EWS performance



- Access to secondary data
- Administrative and financial autonomy
- Analytical independence
- Regular communication with and input from decision-makers
- Ability to recruit, train and retain analysts
- Opportunity to procure funding from the national budget



# Regional Dimension is important



- Often crisis have important regional dimensions that are underestimated
- Regional institutions are/can be effective in providing regional analysis, methodological support, neutral validation of survey results, forum for discussion and collaboration
- Regional Issues:
  - Loss of confidence by member states
  - No authority to compel member states to implement recommendations
  - Complement/support national systems

# Sustainable, effective systems: How move forward?



- Similar conclusions 10 years ago but little progress. Why?
- Minimal attention and resources invested in establishing a process to develop the critical institutional mechanisms to guide the development of an **effective, demand-driven, early warning system.**

# EWS lack critical institutional mechanisms



- To articulate decision makers' information demands
- To provide technical oversight
- To monitor and evaluate impacts
- To develop human resource capacity
- To secure national funding
- To create decentralized systems
- To link EW information to long term development programming – how address chronic poverty and malnutrition

# Major Challenges



- Establishing demand-driven early warning systems (EWS) responsive to decision makers needs
- Linking national EWS to a more comprehensive food security information system capable of more effectively addressing:
  - Growing regularity of short-term emergency situations and crises;
  - Underlying structural factors contributing to endemic poverty and hunger