

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen

This Country Programme is submitted to you for approval with the aim to start implementation promptly on 1 July, as requested by the Government of Egypt.

The CPs of the other Excom agencies, ie UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, are being presented to their Boards later this month on the same basis and timeframe.

SLIDE 1) WFP will commence its new CP in a time of protracted political and economic transition in Egypt.

The political transition is proving more complex than expected, with parliamentary elections re-scheduled to late 2013 and an almost daily incidence of labour strikes and street protests across the country.

At the same time, a deteriorating economic context has compounded the impact of a series of shocks which started with the avian flu pandemic of 2006-07 and the food prices hike of 2008-09 and more recently the Arab Spring events throughout the region.

SLIDE 2) In Egypt food security is driven by economic access both at household and national level.

At a household level, food insecurity has increased to 17.2 percent (almost 14 million people) in 2011, up from 14 percent in 2009. This has been driven by rising poverty and reduced purchasing power: 25% of Egyptians, or 21 million, are living below the poverty line, and a further 19 million are “near poor”. The main coping strategy adopted to secure food for the family has been a sharp reduction in dietary diversity. Currently, over half of poor Egyptians depend on cheap and calorie-dense foods. This has adverse nutritional implications.

At the national level, current economic challenges and low foreign currency reserves pose a risk to the regular supply of key food commodities given Egypt’s net food-importing status. The main concern is over wheat, Egypt’s main staple and of which the country imports over half its needs.

What will WFP do in this context?

SLIDE 3) The new Country Programme will adopt a twin-track strategy by leveraging partnerships at national and local community-level:

- At the national level, WFP will continue to provide technical assistance to national institutions, including the Cabinet’s think-tank (the Information and Decision Support Center), the Central Statistics Agency and key line-ministries: the goal is to strengthen food security analysis and food price monitoring and to set up a national early warning system addressed to decision-makers for timely, evidence-based response.
- WFP is also working with international agencies, such as the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), to put forward policy recommendations including reform to food subsidies.
- At the local community level, the aim is to expand social safety nets, through in-kind and voucher delivery, to reach 800,000 highly food insecure people: school feeding and take home rations will be made available to the most vulnerable through the informal education sector and for combating child labour; as well as for building resilience of rural households in response to climate-induced reduction in food production.

- These targeted programmes offer ‘conditional transfers’, that is, requiring the active participation of the recipient population as a pre-condition to food assistance. WFP will also support national efforts to launch targeted nutritional interventions for mothers and infants that will be tested for scale-up. These complement on-going WFP’s support to the national programmes for micronutrient fortification of subsidized bread and cooking oil, now fully managed by the Government and which reach over 63 million Egyptians.
- The expected results of the CP interventions are spelled out in the logframe whether they are measured through the National Capacity Index for hunger solutions, increase in school enrolment and attendance rates or reduction in stunting and micronutrient deficiencies.

How will we achieve this?

SLIDE 4) Programme implementation will focus on the Southern regions of the country but also tackle pockets of high food insecurity in the Delta and frontier governorates.

WFP will continue to work in close partnership with local government, community associations and partner NGOs to implement the CP activities based on open tendering and selection process and clear performance outputs.

The overarching goal for the CP is to comply with WFP’s mandate and to operate within full accountability for the resources that are entrusted to us, for all our stakeholders, and most importantly for the beneficiaries we seek to serve.

WFP CO keeps an updated risk register: the areas of concern identified in the CP document require constant attention and adequate responses.

Most important, all the proposed CP activities are being funded outside WFP multilateral development sources and through CO-led resource mobilization: there are already firm commitments covering two thirds of overall requirements from various donors including the Egyptian private sector and the Government itself, and further strong interest expressed from multilateral donors locally. Since WFP started years ago to implement a debt swap, this is proving a very successful mechanism and actually expanding to new donors from this year.

SLIDE 5) As for the assistance to Syrian refugees in Egypt, WFP launched its operations last February under the regional EMOP and upon request by the Government. From the current 50,000 Syrians registered by UNHCR in Cairo, Alexandria and Damietta, projections are for some 100,000 refugees registered by the end of this year. WFP assistance is delivered through paper vouchers and magnetic cards: refugees can shop at contracted supermarkets for a variety of foods including dairy products, fresh vegetables and fruits. Since all refugees live scattered in urban areas, an innovative text-messaging software is utilized by WFP to contact directly all refugees and inform them of delivery schedule so that distributions are organized in a staggered and orderly way.

SLIDE 6) Finally, the food security and related studies mentioned in the CP are available on the websites indicated in the slide. A CD rom with relevant documentation has been deposited in your in-boxes outside this room.

I thank you for your attention and stand ready to answer to your questions and suggestions.