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Evaluation reports

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Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Ghana (2019–2023)

Executive summary

The evaluation of the country strategic plan for Ghana for 2019–2023 was conducted between May 2022 and May 2023. It assessed WFP's relevance, strategic positioning and coherence, its contribution to outcomes, its efficiency in implementation and the factors explaining its performance. A theory-based, participatory and mixed-methods approach was used to serve the dual purpose of accountability and learning and to inform the preparation of a new country strategic plan.

With a population of 30.8 million, Ghana is a lower-middle-income country faced with economic fluctuations including a significant decline in gross domestic product growth since 2020, a two-decade-high inflation rate and 59.3 percent inflation in food prices in the final quarter of 2022.

The transitional interim country strategic plan for 2018 and the country strategic plan for 2019–2023 focused on improving the nutritional status of children, women of reproductive age and people living with HIV. Activities and modalities included take-home rations; commodity vouchers for locally produced specialized nutritious foods; support for resilient food systems; strengthening of social protection programmes, in particular the national school feeding programme; enhancement of food security monitoring; support for disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness; and technical support for policies and legislation in areas such as social protection, nutrition and food fortification.

In line with WFP evaluation policy (2022) (WFP/EB.1/2022/4-C), to respect the integrity and independence of evaluation findings the editing of this report has been limited and as a result some of the language in it may not be fully consistent with the World Food Programme's standard terminology or editorial practices. Please direct any requests for clarification to the Director of Evaluation.

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The country strategic plan was implemented in a stable policy environment. Overall, the evaluation found that WFP interventions were well aligned with government priorities and responded to the food security and nutrition needs of the most vulnerable. They were designed coherently but failed to clearly articulate the link between direct implementation and upstream capacity strengthening. WFP displayed flexibility and agility in responding to the coronavirus disease 2019, adapting the country strategic plan and providing timely assistance to affected populations. Partnerships, particularly with the Government, were key to successful implementation.

The country strategic plan facilitated progress in transitioning WFP from direct implementation to its intended role as enabler and enhanced the shift towards a market-based approach to ensure the accessibility of locally produced specialized nutritious foods and high-quality nutritious crops. However, the approach is not yet fully sustainable. The country strategic plan also fell short of adequately addressing country capacity gaps in crisis preparedness and response and community resilience and integrating the humanitarian–development–peace nexus in its design and implementation.

Some significant delays were incurred during implementation due to factors including funding shortages, restrictions related to the coronavirus disease 2019, bureaucratic procedures and the lack of adequate planning to operationalize and manage the shift to an enabler role.

Mechanisms for the integration of gender equality and women’s empowerment, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and environmental protection functioned effectively. Systems for accountability to affected populations did not work optimally, however, with low proportions of beneficiaries reporting that they had been informed about the programme and providing feedback.

The evaluation concluded that the country strategic plan supported the Government in addressing the food security and nutrition needs of vulnerable populations through broadly coherent programmatic interventions. The plan remained relevant to needs throughout. Progress in shifting from “implementer” to “enabler” was impeded by the lack of a clear management and staffing plan and funding constraints, highlighting the challenges of a complex transition process.

The evaluation provided six recommendations to support WFP in the design and implementation of the next country strategic plan. Thus, it is recommended that WFP define its strategic focus as an enabler and facilitator in Ghana; deepen and align its partnerships with the private sector, civil society organizations, academia, other United Nations entities and other development partners; focus on the support it provides to the Government for emergency preparedness and response, in partnership with others; improve timeliness through enhanced collaboration with cooperating partners and the use of innovative financing methods; assist the Government in establishing sustainable market-based approaches for strengthening food systems and scaling up the nutrition-sensitive livelihood programme; and review the accountability to affected populations mechanism and address bottlenecks to ensure all beneficiaries are well informed about WFP programmes.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Ghana (2019–2023) (WFP/EB.2/2023/6-A/5) and management response (WFP/EB.2/2023/6-A/5/Add.1) and encourages further action on the recommendations set out in the report, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the decisions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

Introduction

Evaluation features

1. Country strategic plan (CSP) evaluations are the main instrument for accountability and learning in accordance with the expectations of the WFP Executive Board and WFP management. They provide evidence of WFP's strategic positioning and results to inform the design of the next generation of CSPs and potentially contribute to the design of the United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks.
2. This evaluation encompassed the CSP for Ghana for 2019–2023 and the preceding transitional interim CSP (T-ICSP) for 2018. It reviewed WFP's operations from 2018 to September 2022. The evaluation's main users are the WFP country office and internal and external stakeholders including the Government of Ghana and beneficiaries. The results of the evaluation have informed the design of a new CSP for Ghana.¹
3. The evaluation adopted a theory-based, participatory and mixed-methods approach, drawing on monitoring data, a literature review, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions with beneficiaries and site observations. Gender considerations were integrated throughout the process. Data collection took place in-country in September 2022, followed by hybrid debriefing sessions. Findings, conclusions and recommendations were discussed during stakeholder workshops held in Accra in February 2023. Ethical standards were applied to ensure the dignity and confidentiality of those involved in the evaluation.

Context

4. Ghana is a lower-middle-income country with 57 percent of its population residing in urban areas.² Despite a trend of positive economic growth, the gross domestic product growth rate fell from 6.5 percent in 2019 to 0.5 percent in 2020 due to the effects of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.³ Inflation increased in 2021 to a two-decade-high of 54.1 percent, food price inflation rose to 59.7 percent⁴ and the national currency depreciated sharply between January and December 2022.⁵
5. The share of the population below the poverty line declined from 31.9 percent in 2005/06 to 23.4 percent in 2016/17, but in that year the absolute number of those in poverty had increased by 400,000 since 2012/13 due to population growth.⁶ Due to a combination of natural and socioeconomic factors, poverty levels are generally higher in northern Ghana, where in some regions the poverty rate exceeds 50 percent.⁷
6. Ghana faces the "triple burden of malnutrition", a combination of undernourishment, micronutrient deficiencies and obesity. Stunting and wasting rates (see table) are higher in the north than in the south of the country.⁸ At the time of the latest measurement (2014), 65.7 percent of children under 5 and 42.4 percent of women of reproductive age were

¹ As part of the corporate programme review and approval process for the draft CSP for Ghana for 2024–2028, the Office of Evaluation has reviewed the extent to which the draft CSP is based on evidence and recommendations arising from the evaluation of the CSP for Ghana for 2019–2023.

² Ghana Statistical Service. 2022. *Ghana 2021 Population and Housing Census – General Report*.

³ World Bank. 2022. *GDP growth (annual %) – Ghana*.

⁴ Ghana Statistical Service. 2023. *Statistical Bulletin. Consumer Price Index (CPI): December 2022*.










⁵ International Trade Administration. 2022. *Ghana Currency Depreciation*.

⁶ The poor population is defined based on the national upper poverty line of GHS 1,314 per adult equivalent per year. Ghana Statistical Service. 2018. *Poverty trends in Ghana 2005–2017*; Ghana Statistical Service. 2014. *Ghana Living Standards Survey 6 (With a Labour Force Module) 2012–2013: Round 6*.

⁷ Ghana Statistical Service. 2019. *Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) 7 – Main Report*; World Bank. 2020. *Ghana Poverty Assessment*. pp. 48, 49.

⁸ Ghana Statistical Service. 2018. *Ghana Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017/18: Survey findings report*.

anaemic.⁹ National food insecurity prevalence was 12 percent in 2020, with most food-insecure households in northern Ghana.¹⁰ The number of food-insecure people nearly doubled in 2022, reaching 823,000.¹¹ In contrast to global trends, the prevalence of stunting and wasting is higher in boys than in girls and households led by men are more food-insecure than those led by women.¹²

SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS			
	Indicator	Value	Year
	Total population (million) (1)	30.8	2021
	Population living below the national poverty line (%) (2)	23.4	2017
	Food-insecure population (%) (3)	11.7	2020
	Global Hunger Index (rank) (4)	67 of 121	2022
	Height-for-age (stunting – moderate and severe), (0–5 years of age) (%) (5)	17.5	2018
	Weight-for-height (wasting – moderate and severe), (0–5 years of age) (%) (5)	6.8	2018
	Number of international migrants (thousands) (6)	476.4	2020
	Refugees and asylum-seekers (7)	6 917	2022
	Gender Inequality Index (rank) (8)	130 of 170	2021

Sources: (1) Ghana Statistical Service. 2022. *Ghana 2021 Population and Housing Census – General Report*; (2) Ghana Statistical Service. 2019. *Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) 7 – Main Report*; (3) Government of Ghana, Ministry of Food and Agriculture and others. 2020. *Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA): Ghana*; (4) Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide. 2022. *Global Hunger Index: Ghana*. (5) Ghana Statistical Service. 2018. *Ghana Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017/18: Survey findings report*; (6) *Migration Data Portal*; (7) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Operational Data Portal: Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa. Ghana – refugees and asylum-seekers (as of 31 October 2022)*; (8) United Nations Development Programme. 2022. *Human Development Report 2021/2022. Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World*.

7. The CSP has been implemented in a stable policy environment. The Government of Ghana has adopted a long-term national development plan for 2018–2057 and a coordinated programme of economic and social development policies to guide the country's development trajectory. Recent national reviews have shown that programmes set out in the

⁹ Ghana Statistical Service, 2015. *Demographic and Health Survey 2014*.

¹⁰ Government of Ghana, Ministry of Food and Agriculture and others. 2020. *Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA): Ghana*.

¹¹ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)/cadre harmonisé. 2022. *Résultats de l'analyse de l'insécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle aiguë courante en mars-mai 2022 et projetée en juin-août 2022 au Sahel, en Afrique de l'Ouest et au Cameroun; IPC/cadre harmonisé. 2022. Résultats de l'analyse de l'insécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle aiguë courante en octobre-décembre 2022 et projetée en juin-août 2023 au Sahel, en Afrique de l'Ouest et au Cameroun*.

¹² Ghana Statistical Service. 2018. *Ghana Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017/18: Survey findings report*.

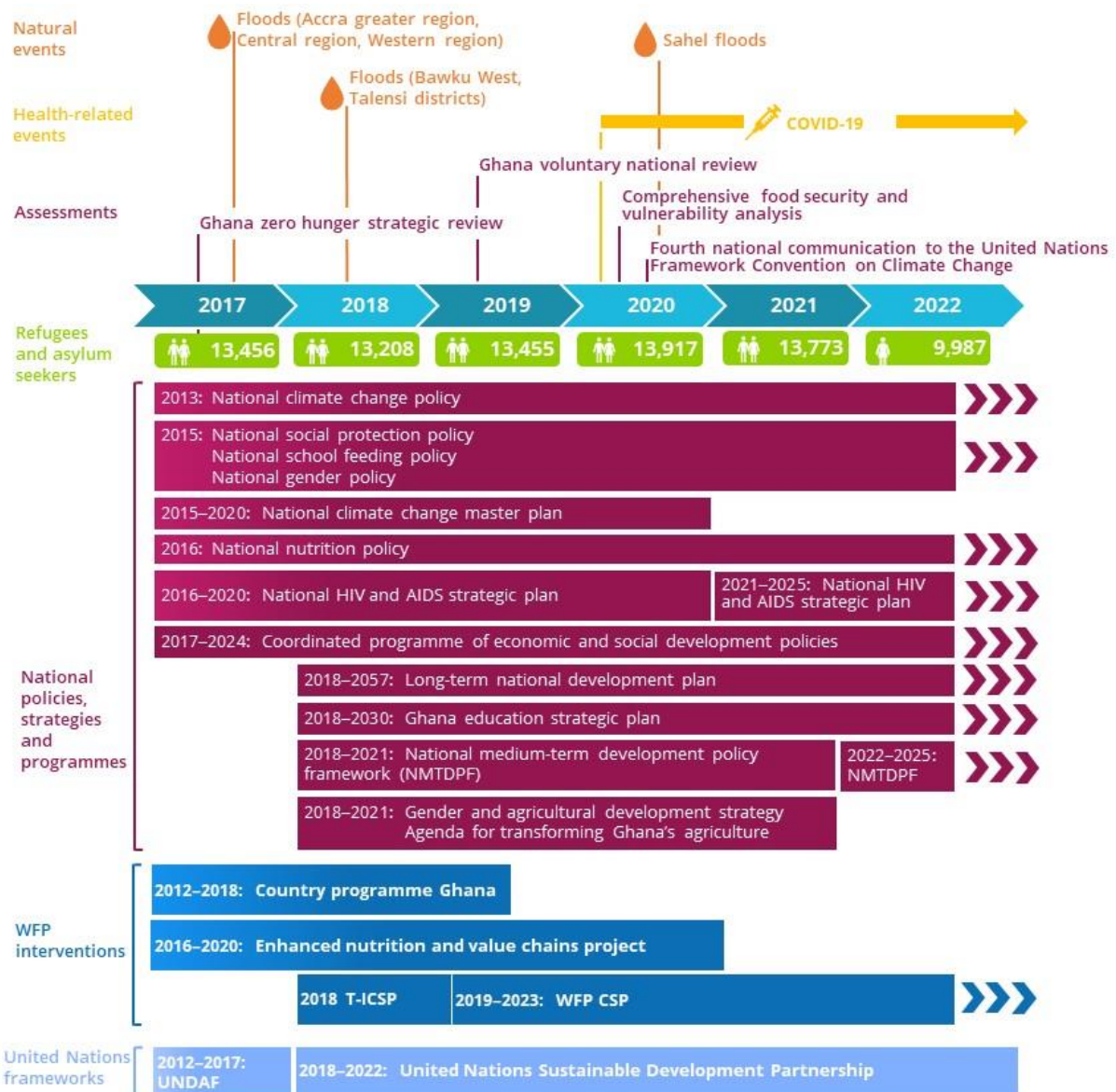
development plan and the coordinated programme have contributed to progress against the Sustainable Development Goals, but not at the pace necessary to reach the 2030 targets.

WFP country strategic plans

8. WFP first established its presence in Ghana in 1963 and primarily focused on providing relief assistance until 2005, when it shifted to a five-year development portfolio. Since then, in partnership with the Government of Ghana, WFP has been transitioning towards an enabler role, reducing direct food assistance and placing greater emphasis on capacity strengthening and policy support.
9. The T-ICSP (2018) served as a one-year extension of the country programme for 2012–2017. It did not introduce a major strategic reorientation but focused on improving the nutritional status of children, women of reproductive age and people living with HIV through take-home rations, commodity vouchers for locally produced specialized nutritious foods (SNF), support for resilient food systems, strengthening of social protection programmes, in particular the national school feeding programme, and technical support for social protection, nutrition and food fortification policies and legislation. The subsequent CSP (2019–2023) continued the T-ICSP activities, with the exception of support for people living with HIV and expanded country capacity strengthening activities to include technical support for food security monitoring, disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness (see figures 1 and 2).
10. In order to support populations affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and respond to an anticipated influx of refugees from Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, the CSP was revised in May 2020 to include a new crisis response strategic outcome (strategic outcome 5), together with a new activity to provide assistance through in-kind or cash-based transfers to populations affected by crisis (particularly COVID-19).¹³ Intervention modalities used under the CSP included cash-based transfers, food transfers and capacity strengthening.
11. The one-year T-ICSP had a total budget of USD 11.5 million and aimed to reach 193,000 beneficiaries. The CSP budget was initially USD 72 million over five years, with the aim of reaching 225,000 beneficiaries through food and cash-based transfers; the budget and number of direct beneficiaries were increased to USD 94 million and 325,000 beneficiaries in May 2020 through budget revision 1.
12. The funding level for the T-ICSP was 93 percent at the end of the cycle. As of October 2022, allocated resources for the CSP amounted to 32 percent of the total CSP budget set out in budget revision 1.

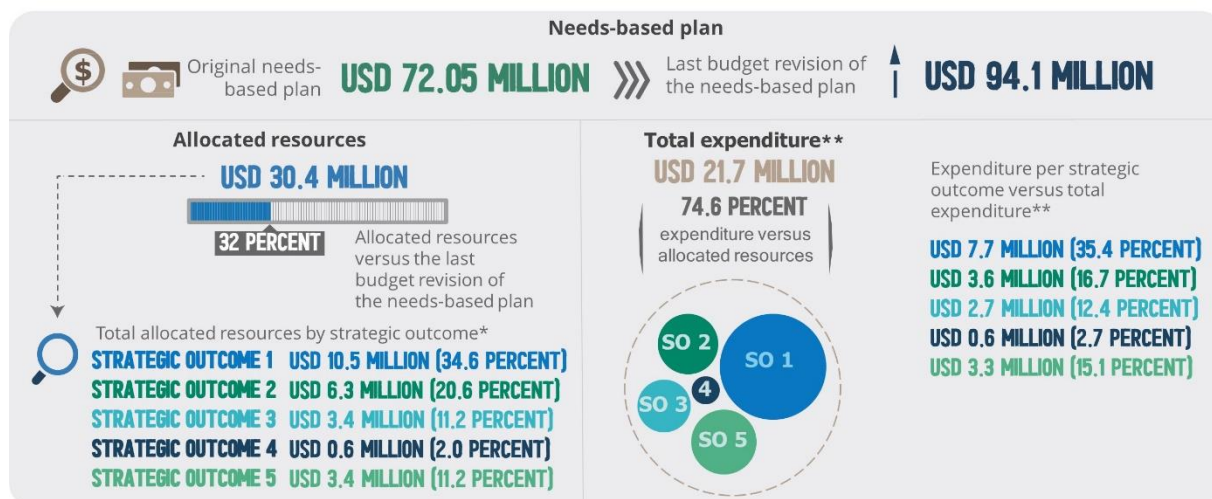
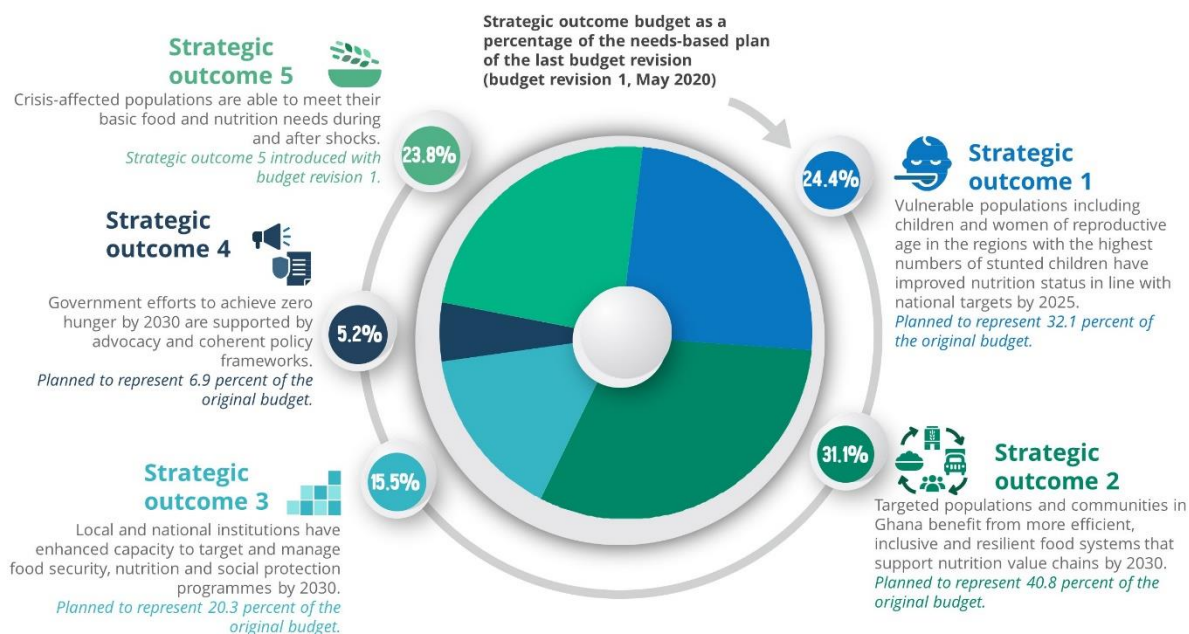
¹³ WFP. 2020. *Ghana country strategic plan – budget revision 1*.

Figure 1: Country context and WFP operational overview, 2017–2022



Source: Elaborated by the Office of Evaluation based on the full report on the evaluation of the Ghana CSP for 2019–2023.

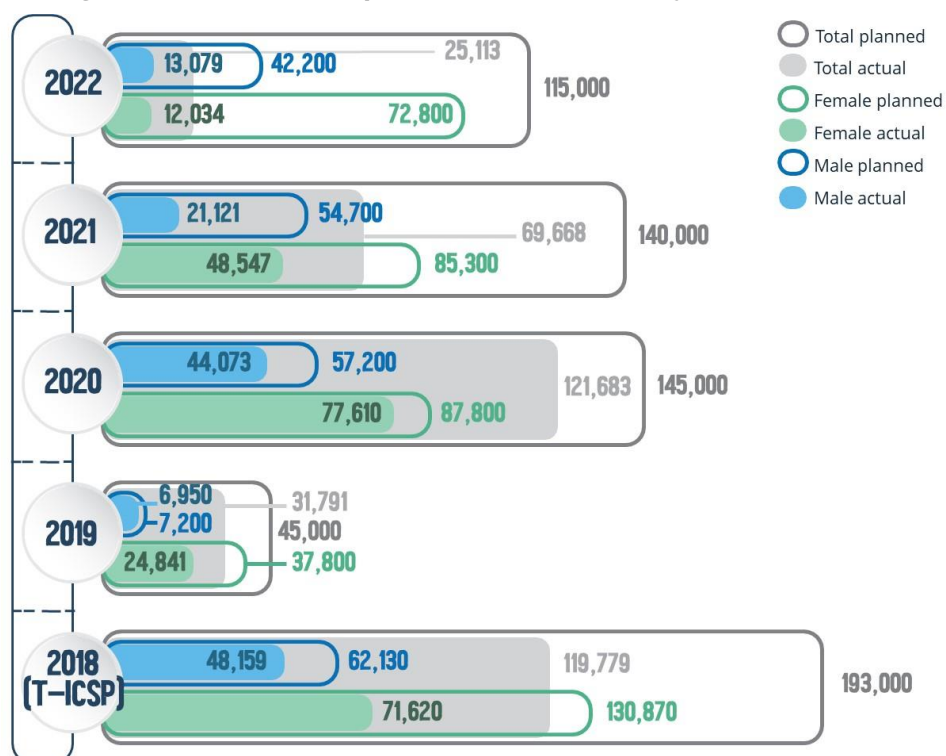
Figure 2: Ghana country strategic plan (2019–2023) strategic outcomes, budget, funding and expenditures



* Percentages of allocated resources by strategic outcome do not add up to 100 percent because resources were also allocated to direct support costs and indirect support costs (not shown).
 ** Total expenditure does not include indirect support costs. Allocated resources and expenditures data as of 7 October 2022.

Source: 2019–2021 annual country reports and Ghana country office for 2022 figures.

- Under T-ICSP strategic outcome 1, WFP targeted adolescent girls in junior high school with in-kind food assistance and people living with HIV, pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls and children age 6–23 months with commodity vouchers for SNF. Activities under CSP strategic outcome 1, targeted children age 6–23 months, pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls and adolescent girls. Under strategic outcome 5, WFP targeted refugees and populations affected by COVID-19. Throughout 2018–2022, the number of beneficiaries reached remained far below the targets (figure 3).

Figure 3: Actual versus planned beneficiaries by sex, 2018–2022

Source: 2018–2021 annual country reports and Ghana country office for 2022 figures.

Evaluation findings

To what extent is the country strategic plan evidence-based and strategically focused to address the needs of the most vulnerable?

Relevance and alignment

14. Both the T-ICSP and the CSP demonstrated strong relevance and alignment with Ghana's national development agenda, particularly in areas concerning food security and nutrition, school feeding, agriculture, social protection and gender. They supported the implementation of the Ghana national development framework and contributed to the Government's efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 17.
15. WFP interventions were also well aligned and coherent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Partnership 2018–2022 as well as with United Nations support for the Government's COVID-19 response. Within the CSP, the country office included partners whose mandates and programmes were aligned with WFP's comparative advantage in Ghana, including government ministries and departments, private sector firms, civil society organizations and development partners.

Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable

16. The CSP design was evidence-based and sought to address the food security and nutrition needs of vulnerable populations identified through reviews, analysis and surveys, including the national zero hunger strategic review and key national studies. The 2020 budget revision for the CSP responded to the Government's request to support populations affected by COVID-19 and the expected refugees, but the evaluation did not find evidence that a specific needs assessment informed the revision.¹⁴

Strategic positioning

17. The T-ICSP and CSP were implemented in a stable environment, with no major changes in context, national capacity or needs of targeted populations until 2020. At that point, WFP demonstrated agility through prompt adjustment of the CSP, requesting a budget revision in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and an anticipated influx of refugees into Ghana from neighbouring countries.
18. Overall, WFP is positioned in Ghana as a key actor in delivering food security and nutrition interventions to vulnerable populations and as a trusted partner in providing evidence on the food security and nutrition situation in the country. It is also gaining recognition for its ability to strengthen social protection programmes and emergency preparedness and response capacity.

Internal coherence

19. Although the CSP did not have an explicit theory of change, its design demonstrated strong internal coherence and interlinkages and synergies between the activities contributed to the different CSP outcomes. Activities were also aligned with WFP's comparative advantage. However, the interlinkage between downstream (community level) and upstream activities was not well articulated.

What are the extent and quality of WFP's contribution to country strategic plan strategic outcomes in Ghana?

20. **Strategic outcome 1 – nutrition:** The CSP aimed to improve the nutritional status of vulnerable populations, including pregnant and breastfeeding women, young children, adolescent girls and people living with HIV. Evidence showed that WFP food assistance contributed to improved antiretroviral therapy adherence and nutritional recovery among people living with HIV, though support was only small-scale, covering four health facilities in the Eastern region. Take-home rations for adolescent girls helped improve school attendance rates but enrolment rates fell and the overall effect on education outcomes was minimal due to low coverage. The CSP contributed to improved food consumption among women and young children, but the consumption-based coping strategy index remained higher than the target. The activities helped to prevent stunting; however, difficulties were encountered in reaching intended beneficiaries and the malfunctioning of the SCOPE system for registering and verifying beneficiaries¹⁵ resulted in delays and, in some cases, incomplete programme enrolment.

¹⁴ WFP responded to the Government's request for support for daily wage earners and smallholder farmers affected by COVID-19, but it is not clear whether the Government did an assessment to identify the needs of these populations. WFP conducted an assessment to identify beneficiaries before providing food assistance in response to COVID-19.

¹⁵ SCOPE is WFP's digital beneficiary information and transfer management platform. It is a web-based application used for beneficiary registrations, intervention setups, distribution planning, transfers and distribution reporting.

21. Social and behaviour change communication interventions aimed at generating demand for nutritious food reached the majority of target groups but SNF supply chain issues in 2022 hindered the implementation of the planned activity linking strategic outcome 1 with food systems strengthening activities under strategic outcome 2. The transition from in-kind food assistance to cash-based transfers was generally well-received but encountered implementation challenges, including increased cost and greater inconvenience for beneficiaries who had to travel long distances to obtain vouchers. Supply chain issues, such as an unstable supply of SNF from food processors to retailers due to a lack of retailer financial capacity to make upfront payments, also impeded the intended transition to a market-based food systems strategy, ultimately leaving consumer demands unmet.
22. **Strategic outcome 2 – food systems:** Activities under strategic outcome 2 aimed to enhance the production of high-quality nutritious food through efficient, inclusive and resilient food systems. The evaluation found that the CSP had contributed to an increase in production of high-quality nutritious food. Women smallholder farmers in particular exceeded the target for nutritious food production in 2019 but significant delays and funding shortfalls after the enhanced nutrition and value chains project led to targets no longer being met in 2021.
23. Although commodity sales increased among targeted smallholder farmers, 2021 targets were not met, due to the length of time it took to establish the farmer aggregation system;¹⁶ WFP staff turnover; weak leadership capacity within farmer-based organizations; and the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The CSP activities contributed to a reduction in post-harvest losses, but targets were not achieved due to the low proportion of smallholder farmers supported with post-harvest handling technologies and the limited number of smallholder farmers who purchased these technologies, as well as weak cohesion among farmer-based organizations.
24. The CSP contributed to an increase in SNF production by expanding the capacity of industrial agroprocessors; however, the planned expansion of the capacity of community food processors is not yet complete and thus has not contributed to SNF production. SNF availability in the market has declined since 2022 due to unstable supply chains, leading to irregular supply to retail shops and, by extension, unmet consumer demand.
25. **Strategic outcome 3 – capacity strengthening:** Activities under strategic outcome 3 aimed to enhance the targeting and management of food security, nutrition and social protection programmes through capacity strengthening interventions. The existence of a standalone strategic outcome 3 on capacity strengthening in addition to the integration of country capacity strengthening across all strategic outcomes except strategic outcome 5 was a challenge for evaluation analysis. Moreover, some interventions had not been implemented long enough to have contributed to outcome-level results. Nevertheless, the evaluation found that country capacity strengthening enhanced WFP's "enabler" role in Ghana although it was not guided by a clear overall intervention logic.
26. Capacity strengthening for the school feeding programme contributed to the provision of nutritious school meals; however, delayed payment of caterers and inadequate programme funding affected the quality of the meals provided. Mapping and assessment of food-insecure and vulnerable populations provided evidence for national food security and nutrition programming. WFP supported the Government in establishing the food security and nutrition monitoring system and the flood information system, with the latter being used to develop district contingency plans, but there was little evidence that the information

¹⁶ An aggregation system is any enterprise that aggregates smallholder farmers' staple commodities in order to facilitate their sale to buyers at fair prices. Pro-smallholder farmer aggregation systems in particular operate with the objective of maximizing socioeconomic benefits for the smallholder farmers who are its members and/or suppliers.

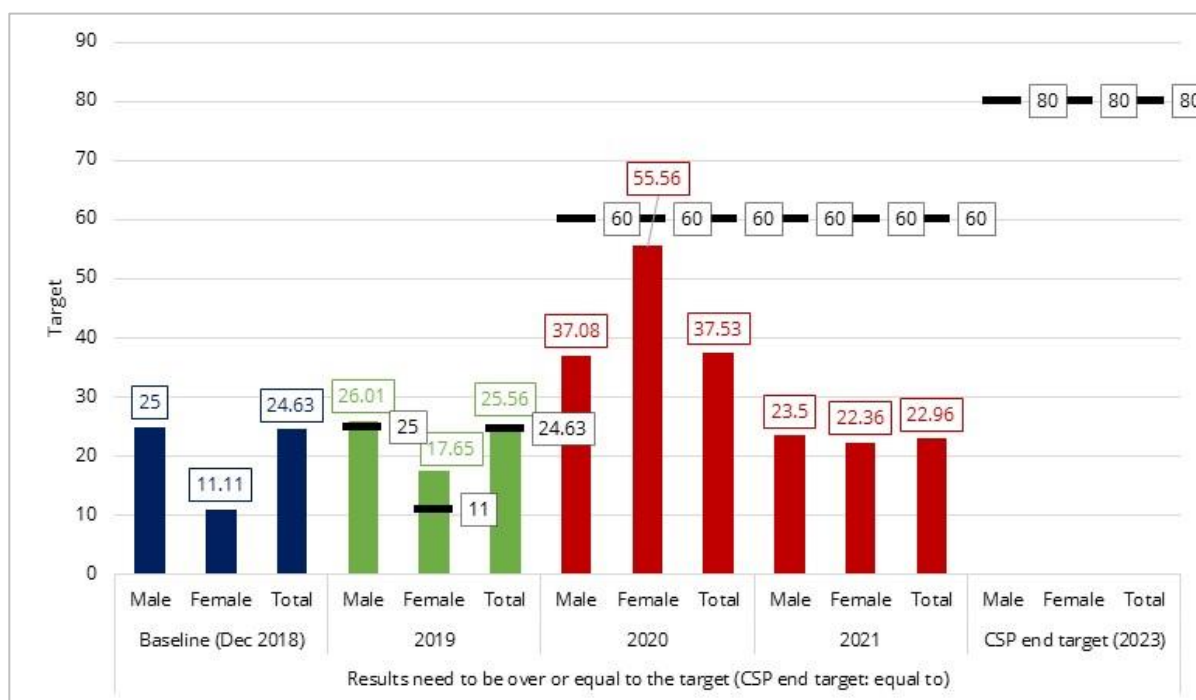
from the food security and nutrition monitoring system had been used. Capacity strengthening of the Food and Drugs Authority contributed to the availability of good-quality, safe SNF in the market, but interventions to strengthen national social protection systems and the financial inclusion of women were at too early a stage to have generated results.

27. **Strategic outcome 4 – policy advocacy and coherence:** Activities under strategic outcome 4 focused on supporting government efforts related to advocacy and effective and coherent policy frameworks. Data challenges plus a lack of clarity on targeted national entities and sectors impeded the assessment of the performance of this strategic outcome. Although country capacity strengthening interventions under strategic outcome 3 contributed to improvements in government programmes, contributions to strategic outcome 4 were limited, as most of the relevant strategic outcome 4 interventions were incomplete or had not taken place at the time of the evaluation. For instance, efforts to enact legislation for school feeding, advocacy for an increase in the school feeding grant and targeting of HIV-impacted households in the national Livelihoods Empowerment Against Poverty programme were still under way and in some cases were experiencing delays due to slower-than-anticipated national processes.
28. **Strategic outcome 5 – crisis response:** Activities under strategic outcome 5, introduced through budget revision 1, aimed to support crisis-affected populations in meeting their basic food and nutrition needs. Under this strategic outcome, WFP's assistance successfully addressed the food security and nutrition needs of people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The projected influx of refugees to Ghana and the anticipated low rate of return to school for adolescent girls following the reopening of schools after the easing of COVID-19 restrictions did not materialize, however, resulting in the non-implementation of related interventions. Cash assistance provided to people affected by COVID-19 enabled people to meet their basic food and nutrition needs and helped improve household food security, with funds spent on farm inputs, purchase of food and health expenses, among other things.

Cross-cutting areas

29. Data from WFP's monitoring system that tracks CSP contributions to cross-cutting goals shows that most of the targets for cross-cutting goals were achieved. In terms of protection, WFP adhered to protection requirements for affected populations, conducting risk assessments, for example, before starting food assistance programmes. Risk mitigation measures were integrated into food assistance programmes during implementation and partner agreements included a clause on privacy and confidentiality to ensure the rights and dignity of beneficiaries. WFP has established a mechanism to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, including mandatory training for all staff. Mechanisms and tools for accountability to affected populations are in place and being implemented but, as shown in figure 4, the percentage of beneficiaries informed about the programme was insufficient, especially in 2020 and 2021.

Figure 4: Proportion of assisted people informed about the accountability to affected populations programme



Source: WFP COMET report CM L009b for 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

30. The CSP contributed to gender equality, particularly in its nutrition and food systems components, and included deliberate efforts to address the diverse needs of different beneficiary groups. The country office's establishment of a gender resource network in 2016 to lead the implementation of the WFP gender policy supported the gains made, as did its development of annual gender action plans. Despite these advancements, certain cultural norms and practices continue to act as barriers to achieving comprehensive gender equality and empowerment of women.
31. WFP successfully integrated environmental protection measures into CSP activities and operations by, for example, implementing environmental risk screening and adopting climate-friendly technologies. There was no explicit integration of climate change into CSP design, although climate adaptation was mainstreamed into CSP activities. Socially excluded populations were similarly not mainstreamed into CSP design, but the food assistance targeting process did integrate people with disabilities and people living with HIV. As most of WFP's work in Ghana is related to development, the focus on humanitarian principles was not prominent.

Sustainability

32. Despite government challenges in sustaining the CSP achievements financially in the short term due to fiscal constraints and the effects of shocks, long-term financial sustainability of some CSP achievements is expected through improved coordination and planning between WFP and the Government. High levels of national ownership of institutional capacity strengthening accomplishments, combined with their integration into institutional planning, suggest that these are likely to be sustained; however, a low resource base at the community level may impede the sustainability of gains in food security and nutrition and food systems strengthening. Sustaining the achievements in environmental protection depends to a large extent on the adoption of environmental protection practices at the community and institutional levels.

Humanitarian–development–peace nexus

33. The CSP did not include a holistic focus on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, but initial work on understanding the nexus concept and its application in Ghana has been done. The peace dimension of the nexus is relevant given the risk of conflict spilling over into Ghana from the Sahel region and recurring pastoralist and farmer conflict. There is therefore scope to create stronger linkages with the peace dimensions of the nexus, such as through stronger links with partners working on peace building.

To what extent has WFP used its resources efficiently in contributing to country strategic plan outputs and strategic outcomes?***Timeliness***

34. CSP activities under strategic outcomes 1 to 4 were not implemented within their intended timeframes, with the exception of activity 3 in 2020 and 2021. Activities under strategic outcome 5 were delivered on time. The factors causing delays included implementation constraints, national processes for legislative and policy reform, COVID-19-related restrictions and funding challenges. Accordingly, the utilization of CSP financial resources was low. The expenditure rate for allocated resources across all outcomes was low to moderate, with 51 percent of funds allocated to the T-ICSP and 35–45 percent of the resources for the CSP spent between 2019 and 2021.

Appropriateness of coverage and targeting

35. The CSP effectively targeted and reached the most vulnerable populations in Ghana, through well-defined criteria and approaches. Target districts were selected based on food security and nutritional status, and households were identified using the national household registry and community-level assessments. Capacity strengthening and policy advocacy interventions also addressed the needs of the populations most vulnerable to food insecurity. However, the geographical coverage and number of beneficiaries reached were constrained by the available financial resources and WFP was not able to extend the CSP activities beyond the targeted 15 districts, meaning that some districts with poor nutrition outcomes were not covered. Expanding the delivery infrastructure into uncovered districts would require additional funding.

What are the factors that explain WFP's performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected under the country strategic plan?***Adequate, predictable and flexible resources***

36. The CSP was not adequately funded even though the needs-based plan for the T-ICSP 2018 was 93 percent funded. The CSP funding landscape has been characterized by instability, with dependency on two main donors (Canada and Japan). Furthermore, a significant portion of the funds received was earmarked, leading to imbalanced funding across strategic outcomes and activities: strategic outcome 1 received the most donor funding and strategic outcomes 3 and 4 the least relative to the planned budget. The funding challenges reflect WFP Ghana's strategic repositioning to an "enabler" role that prioritizes capacity strengthening and policy coherence, which may not align with the priorities of its traditional donors, as well as competition from crises elsewhere in the world and Ghana's development trajectory as a middle-income country.

Monitoring and reporting

37. The system for CSP monitoring and reporting fell short in adequately tracking progress towards outcomes. Some indicators lacked data and others were insufficient to measure CSP performance, with the monitoring system not yet fully customized to support WFP's transition to an enabler role in Ghana, particularly for strategic outcomes 2, 3 and 4.

Monitoring data did, however, contribute to informed decision-making within WFP, with issues identified based on the data presented at weekly management meetings.

Partnerships

38. The partnership between WFP and government ministries and agencies played a pivotal role in achieving CSP results. The use of government staff, systems and infrastructure supported the implementation and ownership of relevant CSP activities. WFP established valuable partnerships with the private sector to strengthen food systems, although sustaining these partnerships was challenging due to the discontinuation of project funding. Engagement with development partners primarily focused on coordination and information-sharing, but progress has recently been made in leveraging technical and financial resources and expertise. Partnerships with non-governmental organizations was based on signed agreements between the parties, enabling the implementation of agreed activities that contributed to the attainment of CSP output results.
39. Collaboration between WFP and other United Nations entities, including the other Rome-based agencies, was limited with respect to joint implementation. Factors included the weak coordination mechanism of the United Nations Sustainable Development Partnership 2018–2022 and limited opportunities for joint programming, as well as a lack of common funding arrangements. Consequently, WFP largely implemented CSP activities without collaborating with other United Nations entities.

Human resources

40. WFP human resources, in terms of numbers and skills, have been able to deliver the CSP results but staff movements affected the timely delivery of some activities. Despite the clear understanding that WFP's value proposition is evolving in a new direction, there is no evidence of an explicit plan for adapting staff capacity to the new enabler role. The process has largely been ad hoc and remains incomplete. Staff uncertainty, especially with respect to job security and roles within the CSP, has affected staff delivery of CSP activities.

Other factors affecting performance

41. The overall performance of the CSP was hampered by delays in government decision-making and slower than optimal approvals of memorandums of understanding, field-level agreements and implementation processes. Internally, prolonged processes for finalizing partner agreements also posed challenges. WFP has nevertheless made progress in its strategic transition to an enabler role under strategic outcomes 1 to 4. The shift is an ongoing process and models to guide the transition are emerging, although no formal change management plan has been prepared to guide the process.

Conclusions

42. Overall, the CSP effectively facilitated progress in transitioning WFP from direct implementation to its intended enabler role and enhanced the shift from food assistance to nutrition-sensitive food systems. It demonstrated that market-based approaches to strengthening food systems and the livelihood programme involving cultivation of nutritious foods by vulnerable households can improve food security and nutrition. Implementation of the CSP encountered obstacles stemming from both internal and external factors, however, leading to delays and the non-attainment of certain output targets and adversely affecting the CSP's contribution to strategic outcomes.
43. The CSP supported the Government in addressing the food security and nutrition needs of vulnerable populations through broadly coherent programmatic interventions; however, it lacked an explicit theory of change, which could have better articulated the interlinkages between community-level activities and upstream capacity strengthening and policy

- coherence interventions, thereby clarifying and helping to accelerate the shift to an enabler role.
44. Despite being implemented in a relatively stable policy environment, the CSP was adjusted to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on food security and nutrition, which demonstrated WFP's flexibility and continued relevance. The CSP fell short, however, in adequately addressing country capacity gaps for crisis preparedness and response and community resilience and in integrating the humanitarian–development–peace nexus into its design and implementation.
 45. The CSP had a clear intent and yielded progress in shifting from direct implementation to WFP's envisaged enabler role, but the absence of a plan to operationalize and manage the shift led to a lack of clarity on the intended change and ambiguity and uncertainty among staff regarding their roles. Insufficient funding for capacity strengthening and policy coherence work further complicated the transition to an enabling role. WFP has started to solicit funding from new sources, primarily the private sector, although new donors are yet to come on board.
 46. WFP successfully integrated gender equality, protection, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and environmental protection into the CSP. Gender concerns were incorporated across all outcomes and contributed to supporting equality in terms of income generation and decision-making, although deeply rooted cultural norms and practices in communities continued to hinder progress. WFP also implemented measures to protect affected populations, including from sexual exploitation and abuse, and included environmental protection measures in its food systems strengthening and nutrition interventions. Mechanisms for accountability to affected populations did not function optimally, however, with low beneficiary awareness of the programme and limited feedback provided. Furthermore, the integration of climate change considerations and the inclusion of marginalized populations such as persons with disabilities were insufficiently integrated into both the T-ICSP and the CSP.
 47. Partnerships with the Government, the private sector and non-governmental organizations played a key role in the delivery of the CSP. Partnerships with the Government ensured that interventions were aligned with national systems and leveraged the use of government resources, thereby promoting ownership. Partnerships with the private sector played a vital role in driving progress towards strengthening food systems and making SNF available in the market. Collaboration with other United Nations entities was limited largely to information-sharing and a few small-scale joint activities, however, and efforts to expand partnerships emerged relatively late in CSP implementation. This reflects a broader concern within the United Nations in Ghana regarding weak coordination structures.

Recommendations

48. The evaluation makes six recommendations, of which three are strategic and three are operational, to address key issues for Ghana in the next CSP. The recommendations are directed mainly to the country office but also call for contributions by headquarters divisions and the regional bureau.

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1	In the next country strategic plan, WFP should clearly define its strategic focus as an enabler and facilitator in Ghana.	Strategic	Country office		High	
1.1	<p>Include a theory of change that articulates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an intervention logic for capacity strengthening informed by a comprehensive capacity needs analysis; • how the enabler and facilitator role will ultimately contribute to improving food security and nutrition outcomes for people in Ghana, with a vision of leaving no one behind; and • the connection between direct implementation and upstream capacity strengthening and policy coherence interventions. 		Country office	Regional bureau, headquarters Country Capacity Strengthening Unit		November 2023
1.2	<p>Develop a detailed implementation plan to manage the process of shifting to an enabler role. The plan should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the alignment of staff profiles to the enabler role, taking into account gender and diversity; • a process for phasing out direct implementation; and • a communication strategy on WFP's new enabler role in Ghana. 		Country office	Regional bureau, headquarters Country Capacity Strengthening Unit		November 2023 and reviewed and updated annually
2	WFP should deepen and align partnerships beyond Government, with the private sector, civil society organizations, academic institutions, other United Nations entities and other development partners.	Strategic	Country office		High	
2.1	Build on the work started on market-based food system strengthening, strengthening of the Livelihoods Empowerment Against Poverty programme systems, financial inclusion of women and the planned digital private sector financing initiative aimed at bringing on board additional partners with expertise in private sector development and social protection.		Country office			December 2024

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
2.2	Consider engaging with relevant parliamentary committees on the review and formulation of policies for addressing food security and nutrition needs in Ghana.		Country office			December 2025
2.3	Identify and implement new joint initiatives or enhance existing joint initiatives with other United Nations entities within the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework.		Country office			December 2025
3	In the next country strategic plan, WFP should focus on the support it provides to the Government for emergency preparedness and response, in collaboration with other United Nations entities and partners that also have a mandate for crisis response.	Strategic	Country office		High	
3.1	Maintain and strengthen the crisis response strategic outcome in order to support the Government in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addressing the adverse impact on food security and nutrition of recurring floods, the ongoing surge in food prices and unforeseen crises; • strengthening emergency preparedness systems; and • facilitating the integration of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus into food security and nutrition programming. 		Country office			April 2024
4	WFP should enhance collaboration processes with cooperating partners and make use of innovative financing mechanisms to ensure timely implementation of the country strategic plan.	Operational	Country office		Medium	November 2023
4.1	Explore innovative financing mechanisms aligned with multi-year funding needs for upstream capacity strengthening and policy engagement work.		Country office	Regional bureau, headquarters Private Partnerships and Fundraising Division		November 2023

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
4.2	Streamline and increase awareness of the processes and guidelines for engaging with cooperating partners in order to ensure timely approval of partner agreements within WFP.		Country office			November 2024
5	WFP should support the Government in developing sustainable models of market-based approaches for food systems strengthening and in scaling up the nutrition-sensitive livelihood programme, particularly in the Northern and Ashanti regions, through the Ministry of Food and Agriculture.	Operational	Country office			June 2024
5.1	Support the Government in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing a strategy for fostering market-based, nutrition-sensitive and safe food systems; strengthening the enabling environment for all actors in nutrition-sensitive food systems, including smallholder farmers, aggregators, food processors, institutional buyers, farming input and technology suppliers; and mainstreaming climate change adaptation into food systems. 		Country office			December 2024
5.2	Advocate and support the Government in implementing and/or reviewing policies that enhance market-based approaches to strengthening the nutrition sensitivity of food systems.		Country office			June 2024
5.3	Facilitate the functioning of multi-stakeholder coordination platforms for the food security and nutrition sector.		Country office			December 2024

#	Recommendation	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
5.4	Support the Government (Ministry of Food and Agriculture) in scaling up the nutrition livelihood programme targeting households vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition, particularly in the Northern and Ashanti regions.		Country office			December 2024
6	WFP should review the accountability to affected populations mechanism and address bottlenecks to ensure that all beneficiaries are well informed about WFP programmes.	Operational	Country office			
6.1	Conduct an assessment of the preferred methods for providing feedback and use the findings of this assessment to ensure that beneficiaries are aware of and have access to WFP feedback mechanisms.		Country office	Regional bureau		December 2024
6.2	Increase the frequency and quality of beneficiary sensitization activities in order to ensure that beneficiaries are well informed about the programmes.		Country office	Regional bureau		December 2024

Acronyms

COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSP	country strategic plan
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
SCOPE	WFP's digital beneficiary information and transfer management platform
SNF	specialized nutritious foods
T-ICSP	transitional interim country strategic plan