

25. MAINSTREAMING ANTICIPATORY ACTIONS AND GOVERNMENT CAPACITIES TO REDUCE, MITIGATE & MANAGE RISKS

ACTION AREA	FOOD SYSTEMS RESILIENCE
SOLUTION CLUSTER	SYSTEMIC APPROACHES TO CRISIS MANAGEMENT
THEMATIC AREA	MULTI-RISK EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS AND ANTICIPATORY ACTIONS
SUBMITTED BY	EU

PROBLEM/CHALLENGE ADDRESSED IN RELATION TO FOOD SYSTEMS RESILIENCE

Humanitarian food assistance is the “lifeboat” of global food systems: it intervenes when food systems fail, saving lives and protecting livelihoods. In this way, it helps food systems cope with and recover from shocks, and thus constitutes a key element of their resilience.

Traditional food assistance is mostly reactive: it is triggered when a shock happens, to mitigate its impact on populations. This is costly in both economic and human terms. In the last years, we are observing a deterioration of food insecurity worldwide, and an ever-growing gap between the food assistance needs and the resources available: **global food security is in jeopardy**.

In these circumstances, it is imperative to transform food assistance mechanisms. We need new working modalities that i) make a **more efficient use of resources** and ii) reinforce synergies and **integration with longer-term efforts** addressing the root causes of hunger and food resilience.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SOLUTION PROPOSED

Global food systems’ resilience would improve if we **promote and mainstream anticipatory mechanisms in food assistance in the next decade** at global level. This would allow triggering interventions at the onset of crises, or even in anticipation to them, and thus change the focus from response to hunger to prevention of hunger when shocks occur.

This would involve systematically making use of several elements:

- Multi-risk Early Warning Systems (EWS) and information systems able to anticipate shocks and trigger interventions;
- Early action protocols, used by all relevant actors;
- Anticipatory financing schemes;
- Shock-responsive social protection mechanisms (such as safety nets), to channel the assistance to the affected populations in an efficient manner.

Anticipatory action requires major changes in the humanitarian mindset, e.g. a 'no-regrets' approach to accept intervening in prevention of disasters that may not occur. It is also more efficient in the context of multi-sector approaches, taking into account other basic needs.

None of these elements is new. Several examples exist, either stand-alone or integrated to some degree. However, their coverage is rather limited today, and there is no example of a fully functioning system encompassing all these elements.

It is important to highlight that anticipatory action works for shocks of a "foreseeable" nature, such as meteorological hazards, but less in e.g. conflict situations. Hence the importance of coupling anticipatory and early action.

Implementation approach

Mainstreaming this game-changing solution would require a **political commitment from global actors** in humanitarian assistance and development, as well as governments of beneficiary countries.

Such political commitment should be accompanied by an **implementation roadmap with clear milestones and targets**, to which the signatories would subscribe. This roadmap would encompass the development of the elements described above, as well as communication activities, evidence-gathering and a monitoring framework.

A key element would be **developing (or reinforcing) appropriate partnerships** to implement the roadmap. The **Global Network against Food Crises**, which already brings together key actors on food security, seems the appropriate framework for this.

Whilst developing the tools and mechanisms would have a cost, the action could be implemented without increasing resources, by prioritising the relevant actions.

IMPACT

Anticipatory action would **increase considerably the effectiveness and cost-efficiency** of humanitarian aid. These mechanisms could be implemented worldwide (provided minimum conditions are met), and **benefit a large portion of the population** in need of food assistance.

This would result in **more resilient food systems**, with an increased (and faster) capacity to react to shocks and recover from them.

Notably when coupled with social protection schemes, these mechanisms would allow to intervene in virtually **any part of food systems**, from food supply chains (food production, storage, distribution) to food environments (food availability and affordability, infrastructures), individual factors (purchasing power, knowledge), consumer behaviour (food preparation, storage) or food outcomes (diets and nutrition). They could thus be used as a **vehicle for change across the five UNFSS action tracks**, helping improve access to food, nutrition, and sustainability of food systems.

Such systems would also help integrate under the same umbrella short-term actions with longer-term programmes, and would hence facilitate coherence across the **humanitarian-development nexus**.

SUSTAINABILITY (ABILITY TO KEEP DELIVERING TO 2030 AND BEYOND)

Anticipatory action schemes, coupled with social protection schemes, constitute a change of paradigm in humanitarian assistance. Putting in place this game-changer would permanently increase cost-efficiency and have lasting effects and deliver indefinitely. Furthermore, these schemes can be perfected and expanded to support an increasingly wide array of objectives at little or no additional cost.