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1. Food Consumption Score (FCS)

VERSION	V3.0 – 2023.05
INDICATOR CODE	1
INDICATOR TYPE & AREA	**Type:** Outcome corporate indicator (CRF under SO.1, SO.2 & SO.3) Reported in ACR & APR 1. Food security and essential needs
INCLUDED IN CSP LOGFRAMES	Yes
APPLICABILITY	**Mandatory:** Under the relevant outcomes for interventions with a food security objective. These interventions should provide food assistance, irrespective of the transfer modality, i.e., i) Unconditional Resource Transfer, ii) Community and Household Asset Creation, and iii) Household and individual Skill and Livelihood Creation activities) to Tier 1 beneficiaries.
TECHNICAL OWNER	Research, Assessment and Monitoring (RAM)
ACTIVITY TAGS	*General Distribution (GD) *Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) *Food Assistance for Training (FFT) *School feeding (take-home rations) (SF_THR) **Note:** FCS is recommended for SBP take-home rations that cover half or more of the household caloric intake.
UNIT OF MEASUREMENT & ANALYSIS	• Percentage of households with poor food consumption score • Percentage of households with borderline food consumption score • Percentage of households with acceptable food consumption score
DEFINITION	The Food Consumption Score (FCS) indicator is a composite score based on households' dietary diversity, food consumption frequency, and relative nutritional value of different food groups. The FCS aggregates household-level food consumption data, in terms of frequency over the previous seven days and weights the data according to the relative nutritional value of the consumed food groups. The FCS is a proxy indicator of households' access to food. It has been validated against the quantity of caloric intake.[1] Cut-off thresholds are applied to the FCS to classify households into three groups: poor, borderline or acceptable food consumption as defined in Table 1; **Table 1:** Food Consumption Score Categories

FCS Category	Standard thresholds	Adjusted thresholds[1]
Poor Food Consumption Score	0-21	0-28
Borderline Food Consumption Score	21.5 -35	28.5-42
Acceptable Food Consumption Score	>35.5-112	>42.5-112

RATIONALE

The FCS was developed by WFP to measure household food consumption, using a method that is flexible enough to account for different needs and contexts, standard enough to have equally applicable analysis techniques and equally interpretable results, and can be implemented in the field in a reasonable data collection and analysis timeframe.

A high FCS increases the probability that a household's food intake is adequate whereas, a low FCS indicates that the household's food consumption is not sufficient. The FCS is a good proxy for the current food security status and is highly correlated with other food security proxy indicators, including DDS, rCSI, and FCS-N (Vitamin A, Protein-rich and Hem Iron intake).

DATA SOURCE

Representative household surveys conducted either face-to-face, or by phone calls. In most cases, the FCS module is collected through post-distribution monitoring or food security outcome monitoring questionnaires.

DATA COLLECTION TOOL

Information on the Food Consumption Score indicator can be collected using the standard food consumption module available here as well as in the CARI technical guide here (page 15). This XLSForm will help to simplify authoring forms in Excel which can be converted to an ODK form, a popular open-source data collection software. The form can also be generated by selecting the sub-module Food Consumption Score (FCS) in the module Food Consumption in WFP Survey Designer.

The standard food consumption module contains eight food groups plus condiments. The analysis of the FCS only requires eight food groups (Table 2), and the condiments food group is mainly included to help capture foods consumed in very small quantities as 'condiments' and avoid inclusion of these foods under nutritious food groups. It is important that small quantities of the main food groups (e.g., a sprinkle of fish powder on top of a dish) are not considered, but are categorised under 'condiments,' a point which needs to be also stressed during the enumerators' training.

Note: This module focuses on the foods consumed by the majority (50%+) of household members, regardless of whether the food was prepared inside or outside the home. It is important to record the number of days in which food groups were consumed, instead of the number of times.

Table 2: Individual food groups

[1] Used in contexts where the consumption of oil and sugar is high. Consult with your CO VAM Officer and/or Regional RAM Officer (VAM-M&E) on applicable thresholds in your country or region.

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How many days over the past 7 days did most members of your household (50% +) eat the following food items, inside or outside their home and what was their source? (Use codes below, write 0 if not consumed in last 7 days) ***Note for enumerator: Determine whether consumption of food items (e.g. fish, milk) was only in small quantities.***			
Foods	Number of days eaten in past **7 days** *If 0 days, do not specify the main source.*	Variable names	How was this food acquired? **Write the main source of food for the past 7 days**
Cereals, grains, roots and tubers Rice, pasta, bread, sorghum, millet, maize, potato, yam, cassava, white sweet potato	|__|	FCSStap	|__|
Pulses/ legumes and nuts: beans, cowpeas, peanuts, lentils, nut, soy, pigeon pea and / or other nuts	|__|	FCSPulse	|__|
Milk and other dairy products: fresh milk / sour, yogurt, cheese, other dairy products (Exclude margarine / butter or small amounts of milk for tea / coffee)	|__|	FCSDairy	|__|
Meat, fish and eggs: goat, beef, chicken, pork, blood, fish, including canned tuna, escargot, and / or other seafood, eggs (meat and fish consumed in large quantities and not as a condiment)	|__|	FCSPr	|__|
Vegetables and leaves: spinach, onion, tomatoes, carrots, peppers, green beans, lettuce, etc	|__|	FCSVeg	|__|
Fruits: banana, apple, lemon, mango, papaya, apricot, peach, etc (Exclude fruit juice)	|__|	FCSFruit	|__|
Oil / fat / butter: vegetable oil, palm oil, shea butter, margarine, other fats / oil	|__|	FCSFat	|__|
Sugar or sweets: sugar, honey, jam, candy, chocolate, cookies, pastries, cakes, ice cream, and other sweets (sugary drinks, including fruit juice)	|__|	FCSSugar	|__|
Condiments / Spices: tea, coffee / cocoa, salt, garlic, spices, yeast / baking powder, tomato / sauce, meat or fish as a condiment, condiments including small amount of milk in tea or coffee.	|__|	FCSCond	|__|
Code book list name: SRf	**Food acquisition codes** 100 = Own production (crops, animal) 200 = Fishing / Hunting 300 = Gathering 400 = Loan 500 = market (purchase with cash) 600 = market (purchase on credit) 700 = begging for food 800 = exchange labor or items for food 900 = gift (food) from family relatives or friends 1000 = food aid from civil society, NGOs, government, WFP etc.		

SAMPLING REQUIREMENTS

Sample size: The recommended sample size is 270 per stratum per round of data collection, with consideration given to the parameters below:

- Population size (beneficiaries per stratum): at least 20,000[2]
- Desired level of confidence: 90%
- Acceptable margin of error: 5%
- Response distribution: 50%
- Simple random sample (design effect): 1

If **cluster sample** is employed, sample size should increase by at least 50% (at least 405 households).

If the **prevalence is lower or higher than 50%,** or the beneficiaries per stratum less than 20,000 then sample size could be lower than 270, use the sample size tool for calculation.

Mandatory stratification:

- Programme activity
- Transfer modality
- Optional stratification: Beneficiaries/non-beneficiaries (when relevant)

Guidance on sampling is available here.

Sample size tool: Raosoft sample size calculator

[2] Sampling requirements using the cluster sample are based on statistical rules and the sample size is not greatly impacted (only marginal increases) for populations larger than 20,000.

INDICATOR CALCULATION

To analyse the FCS, please consider the following calculation steps:

I. Using standard VAM 7-day food frequency data group all the food items into specific food groups (see 8-groups in table below).

II. Multiply the value obtained for each food group by its weight (see food group weights in table below) and sum the weighted food group scores, thus creating the food consumption score (FCS)

III. Using the appropriate thresholds, recode the variable food consumption score, from a continuous variable to a categorical variable.

For more information on how to calculate FCS, refer to the tools posted in the VAM Resource Centre.

An example of collected FCS and its calculation for a single household:

Food group	Frequency of consumption	Weights	Frequency x weight
Cereals, grains, roots and tubers	7	2	14
Legumes/ nuts	2	3	6
Milk and other dairy products	3	4	12
Meat, fish and eggs	2	4	8
Vegetables and leaves	2	1	2
Fruits	1	1	1
Oil/fat/butter	7	0.5	3.5
Sugar, or sweet	7	0.5	3.5
Condiments	7	0	0
Sum of score			50

If more than eight food groups such as FCS-N module (7 additional sub-groups) are collected, then the main eight food groups must be asked in an aggregated way before disaggregation. FCS must be calculated from the direct answers on the consumption of the aggregated eight food groups (above). This is done to reduce the risk of overestimation of food consumption that would derive from calculations made on the sum of every single food item comprised under the respective food groups.

Link to SPSS syntax here:

DATA ENTRY IN COMET

Results generated will be entered into COMET.

DISAGGREGATION FOR DATA ENTRY IN COMET (MANDATORY)

Mandatory disaggregation:

- Sex of household head

Recommended disaggregation (when sample size allows):

- Rural/urban
- Admin and livelihood zone
- Displacement status

	For COMET reporting: If the sample size is not representative of the mandatory disaggregation groups, please include a note indicating that the results are indicative for that specific group in both the COMET and ACR note sections. For regular reporting: Ensure that the reporting accurately reflects categories with a representative sample size.
FREQUENCY OF DATA COLLECTION/ DATA ENTRY IN COMET	Minimum: once/year (same period of the baseline) For operations with access constraints: once/year face to face + remote monthly monitoring (if available). It is strongly recommended that data collection for follow-ups happens in the same period to the baseline. In addition, all follow-ups are to be conducted within the same period/number of days after food distributions. The data collection must take place between seven to 21 days after food/cash distributions take place.
BASELINE ESTABLISHMENT	In line with the business rules, baseline values should be established within three (3) months before and no later than three (3) months from the start date of activity implementation. However, it is strongly recommended to collect FCS baseline values before the start of the activity implementation. The baseline could also be determined from a relevant WFP assessment conducted within three months prior to the start of a programme activity.
TARGET SETTING	**Annual targets:** Reduced prevalence of households with poor food consumption OR Reduced prevalence of households with poor and borderline food consumption (SUM). **End of CSP target:** Reduced prevalence of households with poor food consumption compared to the pre-assistance baseline value. OR Reduced prevalence of households with poor and borderline food consumption (SUM) as compared to the pre-assistance baseline value.
RESPONSIBLE FOR DATA COLLECTION	M&E Officer
INDICATORS COLLECTED & ANALYSED AT THE SAME TIME	Household level indicators: • FCS-N, HDDS in a combined module • rCSI, LCS-FS OR LCS-EN and ECMEN Individual level indicators: MAD, MDD-W (if applicable)
COMPLEMENTARY QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	Focus group discussions can be conducted in addition to the household level data collection to triangulate the qualitative information about dietary habits with quantitative information on the regular consumption of the 8 food groups. In addition, while the FCS does not consider the quality of the foods consumed, quality aspects can be discussed during FGDs. For example, "in an area of Somalia, 97% of households consumed fruits in the last 7 days, and qualitative data explained that the consumed fruits were rotten or nearly spoiled." Here are some example questions for a focus group discussion: • Can you describe the typical foods consumed by households in your community? What are the 3 main staple food commodities consumed in your community?

- What are the 3 main sources of food in your community in the last 7 days? In your opinion, how do households in your community make decisions about what foods to purchase or consume?
- Are there any specific challenges or barriers people in your community face in accessing and consuming a diverse range of foods?
- On average how many meals do people consume a day, what factors influence this practice?
- Are there any cultural or traditional practices that influence the food consumption choices in your community? Can you provide examples?
- Can you share any changes or shifts you have observed in the food consumption patterns of households in your community over time? What factors do you think have influenced these changes?
- What is the general perception of the assistance that people are receiving in your community?
- Etc.

DECISIONS DATA CAN INFORM

The FCS is used for programme activity monitoring to determine the outcomes of the provision of WFP assistance. When the FCS is monitored over time, for each activity and modality of assistance, it can provide insight into the effectiveness of the interventions and evaluate their appropriateness for the targeted or assisted households. By tracking this indicator over time, consider contributing factors such as seasonality, various shocks as well as programme activity design and assistance levels, FCS can provide informative details for improving interventions. In addition to examining stratified results, disaggregated results are important as they help us to understand the effectiveness of WFP interventions for households with different socioeconomic situations.

The FCS indicator plays a part in classifying households according to their level of food security, through Consolidated Approach for Reporting on food Insecurity (CARI), and likely targeting decisions. The prevalence of households with poor and borderline food consumption provides essential information on people's current diets and is helpful in deciding the most appropriate type and scale of food security intervention as well as the right target group for the assistance.

The FCS is also one of the food security outcome indicators in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) acute food insecurity reference table.

INTERPRETATION

The FCS is a proxy of households' food access and a core WFP indicator used to classify households into three different groups: household with poor consumption, borderline consumption, and acceptable consumption. Following the provision of assistance, it is expected that the proportion of households with poor and borderline consumption decreases and the proportion of households with acceptable consumption increases. Besides the three food consumption groups, it is recommended to present the average number of days different food groups are consumed.

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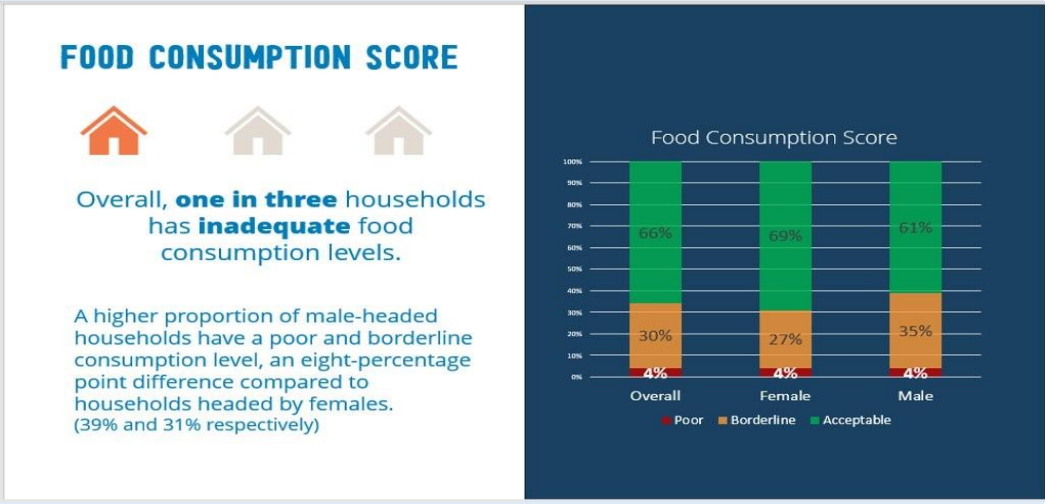
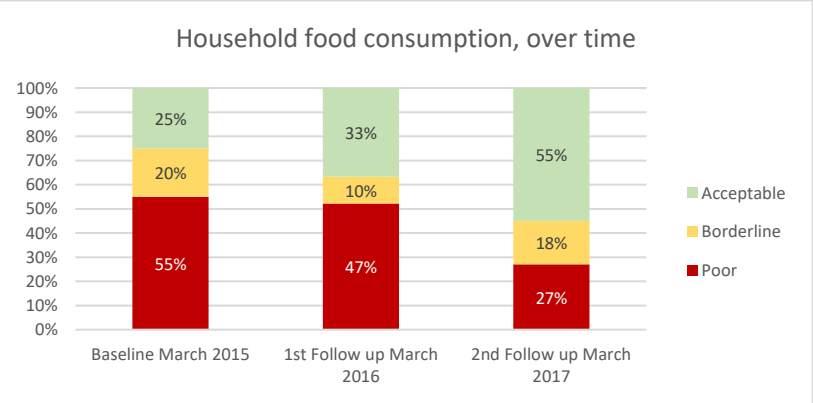
REPORTING EXAMPLE(S)



VISUALIZATION



Note: always add dates of baseline and follow-ups in the graph.

LIMITATIONS

FCS reflects the current food consumption status and does not provide an indication of the households' ability or capacity to remain food secure over time. It is a household-level indicator that does not provide information about intra-household differences and does not make the link between household access to food, individual dietary intake and nutritional outcomes - stunting, wasting and micronutrient deficiencies. For nutrition-sensitive programmes, it is recommended to measure the FCS-N in addition to the FCS.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Refer to the VAM FCS page on the VAM resource centre or contact the Needs Assessments and Targeting Unit in HQ RAM (RAM-N).