1. FOOD SECURITY AND ESSENTIAL NEEDS

1	## 1. Food Consumption Score (FCS) [REVISED]

VERSION	V4.0 – 2024.03
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 – Needs Assessment & Targeting (RAM-N)
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. More activity tags can be chosen from Annex 5 of the Masterlist (e.g. HIV/TB mitigation and Safety Nets) but it is mandatory to select at least one of the above tags to ensure proper corporate reporting.
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' food intake or caloric consumption. 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[4]
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 HDDS[5], 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: Food Consumption Score Module

FCS: How many days over the last 7 days, did most members of your household (50% +) eat the following food items, inside or outside their home, and what was their source?	Number of days eaten in past **7 days.**	Variable names	How was this food acquired? **Write the main source of food for the past 7 days.**

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[4] 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.

[5] Note that Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) is a household-level indicator that is collected in food security assessments, and is different to the Dietary Diversity Score (DDS), country-specific Indicator 51. Indicator 51 does not have a methodological note since it is being retired.

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				If not eaten, do not specify the main source.
	Note for enumerator: Determine whether the consumption of food items (e.g., fish, milk) was only in small quantities and should be recorded as a condiment.			
1.	**Cereals, grains, roots, and tubers:** Rice, pasta, bread, sorghum, millet, maize, potato, yam, cassava, white sweet potato, taro, plantain	|___|	FCSStap	|___|
2.	**Pulses/legumes, nuts, and seeds:** beans, cowpeas, lentils, soy, pigeon pea, peanuts, and/or other nuts	|___|	FCSPulse	|___|
3.	**Dairy**: milk, yogurt, cheese, other dairy products (Exclude margarine/butter or small amounts of milk for tea/coffee)	|___|	FCSDairy	|___|
4.	**Meat, fish and eggs:** goat, beef, chicken, pork, fish, including canned tuna, escargot, and/or other seafood, escargot, insects, eggs (Exclude meat and fish consumed in small quantities)	|___|	FCSPr	|___|
5.	**Vegetables and leaves:** spinach, onion, tomatoes, carrots, peppers, green beans, lettuce, etc.	|___|	FCSVeg	|___|
6.	**Fruits:** banana, apple, lemon, mango, papaya, apricot, peach, etc. (Exclude packaged fruit juice)	|___|	FCSFruit	|___|
7.	**Oils, fats, and butter:** vegetable oil, palm oil, ghee, butter, margarine, other fats or oils	|___|	FCSFat	|___|
8.	**Sugar and sweets:** sugar, honey, jam, candy, chocolate, biscuits/cookies, pastries, cakes, ice cream, and other sweets, including sugary drinks	|___|	FCSSugar	|___|
9.	**Condiments and spices:** tea, coffee, cocoa powder, salt, garlic, spices, yeast, tomato paste; small quantities of other foods, especially meat or fish and small amounts of milk in tea or coffee.	|___|	FCSCond	|___|

Food acquisition codes (Source of food, SRf)
100 = Own production (crops, animal husbandry)
200 = Fishing/hunting
300 = Gathering
400 = Loan/borrow
500 = Purchase (with cash)
600 = Purchase (on credit)
700 = Begging or scavenging for food
800 = Exchange labour or items for food (barter)
900 = Gift (food) from family relatives or friends
1000 = Food assistance (in-kind) from WFP, civil society, NGOs, government, 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[6]
- 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

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:

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[6] 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.

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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:** • Programme activity **Recommended disaggregation (when sample size allows):** • Sex of household head • Transfer modality • Rural/urban • Admin and livelihood zone • Displacement status • Beneficiaries/non-beneficiaries (when relevant) 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: twice/year It is strongly recommended that data collection for one of the 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.

	For years when a baseline is conducted, only one follow up is required.
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: • 2. FCS-N • 3. rCSI • 4. LCS-FS OR • 5. LCS-EN • 6. ECMEN Individual level indicators: 10. MAD, 11. 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 Country X, 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?

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- 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?

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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.
REPORTING EXAMPLE(S)	Analysis results of the FCS indicate that one in three households have inadequate food consumption levels.
	A higher proportion of male-headed households have inadequate food consumption, an 8-percentage point difference compared to female-headed households (39% and 31%, respectively).

VISUALIZATION

Food consumption of beneficiaries (2022-2024)
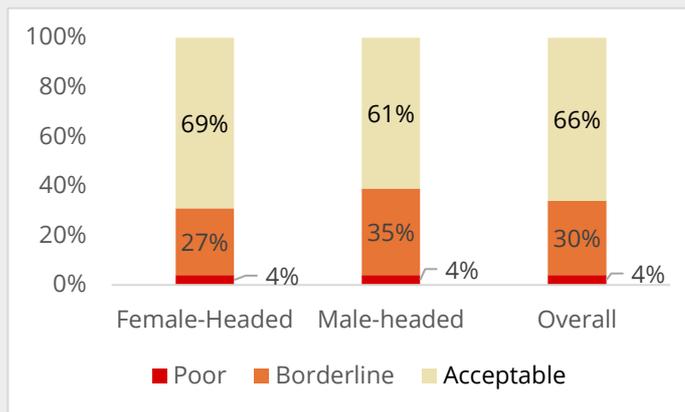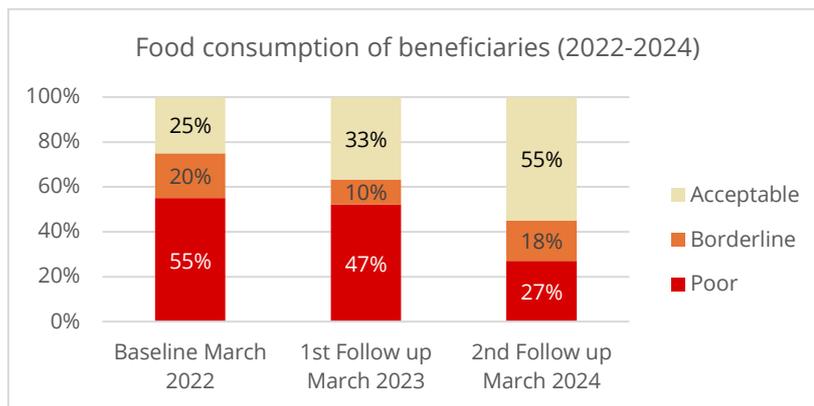
Note: always add dates of baseline and follow-ups in the graph.

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) at global.assessmentandtargeting@wfp.org.