

Assessment of the Food Security II Cooperative Agreement

Prepared for

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Acronyms

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| ACF | Agricultural Consultative Forum |
| AFR/SD | Africa Bureau/Office of Sustainable Development |
| APD | Agricultural Policy Development Project |
| CILSS | Interstate Committee for the Struggle Against Drought |
| DFID | Department of International Development (British) |
| FDI | Foreign Direct Investment |
| FFP | Food for Peace |
| FS II | Food Security II Cooperative Agreement |
| FSRP | Food Security Research Project |
| FY | Fiscal Year |
| HIV/AIDS | Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| IARC | International Agricultural Research Center |
| IFPRI | International Food Policy Research Institute |
| IQC | Indefinite Quantity Contract |
| INSAH | Institut de Sahel |
| MSU | Michigan State University |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organization |
| PACD | Project Activities Completion Date |
| PASIDMA | Projet d'Appui au Système Décentralisé du Marché Agricole |
| PRISAS | Programme Régional de Renforcement Institutionnel en Matière de Recherche sur la Sécurité Alimentaire au Sahel |
| PRMC | Malian Cereal Market Restructuring Program |
| PRSP | Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |

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Executive Summary

This assessment of the Food Security II Cooperative Agreement (FS II) between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Michigan State University (MSU) covers the period from the mid-term evaluation in December 1996 to December 2001. The assessment was made by a two-person team between December 2001 and January 2002.

Because of travel restrictions and limited funds, the assessment team had only limited access to personnel and activities of FS II overseas. To work within these limitations, the team prepared and sent a questionnaire via e-mail to people related to the various FS II-supported activities in the field. Of the 102 questionnaires distributed, 47 questionnaires were returned. Results of this survey, personal interviews, review of project materials, examination of the FS II Web site, and meetings at MSU were the primary source materials used in this assessment.

Project Outputs and Impact

1. Expanding and Improving Knowledge Base on Policy-relevant Food Security Issues

One of the most important elements in the FS II project is expansion and improvement of the knowledge base on policy-relevant food security issues. Respondents generally had positive views of the work the FS II has done in this regard. The strengths were seen to be the descriptive and survey work. The FS II also expanded and improved the knowledge base on cross-country food security issues.

While the overwhelming response to FS II work to build an expanded and improved knowledge base on food security issues was positive, there were some critical remarks principally from the academic community. Most of these critical comments are important for consideration in design of a possible future project.

2. Timely and Effective Communicating of Project-generated Findings to Policy and Decision Makers

For FS II to succeed, its findings must be communicated to public, private and donor-related policy and decision makers. The majority of the responses on this topic were positive on how well FS II was achieving this goal. There was agreement from virtually all reviewers that the policy synthesis series has been well done and is quite useful. In addition to noting the timeliness and effectiveness of country-level policy briefs and policy synthesis papers, respondents valued the participatory forums and the benefits of the project's price information activities, specific market and price publications, and bulletins. Respondents also commented on the usefulness of the project's Web site.

3. Monitoring Procedures and Reporting on People-level Impact of Food Security Strategies and Project Activities

FS II needs to be able to monitor and report on the people-level impact of any given food security strategy. While response to the question on this activity was less universal, a number of examples of this type of work were given. One example was the impact report on the devaluation of the CFA Franc. Others commented on the role FS II had in improving survey design and management of surveys to

improve existing or new monitoring programs. Some respondents also viewed the market price information work as an important monitoring activity.

4. Strengthening Local Capacity for Food Security Research, Analysis and Monitoring

In general, both the respondents to our questions and this assessment team believe that the project has been successful in capacity building. The project has provided long-term training to scores of participants and short-term training to hundreds more. In addition, the on-the-job interaction with MSU staff has been invaluable. Capacity building, while not perfect, has been one of the important project outputs.

Institutional Memory

The terms of reference for this assessment asked the assessment team to look at the success the FS II project has had in establishing and maintaining African and U.S. institutional memory. The general response to this question was positive but a bit less detailed than were responses to other questions. Many respondents noted the collaboration between African and U.S. researchers as an important element in development of institutional memory. Another point made several times was that senior advisors and managers in the food security activities in Africa, both in the private and public sector, were trained under the FS II project. Yet another point made several times is that the FS II project, through its publications, data bases, and Web site, is a storehouse of information, not only for the project but more broadly within Africa, on food security issues. Finally, a few of the respondents noted that institutional memory on African food security issues has been supported by the longevity of the program.

Project Inputs

Participants both in the field and in USAID/Washington believed that the technical teams supporting the project are very good. They are knowledgeable, committed and respected within both the USAID and the African community. Training at a graduate level, in short-courses and on-the-job was also well received, although some questions were raised in particular corners. One of the most important inputs in the FS II project has been the institutional commitment of Michigan State University to food security in Africa. Michigan State has made a long-term institutional commitment to the activities within FS II.

Management - Technical Problems / Solutions

There were few technical or management issues raised by respondents. Those that were noted were country-specific, Rwanda being the most prominent.

Conclusion of FS II Assessment

The second phase of the Food Security II Cooperative Agreement has been successful. FS II has met its outputs and deliverable targets and has contributed significantly to achievement of project goals and objectives. It is recognized and appreciated broadly in the field and within USAID/Washington.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOLLOW-ON PROJECT

View from the Field

The assessment team found a strong desire from the field that any future FS II activity be entirely or primarily directed towards Africa. The one theme expressed in many of the comments was the need to expand long-term training and to create greater local capacity to collect and analyze data. Another common theme was continuity of the project.

There was a split concerning establishment of the research agenda for a future project; USAID sought more mission involvement, other respondents wanted more wide-spread involvement. Several respondents sought to have closer integration of a future project's research agenda with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). Finally, several respondents noted a need for more diversity in ideas and thinking on food security in a future project.

A Conceptual Framework for a Future Food Security Project

The assessment team's interviews and review of questionnaire responses produced several interesting findings: 1) The present FS II project generally is very successful, 2) There is strong need for a follow-on project to FS II, 3) One of the main reasons the present project is so successful is the commitment of the staff and institution at Michigan State University and its long-term institutional memory, and 4) There are important voices, mostly within USAID and the academic community, that seek greater diversity, both in ideas and personnel, within any future food security project. On the basis of these findings, the assessment team proposes a concept for a follow-on project based upon the notion of a public utility – a producer of a public good.

Conceptual Framework and Its Implications

A proposed conceptual framework for the possible future project would configure the project as a producer of public goods. That is, the project would provide services to a broad range of clients who could draw upon its data, analysis, expertise, and conclusions. These clients could go beyond USAID and host countries to include, for example, the World Bank, IFPRI, other universities, and other development organizations. The project would also provide institutional memory for USAID on African development issues and for the development community as a whole.

With many of the outputs of the project seen as public goods, a broader base of organizations should have input into the work plan. This broader participation in the work planning would benefit the project and satisfy the expressed desires of many related to the present project. In fact, it might open the door ultimately to financial contributions from other organizations.

One implication of this concept is that the project should make greater effort and allocate more resources to sharing data and information. This would open access of the data to other researchers who could use it, perhaps applying other types of analysis, and thus increasing the diversity in the project. This openness could help prevent a perception that only one approach to development policy analysis is being used in the project.

Methodological Boundaries

What topics to include and breadth of coverage are important questions for a future project. Clearly, the project's present strength is description and analysis of functioning of markets and development of market information systems to improve market operation. In general, our suggestion would be that the boundaries of a follow-on project should be carefully and narrowly defined. The only exception to the

principle of narrow focus, we believe, is that the project should be better integrated with the PRSP process in the countries in which they are working.

Regional Boundaries

At present, the view from the field and the opinion of the assessment team is that a future food security project should basically focus on Africa. Expanding to other regions could stretch the competencies of the implementing institution and it would dilute the project's Africa concentration.

Procurement Instrument

There is fairly unanimous agreement that a cooperative agreement would be the best procurement instrument for any future food security project.

I. Introduction

This assessment of the Food Security II Cooperative Agreement (FS II) between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Michigan State University (MSU) covers the period from the mid-term evaluation in December 1996 to December 2001. The assessment looks at the more recent activities of FS II for preparation of possible USAID follow-on activities in the food security area after the present cooperative agreement ends on 30 September 2002.

The 1996 mid-term evaluation provided a positive review of the cooperative agreement and served as the justification for the continuation of the FS II activities to the 2002 Project Activities Completion Date (PACD). The evaluation recommended a number of administrative and managerial actions in the implementation of the project. The general substantive scope of the core activities were to remain basically unchanged, with additional emphasis on local institutions, the private sector, and NGO's in the establishment of research agendas. Additional research was recommended on the vertical linkages between smallholders and both factor and output markets.

The present assessment was undertaken by a two-person team between December 2001 and January 2002. The terms of reference (TOR) (Annex A) for the assessment calls for a review of the progress of the project in accomplishing its goal, sub-goal and purpose, the appropriateness and adequacy of project inputs, success in African capacity building and success in establishing and maintaining African and U. S. institutional memory. The assessment team was also called upon to review major management and technical issues and their solutions. Most importantly, the assessment was asked to provide information helpful to USAID in determining whether a follow-on project should be undertaken and what form such a project should take. Of particular concern was the substantive scope, regional focus and procurement instrument a possible follow-on activity should have.

Because of travel and funding restrictions, the assessment team had only limited access to personnel and activities of FS II overseas. To work within these limitations, the team prepared and sent a questionnaire via e-mail to people related to the various FS II-supported activities in the field. The list of recipients of the questionnaire included project managers, USAID / World Bank / other donor users and observers of the project, key counterparts to project activities, and other project collaborators and observers. Of the 102 questionnaires that were distributed, 47 questionnaires were returned. The large number of responses and the positive tone of most of those responses are important indicators of how well the FS II project is viewed in the field. Annex B provides details of the questionnaire, the recipients, and the responses received, sorted by question and project activity. Results of this survey, personal interviews, review of project materials, examination of the FS II Web site, and meetings at MSU were the primary source materials used in this assessment.

The assessment team had an opportunity to visit the Michigan State campus in mid-December to interview staff and faculty of the University working on the FS II program. In addition, the

MSU FS II staff prepared an extensive binder of material (Assessment/Evaluation Briefing Book, November 28, 2001) that provided summaries and details of project activities and impact of the project for the period of the assessment. The assessment team verified the material in the Briefing Book with the MSU team, and this material, while not repeated, is used throughout this assessment. The assessment team considers this Briefing Book an integral part of this assessment documentation. The list of deliverables in Annex C is partly drawn from this Briefing Book.

This assessment document is divided into two parts. Part one covers the assessment of the ongoing FS II project. Part two deals with comments and recommendations for a follow-on activity in support of food security in Africa.

II. Project Description

The Food Security II Cooperative Agreement is a follow-on to the earlier 1984 -1992 USAID-MSU Food Security in Africa Cooperative Agreement. The FS II project's initial authorization in Fiscal Year (FY) 1992 continues through the final obligation year FY 2001. This phase of the project covers the second Cooperative Agreement under FS II for the period September 1, 1997 through September 30, 2002. The estimated amount of this Cooperative Agreement's core budget was \$7,500,00. As of December 19, 2001, \$ 5,800,000 has been obligated to core budget. This includes \$2,625,000 for the FS II/Core, \$1,400,00 for FS II/Africa SD Policy Analysis, \$1,600,000 for FS II/INSAH-PRISAS and \$175,000 for Food for Peace activities. In addition, the project has three buy-ins including \$4,812,803 from USAID/Mali for FS II /PASIDMA and FS II/Nutrition activities, \$1,896,00 from USAID/Rwanda for FS II /Rwanda activities, and \$3,400,000 from USAID/Zambia for FS II/Zambia activities. The total obligated funds for this second phase of the FS II Cooperative Agreement is \$15,908,803. In conjunction with this work, MSU also has a separate Cooperative Agreement with USAID/Mozambique for \$5,666,956 for RPD/Mozambique and a sub-contract with Egerton University/Tegemeo Institute for \$ 443,196.

The goal, sub-goal and purpose of this second phase of the FS II Cooperative Agreement remain the same as in the first phase. Specifically, the goal is "to increase food security in developing countries as part of broad-based, market-orientated, sustainable economic growth." The sub-goal is "to ensure adoption by public and private sector decision makers (including USAID and other donor agencies) of effective policies, programs and management process that promote food security, based on project-generated research and analyses." And finally, the purpose is "to strengthen the capacity of participating countries and USAID to analyze food security issues and to formulate policies, institutional reforms, investment plans and management processes that promote food security."

The operational objective of the second phase also remains the same as that of the first. It is "to improve the capacity of participating countries and USAID missions to analyze food security issues, to formulate policies, institutional reforms, investment plans and management processes that promote food security, and to build capacity through on-the-job training of researchers and

analysts within host countries and through graduate degree training of selected participants at MSU. A secondary objective is to further strengthen MSU's capacity to develop and backstop the proposed program of food security research."

The research agenda, end of project status, project outputs, project inputs and project activities and methodology were revised in the second phase of the Cooperative Agreement. Phase two has three strategic research objectives and two cross-cutting themes. Strategic research objective one is "How to design more cost-effective food systems and related institutions." Research objective two is "How to improve positive effects of macro reforms on agricultural transformation and food system policy." The final research objective is "How to improve access to food by vulnerable groups". The cross-cutting themes are the following: "How to enhance both farm and non-farm sources of income to promote food security" and "How to address food security concerns in the context of concern for natural resource management."

The end of project status is reflected in the four major outputs of the project. These anticipated outputs are the following:

1. "An expanded and improved knowledge base on policy-relevant food security issues;
2. Timely and effective communication of project-generated findings to decision makers (both public and private sector) in participating countries, and to policy makers and analysts within USAID and among the broader development community;
3. Monitoring procedures and reports to assess the people-level impact of food security strategies and project activities;
4. Strengthened local capacities for food security policy research, analysis and monitoring."

As indication of the achievement of these outputs, the Cooperative Agreement specifies a list and minimum number of specific deliverables for the project. These deliverables include country level food security policy briefs, country level working papers, research monographs, policy syntheses, articles in refereed journals, and cross county reports. Annex C contains a listing of these deliverables. Assessment of the quality of these deliverables is provided below.

During this phase two of the FS II Cooperative Agreement, the project carried out its program of applied research and capacity development in nine areas:

- Mali Market Information (PASIDMA)
- Mali Nutritional Linkage Project
- Sahel Regional Program (INSAH)

- Mozambique Research and Policy Dialogue Project
- Rwanda Food Security Research Project (FSRP)
- Zambia food Security Research Project (FSRP)
- Agricultural Transformation Workshop
- Kenya Agricultural Monitoring and Policy Analysis Project (Tegemeo Institute)
- Africa Bureau - Office of Sustainable Development - Cross Cutting Food System Productivity and Household Income Topics

Additionally, MSU, through the FS-II Cooperative Agreement has also helped support the launching of the Partnership to Cut Hunger in Africa.

PART ONE: ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

I. Project Outputs and Impact

The assessment team reviewed the output of the second phase of FS II and made judgements on the impact of that output. FS II expanded and improved the knowledge base on policy-relevant food security issues, provided timely and effective communication of project-generated findings to policy and decision makers, created monitoring procedures and reports to assess the people-level impact of food security strategies and project activities, and strengthened local capacity for food security policy research, analysis and monitoring. To achieve these outputs, FS II produced the deliverables seen in Annex C.

A. Expanding and Improving of Knowledge Base on Policy-relevant Food Security Issues

One of the most important elements in the FS II project is to expansion and improvement of the knowledge base on policy-relevant food security issues. It is quite remarkable that respondents related to programs in five different countries, one regional program and the Africa Bureau of USAID have such uniformly positive views of the work the FS II has done in this second phase. Some work received particular high praise. An example is the study on the Impact of the Devaluation of the CFA Franc in West Africa which one respondent notes as “very important and... widely referred to by policymakers and donors and cited by other scholars.” The work on cereal market reform in Mali was noted as a major support in establishing “completely privatized cereals markets throughout the country and to more cost effective and more transparent management of a food security stock.” The FS II work in Mali is also cited as improving the “understanding of the structure, conduct and performance of cereals market, not only by the government, but also by USAID/Mali and other donors.” The work in Mozambique was described as helping “to expand thinking on food security beyond a narrow focus on farm

self-sufficiency to include issues of household income and trade.” In Zambia, the FS II activities provided a knowledge base that “was used to influence investment and policy decisions by the Zambian government, World Bank, other donors, private firms and business associations.” A respondent related to the Zambian program particularly noted the value of the FS II project in the “transfer of lessons learned from their Mozambique research. . .” Comments from a respondent related to the Rwanda work of FS II state that the “paper on likely profitability of fertilizer by crop and zone is a keystone for fertilizer policy.” Another notes that “all the work I am doing on employment generation . . . is directly dependent on the MSU surveys, leavened by their experience as provided in interviews.”

One of the mandates of the FS II Cooperative Agreement is to look not only at knowledge bases of individual countries but to expand and improve the knowledge base of cross-country food security issues. FS-II has prepared several cross-country reports but the most significant activity in this area was the workshop held in Nairobi in conjunction with the Tegemeo Institute on “Agricultural Transformation in Africa.” The material and comments from this workshop, primarily produced by African researchers, is now being put together in a book for wider distribution.

While the overwhelming response to FS II work to build an expanded and improved knowledge base on food security issues was positive, there were some critical remarks. One respondent, for example, felt the project was “a bit ‘stuck’ on the importance of cotton to African agriculture.” From the academic side came several comments about the depth of the FS II work. One respondent noted that FS II “has done a good job with the first-order, descriptive ‘what’ and ‘who’ questions. But FS II has not generated any significant improvement in the understanding of the ‘why’ questions or the ‘how’ questions about improved intervention or policies for food security.”

Some academic reviewers felt the professional impact has not been as large as it should have been. According to one comment “There is little published in leading economics or development economics or agricultural economics journals, so the broader impact of FS II on scholarship with respect to food security, agricultural development or poverty analysis has been modest for a program of FS II's size.” MSU responded to this critique by noting that the project had put almost all of its “professional” output such as journal articles and contributions to books and other professional publications on the Agricultural Economics Department annual publication list and not directly on the FS II Web page or other Project Fact Sheets. Critics of the project’s output may not have been aware of the extent of such publications of the project. The project provided the assessment team a detailed list of journal articles and other professional contributions that are included in Annex C. Of the 30 listed journal articles produced between 1997 and 2002, over half are in widely respected professional outlets for development-oriented work. These publications include the American Journal of Agricultural Economics (AJAE), Food Policy and World Development.

Deliverables and their Quality

There are four specific deliverables related to the knowledge base output. These are the following: 1) Country-level working papers, 2) Research monographs, 3) Articles in refereed journals, and 4) Cross-country reports. The Cooperative Agreement calls for 15 country-level working papers, 5 research monographs, 4 articles in refereed journals and 2 cross-country reports. As can be seen in Annex C all of these numbers were not only met but were exceeded.

The responses from the field on the quality of the deliverables were all positive to very positive. Likewise, the vast majority of the comments from USAID and academics working with the project or otherwise associated with the project were also positive.

USAID officials and academics associated with the project gave the following comments, which are typical of statements from the field on overall project quality:

- “The project has achieved its objectives - it is a pleasure to be associated with it.
- “The blend of regional and country activities is good and creates a synergy that makes the whole greater than the sum of the parts.
- “The real contribution is to build a more viable market economy, and it has succeeded at that.
- “Policies have changed as a result of market information system work.
- “MSU[‘s] work on African agricultural markets is some of the most valuable work available.
- “INSAH considers all the FS II activities to be important because they originated from programs conceived by partner institutions. Therefore, there are no activities more important.
- “I see the program as instrumental and successful in guiding policy both within the country and across countries. It has left trained people and institutions to carry on the work.

Outside academic reviewers told a mixed and somewhat different story, including comments such as the following:

- “I believe FS II has downplayed analytical methods so much that their work has become a kind of extensive journalism, where instead of one interview they do many and call it a survey. In the end they have no way to measure impact, because they have no way to say what would have happened if policies and project activities had been different.

- “What they do, they do well: market surveys and policy papers resulting from the data and analysis. The descriptive analysis is useful to USAID. They are weak in using the data for analysis. They are not really in the mainstream of development economics. Development is more than improving the efficiency of markets.
- “For right or wrong, the research is widely perceived in the academic community as closely wedded to a particular vision of what food policy ought to look like and therefore insufficiently critical in examining basic assumptions. This undermines the effectiveness of the group's findings . . . , which is truly unfortunate.”

These divergent views on the quality of the project’s output created considerable discussion among the assessment team, the staff of the project, and USAID/Washington representatives. Quality is clearly multidimensional. Each project output could be judged independently as well as viewing the entire package of outputs. Some of the project outputs such as the Policy Briefs were universally praised. In fact, generally reviewers were pleased with project outputs, which we interpret as meaning they perceive the quality to be high. Output of the project is in widespread use and is appreciated by both non-academic and academic practitioners in the food policy and food security field. This use and appreciation speaks to output quality. Secondly, as the project has pointed out, FS II staff and associates have produced a significant volume of professional documents and published contributions, most of which have appeared in respected peer-reviewed outlets. If there were substantial questions of methodology or technical competence in this work, these would either have been pointed out by the reviewers, or the documents would not have been accepted for publication.

The project is based upon what FS II calls a “joint product - interim report model.” According to the project’s staff, this model is “an integrated approach including practical problem-oriented data collection, problem diagnosis, both descriptive analysis and in-depth quantitative analysis, multiple modes of communication (including immediate market information, policy briefs, one-on-one and ‘under the door’ policy consulting, extension-type reports, research reports (some for journals), and simultaneous training and education function in the form of in-service training and informal workshops and more formal graduate course work.” These activities support the objective of the project, which in a nutshell is the development of knowledge (data) and analytical capability in host countries to support better food policy which will promote increased food security in affected countries. How well the project achieves these multiple tasks determines its quality.

As with all activities undertaken with scarce resources, there are a number of tradeoffs that have to be taken. For example, the shorter-term more practical results of the project have to be traded off against the longer-term more theoretical results related to food policy and food security. While expanding its neoclassical and quantitative capability, the Department of Agricultural Economics at MSU is already a center of excellence in applied institutional economics. The tradeoff between institutional and more neoclassical quantitative analysis may be the source of some of the academic criticism of project activity. The project’s primary focus has been on solving current

problems of food security in less developed countries. The project's success at this effort is the basis of most of the praise directed to the project from the field.

The assessment team feels it is important to take note of this debate on these tradeoffs in the design of a future project. The FS II activity is the major source of resources supporting data collection and analysis on basic food security issues in Africa. It is a resource that has to be managed carefully if it is to result in the greatest good in both the short and the long term. There is a critical need to improve and expand both theory and methodology to address the medium- and longer-term aspect of the food security question. While it is not the fundamental focus of this project, longer-term needs should be considered in the design of any future project of how to enable the project operation to facilitate achievement of not only immediate project needs but this longer term need. In Part II of this assessment we make some suggestions on how longer term needs could be addressed.

B. Timely and Effective Communicating of Project-generated Findings to Policy and Decision Makers

Knowledge in isolation has limited practical use. For the success of FS II, its findings must be communicated to public, private and donor-related policy and decision makers. The majority of the responses were positive on how well FS II was achieving this goal. One observer noted that “this is probably the greatest strength of the FS II Cooperative Agreement.” The observer believed the “short briefs FS II has circulated are effective and timely. I see them routinely in government, collaborator and donor offices. They seem to be popular and influential.” In Rwanda for example, a respondent noted that “I have been shown several FS II publications by the Minister of Agriculture, who has cited them as references.” In addition to timeliness and effectiveness of country-level policy briefs and policy syntheses papers, respondents cited the use of participatory forums on cereal policy, television program on cotton policy in Mali, and a national food policy seminar. In Zambia several respondents remarked upon the collaborative work FS II was doing with Agricultural Consultative Forum (ACF) and its general approach to working with a coalition of government, private sector, donors and NGOs to get information to a broad base of policy and decision makers. Respondents also noted the benefits of the use by the project's price information activities of specific publications and bulletins such as the *Flash* and *Quente-Quente* in Mozambique and *Le Reflet* in Mali. Several respondents also mentioned the usefulness of the project's Web site. From the reading of Internet-based papers, an International Agricultural Research Organization (IARC) sought FS II staff from MSU to come to Zimbabwe to discuss their technology development and transfer agenda.

A respondent related to FS II's work in Mali commented that “one of the joys of being in Mali was to see how the information generated not only got to donors but to policy makers in the PRMC that made necessary decisions collectively about interventions. In spite of local shortages and real political pressure, the data was used in rational and useful ways that helped the most needy and preserved the market.” The respondent continued, noting that this information also made it to top government decision makers and that “some of my best moments [in Mali] were

long conversations with[the] President . . . about complexities of marketing and distribution as well as the best way to keep production increasing.”

Another example of how FS II was able to get its project-related data used for important policy decisions was seen in comments from a respondent working in Zambia. The respondent had “attended a donor meeting where the agenda was to consider the GOZ appeal for food relief to protect affected communities, especially those affected by the adverse weather conditions in the 2000/2001 growing season.” At the meeting importers were also asking for subsidies to keep prices down. The issue was further complicated because it was an election year, and there would be significant political impact of the decision. “At that point the MSU team provided USAID with an analytical piece laying out the available data on the various components of the food balance sheet and the implication of the various options under consideration.” This information was shared among the donors. The project’s “solid analysis and presentation of the deficit situation enabled USAID as well as many other donors in arriving at a reasoned position on the status of the deficit and its implication for their respective contributions.”

Communication of findings of multi- and cross-country research is also important for the FS II project under the project’s Core/SD/FFP-funded activities. A respondent related to a cross-country research effort noted the “FS II is good in providing timely project-generated results to key stakeholders.” At the end of a cross-country workshop a “four-page policy synthesis paper was published and widely circulated to key stakeholder.” “This paper carried the key findings of the workshop and it incorporated collaborators from the region.”

Not all comments were this positive. A respondent related to the Zambian activity commented that as far as the reports being timely was concerned, “the short answer is - not always” and then notes the difficulty of doing so in a Zambian environment. A respondent related to the Mozambique work noted that “the work could be faster, MSU may be at capacity.”

Country-level policy briefs and policy syntheses are the two deliverables mentioned in the Cooperative Agreement for communication of findings of the work of FS II. The Cooperative Agreement indicates that a minimum of 30 country-level policy briefs and 15 policy syntheses be prepared by the project. The project exceeded this requirement (see Annex C). In addition to the required deliverables, the FS II project also used workshops and conferences.

Policy Syntheses

There was agreement from virtually all reviewers (USAID, academic, other organization, or host country national) that the policy synthesis series has been well done and is quite useful. The project has produced more than two dozen of the syntheses since 1997. The syntheses provide a short (usually four pages) summary of the key points or major findings of more in-depth research or analysis. They are transmitted to government officials, USAID, and are available on the FS II’s Web site. The quality of this deliverable has been high.

Conferences and Workshops

Several national and international conferences and workshops have been held to disseminate project results. These workshops and conferences have been a prime forum for disseminating and discussing cross-country work. We received generally positive comments on these conferences. The African respondents were more likely than others to mention them in a positive light. No doubt, they have provided an opportunity for African scholars to exchange ideas and research results.

C. Monitoring Procedures and Reporting on People-level Impact of Food Security Strategies and Project Activities

Food Security ultimately has to be judged on its impact on individuals. Individuals experience the direct consequences of having or not having enough food and being able or unable to utilize this food to support their health and well being. It is important to be able to monitor and report on the people-level impact of any given food security strategy. Thus, monitoring and reporting is an important output for FS II. There were fewer responses to this question than for the questionnaire was more spotty than for the previous two questions. Some respondents were unaware of such monitoring or did not answer the question. For some of these respondents, the problem may be lack of familiarity with the terminology used in the question.

One report was noted by several respondents. This was the impact report on the devaluation of the CFA Franc. One respondent commented, “this analysis, in particular, was insightful in identifying the impacts of the devaluation on several different segments of the population.” Many comments on the monitoring and reporting questions mentioned the role FS II had in improving survey design and management of surveys to improve existing or new monitoring programs. The Income Proxy Methodology was mentioned several times; for example, “the system has reduced the need for expensive repeats of income surveys.” Another respondent noted that the “the FS II project has helped to expand ministry monitoring activities beyond narrow indicators of aggregate output toward more meaningful indicators of impact such as household income.”

The market price information work was also viewed as an important monitoring activity by some respondents. As one respondent said, “the daily and monthly market price information is an excellent way to monitor the impact on the food security strategies and project activities.” But it was also noted that “measuring impact at country level is a challenging but yet important step to go through.” The reports one respondent has seen “do not quite look at impact in the sense of a longitudinal study that isolates the causal pathway of a program or policy but this standard for impact assessment is hard to achieve for policy analysis.” Nevertheless, FS II “has gone farther in this regard than any previous work, providing an excellent basis [on] which to move the agenda further, and deeper.” The general view of the respondents seems summed up by the comment: “The MSU surveys are all we have. They do it well, use local people, and plug the output into the policy process.”

D. Strengthening Local Capacity for Food Security Research, Analysis and Monitoring

One could divide capacity building into at least two parts. First, there is capacity building through the long-term training of individuals. MSU has done a lot of that under its food security projects. For example, at present 15 of the 75 graduate students in agricultural economics at MSU come from countries in which the Food Security project operates. As one reviewer indicated, “In my experience you can’t do anything in the FS II countries without bumping into people who have worked on FS II projects. For sheer quantity of activity, it is unsurpassed.” A couple of reviewers expressed concerns about the quality of the training or the productivity of graduates, but most seemed to be quite pleased with the impact of the long-term training activities.

A second level of capacity building is in-country training through short courses or on-the-job training. We received several comments such as the following:

- “It has been the bulwark in the Mali environment for strengthening local capacities for food security and nutrition. FS II has been able to get the attention and commitment of the Minister of Health on these matters, which attests to FS II’s worth. It has worked effectively with the Ministry of Health’s multi-sectoral coordination unit in nutrition and food security to strengthen its capacity.
- “The FS II project has trained a number of analysts in the Ministry of Agriculture to a level where they can conduct quality research and analysis on their own. These analysts are having an impact in the ministry.
- “Surely they have strengthened local capacity in food security issues: for example the agricultural transformation workshop was for the Africans. Among 50 participants, 45 were Africans. Papers were presented by Africans. These papers were reviewed several times and in so doing the capacity was strengthened.”

There was some concern expressed regarding the approach to capacity building used in many countries. Often the local MSU staff are not a part of the government structure. Thus, there are sustainability questions once the MSU support is withdrawn. However, given the very low level of government economics and statistics units in many countries, there may be no viable alternative to opening a separate operation. Also, some concern was expressed that the high level of support provided by those selected as MSU partners may, in fact, inhibit development of other capable nationals. In other words, some felt the support and training base should be broader or more competitive. It should be noted, however, that FS II is a project with specific objectives and limited training-related resources. The “joint-product and interim-report” model used in project implementation focuses resources, including training resources, on the task of each country’s activities. This is selective, but also prudent management of project resources.

In general, both the respondents to our questions and this assessment team believe that the project has been successful in capacity building. The project has provided long-term training to scores of participants and short-term training to hundreds more. In addition, the on-the-job interaction with MSU staff has been invaluable. While not perfect, we believe that capacity building has been one of the important project outputs.

II. Institutional Memory

The terms of reference for this assessment asked the assessment team to look at success the FS II project has had in establishing and maintaining African and U.S. institutional memory. A question to this effect was added to the questionnaire. Responses to the question was generally positive but a bit less detailed than responses to other questions. Many respondents mentioned the collaboration between African and U.S. researchers as an important element in development of institutional memory. Noted a respondent from Zambia, “there has been a lot of sharing and institutionalizing of research findings. For example, Zambians have visited project activities in Mali and Mozambique. Staff from Mozambique have visited Zambia. MSU professors have frequently been fielded to Zambia and local staff have been to Lansing (MSU) to discuss various issues related to the project. This intensity in collaboration means that lessons learned by the project in various countries have been institutionalized by the project collaborators in beneficiary countries.” Another point made several times was the fact that senior advisors and managers in the food security activities in Africa both in the private and public sector were trained under the FS II project. Yet another point made several times is that the FS II project, through its publications, data bases, and Web site, is a storehouse of information on food security issues not only for the project but more broadly within Africa. A respondent in Rwanda said “FS II established and maintained African and U.S. institutional memory by keeping agricultural data bases in both Rwanda/MINAGRI and in an American university (MSU) and by sending the research reports from the FSRP to the Library of Congress.” Finally, a few of the respondents noted that institutional memory on African food security issues has been supported by the longevity of the program. This important point was most compellingly described in this comment: “One of the signal victories in Africa was our ability to hold on to the FS II program against the ravages of ‘re-engineering.’ There were those that would have thrown out years of data and the capacity to analyze its contemporary relevance for food policy and make it possible for Africa’s poor to eat better. It is vital that these programs be continued. Our long-term investment has produced real results.” It should be noted that AFR/SD and Global Bureau funding has been a key resource for supporting MSU’s on-campus capacity to maintain this institutional memory.

III. Project Inputs

The major inputs in the FS II project are technical assistance, training and a difficult to define but in this case critically important factor, institutional commitment. The view both in the field and in USAID/Washington is quite positive that the technical teams supporting the project are very good. They are knowledgeable, committed and respected within both the USAID and the

African community. Training at a graduate level, in short-courses and on-the-job was also well received, although some questions were raised in particular corners (See Section I D).

One of the most important inputs in the FS II project has been the institutional commitment of Michigan State University to food security in Africa. Michigan State has made a long-term institutional commitment to the activities in FS II. Within the by-laws of the institution defining what constitutes scholarship recognized by the university are not only the traditional elements of research, extension and teaching, but also international work. Recently, the university has established mechanisms to provide three year contracts to long-term, non-tenured staff people to provide them greater job security within the faculty structure. This change was a direct result of the need to support staff in the FS II project. In the field, this institutional commitment is seen in the extra effort the FS II staff makes to maximize impact and seek out synergism of the work they are doing. Their support for the Partnership to Cut Hunger in Africa is but one example of this.

IV. Management - Technical Problems / Solutions

It is remarkable that so few technical or management problems have been identified for a program in so many different countries and working in so many areas that could be political and technical land mines. Some issues, however, have been raised. Most are country-specific, Rwanda being the most prominent. The problems in Rwanda dealt with difficulties of the program in working with the space and staff placement restrictions placed on the project by the Minister of Agriculture. This issue is still being worked on by the FS II staff.

Placement and relationship questions also were a concern in the Mozambique program, but these now appear to have been resolved.. Because FS II work is so closely linked to policy, the program can be viewed with suspicion in some countries where the relationship of the project to the Ministries of Agriculture or Finance or Planning sometimes difficult. As a respondent in Mozambique observed, the change of the situation in that country was “perhaps due to a new ‘openness’ at the ministry, perhaps due to finally establishing an adequate level of trust with the ministry, and perhaps due to concerted efforts by the project to do better with integration. Most likely due to all three.”

Other concerns noted were finding local senior staff, more integration of local staff in work plan development and USAID contracting procedures. A few respondents noted problems not with the project but with USAID’s support of the project. The most direct statement was this: “the most significant problem was the direct challenge to FS II from AID ideologues who wanted to try something new and different. The other issue was the lack of funds for long-term graduate education that would keep sufficient high-level capacity in policy analysis that we have built, in continuing supply in these countries.”

V. Conclusion

The second phase of the Food Security II Cooperative Agreement has been a successful project funded by USAID to deal with the food security problem in Africa. FS II has met its outputs and deliverable targets and has contributed significantly to achievement of project goals and objectives. It is recognized and appreciated broadly in the field and within USAID/Washington.

PART TWO: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOLLOW-ON PROJECT

Of the programs being funded at present by USAID, the Food Security II Cooperative Agreement is one of the most successful and best appreciated programs, both in the field and in USAID/Washington. Interviews by the assessment team and responses to the questionnaire have generally supported continuation of the work now being undertaken by FS II. While there is strong desire for continuing the food security effort, there is divergence of views on what exact focus future effort should have and how it should be configured. In this part of the paper we will look at some of the views that have been expressed about a possible future program. We will also look at potential demand for the services of a future food security program as these services appear in draft strategies for future intervention by USAID in African agriculture and rural development. We will then propose a concept for a possible future food security project that will take into account many of the respondent views, including some of the concerns about the present program.

I. View from the Field

In conversations with people related to the FS II project both in Washington and in the field, the assessment team found a strong desire that any future FS II activity be entirely or primarily directed towards Africa. As might be expected, in responding to the question of possible future activities for a follow-on project, questionnaire respondents focused primarily on continuation of activities within their own sphere of operation. The one theme seen throughout many of the comments was need to expand long-term training and to create greater local capacity to collect and to analyze data. Another common theme was continuity. As one respondent put it, "...continue to support the work. Stay with it for the long term. AID is too anxious to start project[s] and then to prematurely stop funding them for some new agenda that someone wants to initiate." Another wrote, "...more of the same, is basically what I would ask for, at least for another 5 years."

There was a split concerning establishment of the research agenda for a future project. Respondents primarily from USAID sought more mission involvement in establishing the research agendas, whereas respondents from local institutions and other donors felt that the host government, private sector and NGO community should have more input. A common response was that a future project will need to have closer integration of the project's research agenda with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) now being developed in a number of African countries.

Involvement of the private sector, including NGOs, in any future project was also mentioned several times. Inclusion of data collection and analysis of marketing and trade, particularly regional trade, was part of the concerns related to food security. Expansion of the ability of the private sector to lobby for appropriate policy changes in support of food security was one of the more intriguing ideas presented.

Finally, several respondents noted that there is a need for more diversity in ideas and thinking in a future food security project. As one respondent observed, while the present FS II staff is doing “excellent work in many ways. . . . there needs to be some diversity of personnel and other university involvement. I think the group tends to be a little inbred now, and more diverse ideas might be useful for USAID purposes. There needs to be more quantitative work done and involvement of excellent people from other first rate institutions.”

II. Areas of Future Demand for Follow-on Food Security Project

It is clear that there is substantial demand, both in the field and from USAID/Washington, for continuation in a follow-on project of work now being undertaken by FS II. To get a broader view of potential demand for services in a follow-on project, the assessment team reviewed drafts of two major strategy documents now being prepared for USAID and U.S. involvement in agriculture in Africa. These draft documents are *A Strategic Framework and Action Plan* for the Partnership to Cut Hunger in Africa and *USAID Agriculture Initiative to Cut Hunger in Africa – An Operational Plan*. As mentioned, both documents are presently in draft form and a final version of each document will not be available for several months. Nevertheless, these drafts provide a glimpse of present thinking on where the agency is going in terms of future activities in agriculture in Africa.

Both documents list a wide range of activities in the agricultural and political areas. Some of these are not appropriate for a future food security project, but a number of others would be usefully served by such a project. Both documents seek substantial increases in funding for agriculture-related support for Africa. With such increase in funding will come a corresponding increase in need for technical assistance. This assistance will be needed to work with African counterparts to manage and utilize these funds. Knowledge and technical expertise such as that found in the present FS II project could be an important source of this technical assistance.

The draft Partnership to Cut Hunger in Africa document lays out eight principles, of which at least three are relevant to a future food security project. Among these is increased local institutional capacity, which has been one of the basic objectives of FS II. Another principle is working with local African institutions and strategies such as the PRSP. This principle is also directly relevant to FS II work and could be part of a future follow-on project. Finally, the strategy document seeks as a principle to put a focus on trade and markets, a likely focus of a future project.

On the action side of their strategy, the Partnership document stresses need for increased human capital development, policy reform, creation of local institutions with domestic financial and political support, and linkage of food aid and longer-term development strategies. All of these activities have been successfully undertaken in the FS II project and would likely be elements of any follow-on activity.

In the USAID Agricultural Initiative document, stress is also put on agricultural trade and markets. Action areas include human and institutional capacity development (particularly in areas related to policy), integration of vulnerable groups into the development process and emphasis on a food systems approach in project implementation. These are all areas amenable to the approach and resources available within a follow-on food security project.

At the present time, USAID has two instruments for responding to missions' needs for technical and other support in the area of food security and policy questions. One is the FS II Cooperative Agreement. The other is the Agricultural Policy Development (APD) Indefinite Quantity Contract (IQC) managed by Abt Associates, Inc. There is a natural division of labor between these two contracting instruments. Specific short-term policy analysis work is best suited to APD, while longer term institutional-based activities in data collection and policy analysis fit the FS II framework. There are also other indefinite quantity contracts such as RAISE that can be used for agricultural policy. It seems beneficial that this same choice of options for support of food security and policy analysis issues be available to missions in the future.

III. A Conceptual Framework for a Future Food Security Project

After its interviews and review of questionnaire responses, the assessment team found that it was facing several interesting findings. These findings were the following:

1. The present FS II project generally is very successful.
2. There is strong need for a follow-on project to FS II.
3. One of the main reasons the present project is so successful is the commitment of the staff and institution at Michigan State University and its long-term institutional memory.
4. There are important voices, mostly within USAID and the academic community, that seek greater diversity, both in ideas and personnel, within any future food security project.

How can these somewhat divergent ideas be put together? The assessment team proposes a follow-on project based upon the notion of a public utility – a producer of a public good.

A. Conceptual Framework and Its Implications

Assume the follow-on project for Food Security II to be a large, non-competitive project. How could one justify such an undertaking, particularly given the need expressed for greater diversity in ideas and people? One possible conceptual framework is that of the project as a sort of producer of public goods. That is, the project would provide services to a broad range of clients who could draw upon its data, analysis, expertise, and conclusions. These clients could go beyond USAID and host countries. The client base also could include, for example, the World Bank, IFPRI, other universities, and other development organizations. The project would also provide institutional memory for USAID on African development issues and for the development community as a whole.

Unlike a public utility, a project developed within this conceptual framework would not necessarily experience increasing returns to scale (like an electric power company), although there could certainly be some of that as it launched market information systems in different countries or policy work on similar topics. An institution under this concept would not necessarily incur up-front costs in every situation or country, as might be the case if other organizations were undertaking the activities.

If one views many of the outputs of the project as public goods, what does that view imply about the structure of possible follow-on activity? One thing possibly indicated is that a broader base of organizations should have input into the work plan. Under the current project, the core funded work plan is determined jointly by MSU and USAID/Washington. Country buy-ins are determined between MSU and country missions. Some in USAID argue that this arrangement is as it should be, because USAID is paying the bill. If other organizations want to have input into the work plan, they should contribute financially. Others in USAID, however, see the merits of inviting a broader group to participate in some way in the priority-setting process. More concretely, perhaps the annual work planning activity could be done in two parts, the first part being open to a broader set of the development community, and the second part being reserved for the institution implementing the project and USAID. Whatever form it might take, we believe that broader participation in the work planning would benefit the project and satisfy the expressed desires of many related to the present project. While this additional participation in development of the work plan might mean additional expense, both in staff time and logistics, such an approach might, in fact, open the door ultimately to financial contributions from other organizations.

If the public good model is used, what other implications would that have for a future project? One implication might be that the project should make greater effort and allocate more resources to share data and information. The project Web site is impressive, but a more powerful search engine or sorting mechanism would be very useful. One should be able to get all articles, policy syntheses, data sets, etc. related to certain key words, e.g., fertilizer, or perhaps combinations of key words, e.g., fertilizer and Mali.

Data sets are another area where more effort could be expended to make data available to others. When this possibility was raised by the assessment team with MSU, they argued that it is much

more difficult to document a data set to make it usable by others than to keep it usable by those intimately involved in the work. We do not dispute this difficulty. On the other hand, if the outputs of this project are like public goods and financed through non-competitive public funds, one could argue that the extra effort and expenditure are essential. Also, making the data available to other researchers could result in other types of analysis being done, increasing the diversity in the project. This openness would also prevent a perception that only one approach to development policy analysis is being used in the project.

The FS II project is already doing a lot of sharing of information. Annex D is a list provided by project staff of examples, by country, of data sharing under FS II. The FS II staff has also correctly noted the difficulty in both perception and legalities of data sharing. Developing countries are sensitive about data collected in their countries. Too many outside individuals and organizations have gone into a country and collected data, taken it home and analyzed it from their own particular problem or methods perspective, and made the data and results of the analysis relatively inaccessible to local users. Through much effort, the FS II project and staff have assuaged over-sensitivity in most of the countries where it has worked. Any future design for data sharing in a follow-on project needs to take into account potentially sensitive host country perceptions. It is unlikely that significant data sharing will occur without full collaboration and agreement of the host country.

B. Methodological Boundaries

What topics to include and breadth of coverage are important questions for a future project. Clearly, the project's present strength is description and analysis of functioning of markets and development of market information systems to improve market operation. Should its focus be broadened to cover issues like HIV/AIDS, international trade, investment (FDI and local), technology issues, and others? Recently the project has moved more into poverty and nutrition issues, as these have advanced to front stage on the international development agenda. Were these moves appropriate?

There is no clear and unequivocal answer to these questions. Part of the reason for academic criticism is that the current scope does not encompass the full set of development issues in Africa. That criticism argues for expanding the scope. But clearly, the further any institution responsible for a follow-on project moves beyond their core competence, the more diluted its expertise and activities will be. In general, our suggestion would be that the boundaries of a follow-on project should be carefully and narrowly defined. The central focus of the present project is on marketing and markets including trade with additional work in technology, inputs, and land/income and agricultural/nutrition/health linkages. This is already a fairly diverse agenda. A possible follow-on project should build upon the work now being undertaken by FS II, but care should be taken that these activities be logically linked to each other under the food security umbrella. The only exception to the principle of narrow focus, we believe, is that the project should be better integrated with the PRSP process in the countries in which they are working. The project data and analysis have much to offer the PRSPs, but very little project input has been used to date. This is not necessarily the fault of the project. When the PRSP

process was first scoped, agriculture was not a big part of the agenda. However, more recently, the importance of agriculture has become more widely recognized, and the project should have easier access into the PRSP process in its host countries.

C. Regional Boundaries

Project work to date has been exclusively in African countries and on African cross-cutting issues. Some at USAID have urged expanding the coverage to other regions. The argument for expansion is that there must be lessons learned in the Africa experience that would be applicable to other countries and regions. The geographical orientation of the FS II project was questioned in the mid-term evaluation. At that time the view was that Africa was to be an important client for FS II services, but that the services should be offered world-wide under the auspices of the Global Bureau. At present, the view from the field and the opinion of the assessment team is that a future food security project should basically focus on Africa. Expanding to other regions would require competencies that do not necessarily exist at any one institution, and it would dilute the Africa concentration of the institution managing the project.

There are two minor exceptions to this overall recommendation. First, the future project's results, data, and analyses should be available to researchers, analysts, and USAID officials in other regions. This availability would occur if the public good approach mentioned above is followed. Second, there may be instances in which the best implementation of some proposed policy or institutional change for one of the project's countries is occurring in a country outside the region. In that case, the project should not hesitate to take African officials to the country with the policy mechanism in place to see first hand how it operates. They could then judge for themselves the extent to which it might fit or be adapted to their institutional, social, cultural, and economic environment.

From an administrative standpoint, the project should continue to have links through the Global Bureau to the wider developing world, both to provide information from the African experience and to gain from the experience of non-African countries. This linking would mean that the basic management configuration (between the Global Bureau and AFR/SD) of the present program could remain more or less the same for any future food security project, with the understanding that the project operations have an African focus.

D. Procurement Instrument

The current procurement instrument is a cooperative agreement. Mission agricultural officers were very positive on this instrument. In fact, at times they seemed to be saying that they used the project as much because of the flexibility and ease of the instrument as because of MSU. Expense did not appear to be the driving force, but rather ease of contracting. Mission officers felt that contracts offices were over-burdened, and having a simple and easy instrument available was a tremendous plus. There is fairly unanimous agreement that a cooperative agreement would be the best procurement instrument for any future food security project.

Some USAID missions indicated a desire to establish a direct cooperative agreement with the project institution rather than going through USAID/Washington. This sort of arrangement is already being used by the mission in Mozambique, and it should be a viable option for other missions who have important levels of activity with the project.