Strategy Paper of the Belgian Fund for Food Security
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I. BFFS Procedure Manual
Introduction

The Belgian Fund for Food Security (BFFS) is a unique financing instrument that focuses on improving the food security of vulnerable populations in areas of Sub-Saharan Africa at great risk of food insecurity.

The fund was established in 2010 by an act of the Federal Parliament. It is financed by the National Lottery and secondarily, by the Directorate General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) which injects additional resources. It is a unique instrument of development since it is the result of a parliamentary initiative, fed by Lottery funds.

The BFFS is managed by the government member responsible for development cooperation who also assumes responsibility for it. The Fund is monitored by a special BFFS Working Group, made up of representatives from each parliamentary group, the competent government member for development cooperation and its services (DGD), Belgian NGOs, Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC) and multilateral partner organizations of the BFFS.

This Strategy Paper defines the BFFS' priority intervention areas and is in line with the mission and objectives of Belgian development cooperation. It describes the Fund's context, challenges, mission, approach, target groups and priority issues. As a framework document, it is also a guideline for organizations responsible for implementing the interventions financed by the Fund.

The BFFS Procedure Manual completes this Strategy Paper forming a practical guide on the procedures and arrangements for the Fund. Step by step, the manual explains how programmes are identified, formulated, financed, implemented, monitored and evaluated and specifies expectations with regards partner organizations.
I. Context

1.1 Retrospective

1. Although the Belgian Fund for Food Security was only created in 2010, in reality it has existed for over 30 years since it was preceded by two other funds during the 1983 to 2009 period.

1.1.1 1983 - 1998: Survival Fund for the Third World

2. The *Survival Fund for the Third World* was created by the law of the Federal Parliament of 3 October 1983, following public shock at the famines in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. Its creation also resulted from the "Manifesto Against Hunger" signed in the early 1980s by 77 Nobel Prize laureates and the demonstration by the Belgian people and 60 mayors in June 1982 for a special fund designed to combat hunger.

3. The Fund had a budget of 10 billion Belgian francs (approximately 248 million euros) which came from the net profits of the National Lottery. From 1984 to 1999, 71 projects were implemented representing an amount of 7,953 billion Belgian francs (198.8 million euros). In total, 4.5 million people are estimated to have benefited from the Fund.

1.1.2 1999 - 2009: Belgian Survival Fund

4. The *Belgian Survival Fund* (BSF) succeeded the Survival Fund for the Third World and was established by the law of 9 February 1999 with the aim of specifying the Fund's objectives and working methods. The BSF's provision, financed entirely by the National Lottery, also amounted to 10 billion Belgian francs.

5. Between 1999 and 2009, 72 projects lasting an average of 5 years were implemented, 34 of which were consolidated by a second phase and lasted a total of ten years. All 106 projects and programmes represented a total amount of 282 million euros. 78% of projects were implemented in Belgian development cooperation partner countries.

1.2. Belgian Fund for Food Security

6. In 2008, after 25 years of financing projects, it was time to reconsider the BSF's approach. A comprehensive evaluation\(^1\) of the BSF observed that the Fund needed to adapt its approach in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of its interventions. The recommendations given in the evaluation report led to the adoption of a new integrated approach for the third fund, the Belgian Fund for Food Security.

7. The Belgian Fund for Food Security, hereafter referred to as the Fund or BFFS, was established by the law of 19 January 2010. Once again a financial contribution of 250 million euros from the net profits of the National Lottery was granted for a 10-year period (2010-2020). Furthermore, the law states that resources from the

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development cooperation budget can be mobilised in addition to the National Lottery resources, depending on annual budget plans.

8. The “third fund” revolutionised the design of its development programmes. The major difference in comparison to the previous two funds was the introduction of country programmes. The BFFS establishes multisectoral and integrated programmes (multidimensional), implemented by various development organizations (multi-actor) who cooperate within a single programme (programme approach).

9. Each partner organization involved in a BFFS programme works on the aspects where it has a strong expertise and can provide real added-value. This improves the quality of the interventions and means that synergies and complementarities are considered from the start of the joint programme. Furthermore, compared with the two previous funds, the programmes financed by the BFFS focus more on improving food security in the strictest sense.

10. Through this approach, the BFFS complies with the law on development cooperation which states that "Belgian development cooperation looks for synergies, coordination and complementarities between the different stakeholders (...) in order to achieve maximum effectiveness for the resources implemented\(^2\)."

11. The legal, regulatory, strategic and conceptual framework of the BFFS is formed by the BFFS and development cooperation documents referred to below:

- The law of 19 January 2010 creating the BFFS;
- The law of 19 June 2011 implementing and amending the law of 19 January 2010 on the BFFS;
- The law of 19 March 2013 on Belgian Development Cooperation;
- The BFFS Procedure Manual;
- The BFFS Strategy Paper;
- The Strategy Paper on Awareness Raising and Information of the BFFS;
- The Strategy Paper for Agriculture and Food Security and its analysis table.

\(^2\) Law of 19 March 2013 on Development Cooperation, Chapter 3, Article 13, §1.
II. Challenges

12. This strategy paper does not intend to address all the issues at the origin of food insecurity. Below, we will limit ourselves to mentioning some of the global challenges influencing the current and future food security of vulnerable groups in the South.

2.1 World hunger

13. Although the right to food has been enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights since 1948, every day hunger continues to affect hundreds of millions of people across the globe. This scourge remains at unacceptable levels; it is estimated that 870 million people (12.5% of the world's population) suffered from chronic malnutrition during the 2010-2012 period. Paradoxically, it is mainly poor farmers that are affected by famine. Sub-Saharan Africa, the Fund's intervention area, is still the most affected region.

14. According to studies conducted using improved methods, more progress has been made in the fight against hunger than previous measurements had led us to believe. The most significant advances predate the 2007-2008 period when a global food crisis and a persistent economic crisis broke out. However, it is certain that we will be unable to halve hunger by 2015, as provided for by the first Millennium Development Goal.

2.2 From temporary to structural food crises

15. Due to the harrowing images broadcast on television, mainly since the 1980s, the world has become aware of the existence of food crises. More specifically, it has become familiar with the traditional images showing the consequences of terrible famines and the mass delivery of humanitarian aid. However, providing humanitarian aid is not enough. Indeed, it is essential to apply a more differentiated approach, likely to improve the population's capacity for resilience against external shocks.

16. Data recently collected in East and West Africa shows that food crises are ever-more frequent, becoming almost semi-permanent in some regions. These, once temporary crises are transforming into more structural phenomena. Furthermore, it seems increasingly clear that food crises are part of larger systemic crises. Vulnerable populations living in countries regularly affected by humanitarian crises experience growing difficulties in recovering from each new crisis.

17. These problems require structural and sustainable solutions. Faced with this situation, the approach of the BFFS as an instrument of development, is proving to be more vital than ever. This means providing populations, authorities and civil society with the tools to become independent and reduce their vulnerability to increasingly frequent external shocks. National and local authorities are undoubtedly partly responsible in this matter.

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2.3 Causes of food insecurity

18. There are many, multidimensional causes of food insecurity. At its base is a jumble of political, technical, geophysical, social, economic, financial and cultural causes: weak institutions, natural disasters, drought, war, poor governance, ineffective farming methods, failed harvests, inappropriate eating habits, sustained population growth, food speculation, a lack of financing for agriculture, land grabbing, etc. It is essential to identify these causes and tackle them in order of importance and feasibility.

19. Hunger in the South also results from the impact of policy decisions made in areas other than development cooperation, for example in areas such as trade, migration, energy, security, climate, agriculture, etc. Consequently, strengthening the coordination of actions on the ground is not enough; there must be increased consistency between the different areas of political action that have repercussions on development cooperation. "Policy coherence for development" should ensure that the effects of the measures taken as part of the development of the South are not negated by other decisions.

20. However, hunger is not an inevitability. Indeed, humanity has the knowledge, resources and technologies needed to overcome food shortages. One of the most important challenges in this matter lies in the increased harmonisation of different interventions. In order to be effective, actions cannot be limited to a single intervention, single discipline or even a single level of power. There must be a joint analysis and coordinated response that goes beyond the limits of sectors and levels of power.

2.4 Climate change and the scarcity of natural resources

21. Climate change is the result of constant temperature rises generated by massive CO2 emissions. Climate change causes floods and droughts, threatens global water reserves and puts great pressure on natural resources and biodiversity.

22. The decline in biodiversity and the increasing scarcity of natural resources directly compromises the food security of millions of vulnerable people who depend on these resources for their survival. The enormous pressure on water reserves in the Middle East or on the grazing land of the Sahel leads to conflicts between families, population groups and even some States and entire regions.

23. Climate change also has an impact on many development projects. Periods of extreme flooding and drought can derail agricultural projects or investments, ruin harvests and even reduce the basic income of smallholders and farmers.

2.5 Continued pressure of population growth

24. Continued, unrelenting population growth is a significant source of pressure on available natural resources and food security. This growth is mainly evident in the poorest countries. In Niger, the country with the world's highest fertility rate and an extremely low human development, a woman gives birth to seven children on average.
25. The total population living in Sub-Saharan Africa, which amounted to approximately 900 million people in 2013, will exceed two billion by 2050. Poverty reduction will be seriously complicated and the pressure on natural resources will continue to increase. Given this factor, Belgian development cooperation advocates an integrated approach for health and sexual and reproductive rights.

26. This rights-based approach is very important for the education and empowerment of women. Women who benefit from a better education (the right to quality education) are more able to make their voice heard, which could have an impact on the fertility rate.

2.6 Africa faces significant challenges

27. For many Africans, chronic malnutrition is a daily reality. More than one in four is malnourished or experiencing food insecurity. The inability to satisfy their food requirements prevents a large part of the population from leading a healthy and active life. Although the spectre of famine has almost entirely disappeared on other continents, it remains a real threat in vast areas of Sub-Saharan Africa.

28. Failures in the agricultural policies of African countries go some way to explaining the problem. Indeed, only 5 to 10% of their public budget is allocated to the agricultural sector. As a comparison, this rate is around 20% in Asian countries. However in the 2003 Maputo declaration, the African states agreed to allocate at least 10% of their budget to agriculture - a promise broken by many governments.

29. The agricultural potential of Sub-Saharan Africa is however considerable and on the whole, there is sufficient food for everyone. Despite this, millions of people continue to suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Among other things, this situation results from failures in local production and food distribution and chronic malnutrition. Unstable climate conditions, fluctuating food prices, conflict and violence only increase the pressure on food security.

30. Agricultural productivity in Africa remains lower than in other continents. In 2010, Asia produced 3.5 tonnes of grain per hectare and Latin America 3.7 tonnes, while Africa produced just 1.3 tonnes. In order to deal with the increasing demand for food, it is essential that the yield from food crops increases substantially.

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4 Article MO*, How can Africa achieve food security?, UNDP 2012.
III. Strategy

3.1 The BFFS' mission

31. The law of 19 January 2010 creating the Belgian Fund for Food Security states:

“A fund called the "Belgian Fund for Food Security - BFFS" is created which is designed to improve, in Sub-Saharan Africa, in the partner countries of the Belgian development cooperation as a priority, the food security of the population living in areas of major food insecurity, including the most vulnerable groups of this population.”

32. The BFFS' mission is also included in the strategic framework for agriculture and food security of Belgian development cooperation and its execution measures:

“Belgian development cooperation supports sustainable family agriculture and aims to improve the food security of the populations in our partner countries and contribute to a sustainable economic growth creating decent jobs. To do so, it agrees to support, in accordance with the principles of the right to food and equal rights, the transition process from subsistence farming to human, professional and economically profitable family agriculture.”

33. The BFFS' programmes:

- help to ensure food security through a fair and sustainable local economy, taking into account social development and environmental challenges;
- aim to align with the policies and strategies of partner countries;
- promote ownership by the beneficiaries of aid while respecting the priorities of the national and local authorities, as well as those of civil society;
- support the territorial development approach implemented by decentralised authorities.

34. The BFFS is also convinced that part of its mission involves raising public awareness and improving knowledge of the issue of food security. The Fund thereby ensures public support with regards to food security programmes and strategies. (See below)

3.2 The BFFS' approach

35. The BFFS' programmes are based on the four pillars of food security and address the structural causes of food insecurity linked to poverty. Its integrated approach:

- gatters diverse and complementary expertise in an overarching whole;
- is focused on priority issues and target groups;
- is implemented in the most vulnerable regions in terms of food insecurity.

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3.2.1 The four pillars of food security

36. The multidisciplinary approach to food security aims to reinforce the four pillars of food security and is of major importance for vulnerable groups facing chronic food insecurity.

37. Since the 1996 World Food Summit, food security has been defined as follows: "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life".

Based on this definition, food security relies on the following four pillars:

1. **Food availability:** the availability of food in sufficient quantities and of an appropriate quality, supplied by national or regional production or imports (including food aid);

2. **Food access:** access to adequate resources (rights) for everyone enabling them to acquire appropriate and nutritious food;

3. **Utilization:** the use of food within an adequate diet, in addition to the use of drinking water, sanitation and healthcare facilities so as to satisfy all physiological needs and create a state of nutritional welfare;

4. **Stability:** continued access to adequate food; the concept of stability can therefore concern both food availability and food access.

3.2.2 Additional dimensions of poverty reduction

38. Food security cannot be guaranteed solely on the basis of the four pillars referred to above. Indeed, it is also important to take account of the dimensions of poverty reduction because there is a close link between poverty and food security. The extent of food security depends greatly on the poverty level.

39. Combating food insecurity, combined with poverty reduction focuses on:

1. improving **basic social services** (in terms of healthcare, drinking water and sanitation, basic education and social facilities);

2. improving the **resilience** of populations so that families are better able to withstand the shocks that lead to adverse agricultural seasons (lean periods);

3. improving the **institutional capacities** of local stakeholders, at government and decentralised regional authority or civil society level.

3.2.3 Diversity of partners, synergy of expertise

40. The BFFS’ programmes are carried out by organizations belonging to the traditional categories of Belgian development cooperation stakeholders, namely Belgian NGOs, multilateral organizations and Belgian Technical Cooperation. These organizations are considered as potential partners for the BFFS for every
programme. For the implementation of its programmes, legislation requires the Fund to select at least two different organizations.

41. A programme's execution brings together partners who cooperate in related sectors and in the same intervention area, the objective being to maximise synergies and complementarity between different projects. The BFFS' programmes therefore unify a range of expertise (agriculture, water, capacity development, healthcare, nutrition, education, land management, etc.) within a single global programme approach. This provides the ability to address several dimensions of the issue of food insecurity.

42. Each of the Fund's partner organizations submits a cooperation agreement for the minister's approval. This agreement details its approach to food security and demonstrates its expertise and added-value if it should be involved in a programme. Through this agreement, the organization also indicates all the countries where it would like to intervene. On launching a country programme, the Fund selects partner organizations based on their letters of intent demonstrating their specific expertise in implementing one or more components of the programme.

3.2.4 Alignment and ownership

43. Based on the development principles of ownership and alignment, the national and local authorities and civil society in the partner country are involved in the choices relating to the programme design: "The national and local authorities of receiving countries, local officials and representatives from civil society are involved in identifying the programmes in order to strengthen the local management of the development process.""9

44. In practical terms, this means that the BFFS prioritises the strategic choices of the partner country and local stakeholders:

- alignment of the choice of intervention area: the intervention area is identified by the partner country in consultation with the DGD and based on studies comparing the regions affected by food insecurity;
- ownership at national level: the partner country takes on the responsibility of coordinating the BFFS' programme; the national institution responsible

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6 In 2013, the BFFS had 22 partner organizations, namely Aide au développement Gembloux (ADG), Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC), Bevrijde Wereld (BW), Broderlijk Delen, Caritas Belgium, CDI-Bwamanda, Collectifs stratégies alimentaires (CSA), Dienst voor Internationaal Samenwerkingsaant Entwikkelingsprojecten (DISOP), Vétérinaires sans frontières (VSF/DZG), National Fund for Development Cooperation (FNCD Solidarité sociale), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO),International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Louvain coopération au développement (LD), PROTON, Belgian Red Cross, Service laïque de coopération au développement (SLCD), SOS Faim, TRIAS, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), VECO (Vredeseilanden), Solidarité mondiale (WSM) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

7 Ownership: developing countries determine their own strategies for poverty reduction, coordinate their development process and improve their institutions for this purpose.

8 Alignment: donor countries support the strategic objectives of the partner countries and use the management systems of the developing countries.

9 Law of 19 January 2010 creating the BFFS, Article 6, §5.
for food security receives the support of a partner organization selected for this purpose;

- ownership at local level: in the event of inadequate management capacities, the national and local authorities receive support at this level from the programme's partners;

- ownership at strategic and operational management level: the national and local authorities and civil society are represented on the programme's steering committee; they manage the strategic priorities and the operational choices made in this area.

3.2.5 Awareness and information

45. Among other things, the legal framework of the BFFS contains the following objective: "ensures... a social base (...) through information and awareness campaigns (...)". To do so, "funds (...) from the BFFS (are) granted (...) to information and awareness campaigns (...) organised in Belgium and partner countries (...) (which) aim to raise public awareness".\(^{10}\)

46. The BFFS wants to increase citizens' awareness so that they can adopt a position on the issue of food insecurity. In particular, the Fund hopes to support and influence policy-makers, enabling them to opt for appropriate policy measures in terms of food security and poverty reduction.

47. In order to support the aforementioned objectives, greater support must be generated among citizens, authorities and private stakeholders in favour of knowledge, attitudes and policy measures likely to improve food security in Sub-Saharan Africa.

48. The Fund uses external partners for its awareness campaigns. However, to a large extent, it handles its own general information projects.\(^{11}\) The Fund's awareness strategy is defined in its strategy paper on awareness and information.

3.2.6 BFFS working group

49. The Fund is a parliamentary initiative. As a result, it is managed and monitored by a parliamentary working group. This "BFFS Working Group” meets at least once a year and is comprised of representatives from:

- each parliamentary group in the Chamber of Representatives
- the Minister and his administration (DGD)
- the Fund's multilateral partner organizations
- both Belgian NGO federations
- Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC)

50. The BFFS Working Group "formulates recommendations regarding the strategic direction of the BFFS, based on the priorities of the different components of Belgium's

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10 Laws of 19 January 2010 and 19 June 2011 on the BFFS.
51. In practice, this means that the working group prioritises the Sub-Saharan countries where the BFFS will implement programmes, formulates recommendations using the evaluations and reports, translates the BFFS' experiences and knowledge into strategic proposals and conducts a mission in a partner country every three to four years to gain information about the situation on the ground and the projects and programmes financed by the Fund.

52. Since the Fund is the result of a parliamentary initiative, it is logical that its visibility and legitimacy are, to a large extent, determined by the working group's parliamentary members. These members play the most political role in the Fund and make policy-type decisions. They also seek to keep food insecurity on the political agenda, maintain interparliamentary contacts with partner countries, participate in awareness initiatives for the Fund, convey prospects and trends in new strategic proposals, etc.

3.3 Target groups and priority themes

53. The BFFS' programmes take into consideration the cross-cutting issues and priority target groups described in the legislation relating to Belgian development cooperation and the Fund. These programmes naturally find their focus in the specific causes of food insecurity affecting the intervention area and in local strategies for food security. Consequently, many varied activities can be implemented within the framework of a BFFS programme.

54. The BFFS' geographical and sectoral scope is unique; sitting on the crossroads between development (long-term), rehabilitation (medium-term) and humanitarian aid (short-term). The Fund operates in highly vulnerable areas that are often almost constantly plagued by humanitarian crises. In doing so, its interventions also occasionally have humanitarian or rehabilitation-related aspects such as nutrition for chronically malnourished children or agricultural rehabilitation measures.

55. Its approach nevertheless focuses on development, based on cooperation for socio-economic development and long-term food security. This is a long drawn-out process requiring a sustained effort. This particular positioning - on the crossroads between development, rehabilitation and humanitarian aid - influences the Fund's choice of programmes on the ground.

56. The BFFS' programmes pay particular attention to the following priority issues and target groups:

- Gender equality and the empowerment of women
- Resilience and vulnerable populations
- Young children, mothers and the right to healthcare
- Environment and natural resources
- Sustainable family agriculture

3.3.1 Gender equality and the empowerment of women

57. In most developing countries, it is mainly women who are involved in food production and the transformation and sale of food. For example, production from the work of women in Africa represents 80 to 90% of household food consumption. Women are also generally responsible for the provision of water and firewood, the preparation of meals and the care of children and the sick or elderly.

58. They play a key role in terms of food security and family welfare. Consequently, increasing their income and improving their living conditions has a positive impact on the food situation and the education of their children. Despite this, women in rural areas often remain "invisible" when it comes to investment and policy measures. They are also victims of discrimination in terms of land rights.

59. The BFFS' interventions specifically aim to strengthen rural women's economic empowerment and capacities by ensuring that they have access to resources and production methods and involving them in decision-making at all levels.

3.3.2 Resilience and vulnerable populations

60. Food security in Sub-Saharan Africa depends greatly on unpredictable external factors such as extreme weather conditions (floods and droughts), soil quality, diseases and epidemics or increased food prices. These external shocks often take place without warning and have serious consequences for vulnerable populations.

61. Poor and marginalised populations (landless people or those living with HIV/AIDS, widows, isolated farmers, orphans, the disabled, etc.) are particularly vulnerable to external shocks. A prolonged drought has another impact in terms of the quantity of food available (harvests fail and reserves are depleted) which leads to price increases. Consequently, vulnerable people quickly find themselves in a problem situation.

62. As a result, the BFFS' interventions must aim to improve the resilience of vulnerable populations so that they are better able to withstand the consequences of sudden, long-lasting external shocks. The State has an obvious responsibility in this regard. It must protect the population and guarantee the continuity of quality basic services, such as education and healthcare.

63. Nevertheless, several partner countries find themselves in a situation of fragility, characterised by a lack of legitimacy on the part of State institutions and the inability of the State to satisfy the population's basic needs. These factors compromise food security and the resilience of the population and the State itself when faced with external shocks.

64. In view of these observations, some of the Fund's actions focus on prevention of and preparedness for natural disasters. This approach is used for the capacity development of the population and local authorities, which eases the consequences of these disasters (especially on health and food).

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65. Strategically, the actions supported by the BFFS should provide a contribution across several areas:
   - re-establishing and protecting the livelihoods of the most vulnerable groups;
   - re-establishing and strengthening the production of livelihoods;
   - improving governance in terms of food and nutritional security.

3.3.3 Young children, mothers and the right to healthcare

66. Suitable, rich and sufficient food is essential for general health at every stage in life. In case of malnutrition, those people with lower physical resistance are the most vulnerable groups. Infant children, pregnant or breast-feeding mothers, the elderly and those living with HIV/AIDS all have specific and sensitive dietary needs.

67. Young children are extremely vulnerable. 165 million children under five suffer from growth retardation and one third of infant mortalities results from malnutrition. The effects are both physical and intellectual; a malnourished child very quickly registers growth retardation which is accompanied by sub-optimal development of the brain and cognitive abilities and a lower resistance to disease and infections.

68. The risks of malnutrition that affect young children are already present during pregnancy. The diet of many African women is too low in iron, a deficiency that causes the low weights seen in their children at birth. In other words, from the first day, the child is already suffering from growth retardation which increases the probability of a vicious circle of poverty and malnutrition. This is why pregnant women should visit high quality health centres that provide nutritional support.

69. Education has a crucial role to play in addressing this issue. Mothers who are sufficiently educated considerably increase their chances of raising healthy children. In terms of food, the health of a young child is directly related to the mother’s education. Researchers have also discovered that educated women, who make their own decisions regarding their fertility, systematically choose to have fewer children. A wise decision in the context of the enormous population pressure on natural resources and global food production.

70. In line with the priorities of Belgian development cooperation in terms of healthcare and nutrition, the BFFS supports an integrated approach towards a safe and balanced diet for the most vulnerable groups and the protection of their right to quality healthcare.

3.3.4 Environment and natural resources

71. Climate change, the loss of biodiversity, air pollution, unpredictable wet seasons and desertification aggravate food insecurity. For example, if the dry or wet seasons follow an unpredictable pattern, this results in profound changes to the environment which then disrupts agriculture and farming. Specifically produced crops (adapted to the current ecological conditions) must acclimatise to the changing conditions. Otherwise, we risk seeing a decline in their yield or even their disappearance.
The pressure on natural resources is increased by unsustainable farming techniques resulting from a lack of technical or financial resources, knowledge or ad hoc regulation. Overgrazing causes the depletion of land and desertification while unsuitable farming techniques deplete the soil causing erosion, deforestation and long-term water shortages. It is vital to map these risks and manage them from a sustainability perspective.

Therefore, the BFFS' programmes aim to combat soil degradation and erosion, targeting adaptation measures against the consequences of climate change, the sustainable use of natural resources and the resolution of land disputes.

A region like the Sahel is facing advanced desertification, ever-longer droughts (or lower or less predictable rainfall) and flash floods. This results in increased pressure on the available land and water reserves for agriculture and farming, leading to structural food deficits and ongoing humanitarian crises. The Fund's programmes must work on sustainable land management and establishing legal certainty for the use of land and water reserves.

### 3.3.5 Sustainable family agriculture

Agriculture and rural development are key sectors for the development of most developing countries. The fate of most of the population is in fact related to agriculture, not only as a source of food, but also of employment and income.

It is therefore striking that the financing of agricultural development in the South has seen a steady decline over the last three decades. However, this trend slowly seems to be reversing. Decision makers and development partners seem again more aware of the importance of agricultural development. Many developing countries and international donors are once again putting sustainable family agriculture on the political agenda.

In its programmes, the BFFS deliberately decides to support sustainable family agriculture. In this way, the Fund is in line with the strategic framework defined by the strategy paper for agriculture and food security of Belgian development cooperation, which expresses four priorities:

- **Agricultural production**: improvement and safeguarding production and agricultural productivity accounting for sustainable development;
- **From products to markets**: adding value to local products and improving access to markets;
- **Good governance of the agricultural sector**: strengthening of the State, civil society and farmers' organizations;
- **Rural women**: individual and collective empowerment of rural women.
3.4 Geographic coverage: countries and zones

78. The law creating the BFFS states that its programmes are executed:

- in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa that present low development indicators (Human Development Index);
- within these countries, priority is given to the partner countries of the Belgian governmental development cooperation;
- in areas of major food insecurity as a priority.

79. Legally, the Fund can therefore operate in most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa because with only a few exceptions, they all present low development indicators and almost all include areas of major food insecurity.

80. The desire to promote synergies and complementarity with other Belgian development cooperation actions and the need to coordinate and monitor the programmes explains why the BFFS favours Belgian governmental development cooperation partner countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, with low development indicators. Still with a view to synergy and complementarity, the governmental cooperation programme in this country, in terms of both its geographical and sectoral priorities, will be taken into account by the BFFS when considering a programme in the partner country in question.

81. Once the countries eligible for a BFFS programme have been identified, the regions most affected by food insecurity are chosen based on comparative studies. In doing so, the less developed and often unstable regions tend to be selected. It is therefore necessary to take into account other parameters when selecting the intervention area, for example technical feasibility, security and the presence of partner organizations. The Fund must identify areas where its interventions are potentially feasible, useful and effective.

82. The intervention area is selected through a participatory process with the authorities and civil society of the partner country and the potential partners of the Fund that are active in the country in question.

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14Law of 19 January 2010 creating the BFFS, Article 6, §1.
IV. Monitoring, evaluation, laboratory and knowledge management

83. The law creating the BFFS states: "The BFFS spends at least 1.5% of its annual budget on the evaluation of projects and programmes and the development of knowledge management within it." These resources should be used to make optimal use of the Fund's knowledge and distribute it to other development cooperation channels.

84. The Fund aims for a specific division of tasks between those on the ground and the administration. The strategic preparation and evaluation are mainly coordinated by the DGD's BFFS department while the programme is monitored more on the ground by the international cooperation attachés.

4.1 Monitoring and evaluation

85. The BFFS' programmes are subject to monitoring and evaluation methods. Every project must define a logical framework and a reference situation which is incorporated into the programme's overall logical framework. Using these instruments, it should be possible to measure the impact of the projects and programmes through objectively verifiable indicators.

86. Every year, partner organizations are required to simultaneously submit a narrative and financial report based on the logical framework and a work plan for the following year. Before they are submitted, the annual reports are consolidated by the coordinator at programme level. The DGD uses these annual reports to decide on the payment of the next financial instalment to the partner organization.

87. A mid-term evaluation is organised by the partner organizations midway through the programme's execution. This is primarily a self-evaluation exercise for the project stakeholders, given that the evaluation consists of a progress report compiled based on the results to be achieved. Where necessary, the interim evaluation must also make it possible to correct the path without undue delay.

88. At the end of the programme, a final evaluation is organised by the DGD which recruits an external independent evaluator for this purpose. Lessons are learned from this final evaluation in order to build knowledge, experience and perspectives, to terminate the programme if necessary, extend it for a second phase or redirect other programmes.

4.2 Laboratory function and knowledge management

89. Synergy, multi-actor, ownership, complementarity, alignment, country programmes... In many respects, the BFFS' approach is more forward thinking than that of other, more traditional channels of Belgian or international development cooperation. The two laws relating to the BFFS refer to the principles of aid effectiveness.

"The Fund strengthens the role of the government, decentralized entities and civil society organizations in the definition and implementation of national improvement strategies for

15 Act of 19 January 2010 creating the BFFS, Article 10, §1.
food security (...). It ensures the ownership of aid by these local stakeholders, the alignment with their priorities and develops a participatory process (...)”¹⁶.

90. The Fund also fulfils a laboratory function. It is used for the practical testing of new methods and insights, putting theory to the test, looking for new strategies in terms of food security, giving various partners the opportunity to look for synergies and complementarities, working on the crossroads between humanitarian aid, rehabilitation and sustainable development, etc. This laboratory function, driven by a modern development approach, obviously involves risks.

91. One of the Fund's "experimental objectives" is to test a coordinated, multi-actor approach in order to increase food security in a given area. If the results prove positive, the BFFS' programmes could be transposed to a national level. The innovative nature lies, on the one hand, in the selection of areas most affected by food insecurity and the most vulnerable groups and, on the other hand, in the use of the complementary expertise of various actors when executing these programmes.

92. The many actors and projects produce a great diversity of knowledge, beliefs and methods. In the interests of the effectiveness of the programmes, it is essential to use the lessons learned and translate them into new strategic guidelines. As a result, lessons learned from the evaluations, reports and field missions must be subject to consistent treatment. They are an ongoing learning tool for the Fund and its partners.

93. Due to the multitude and diversity of knowledge and stakeholders, overall knowledge management is a sizeable challenge. For the best fulfilment of its laboratory function, by making it available to its partners, the Fund uses external knowledge management expertise. In partnership with the DGD, a strategy is being defined for more effective knowledge management within the BFFS.

Appendix: I. BFFS Procedure Manual