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**IMPACT OF EXPORT PROHIBITIONS OR RESTRICTIONS ON FOODSTUFFS
PURCHASED FOR NON-COMMERCIAL HUMANITARIAN PURPOSES
BY THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)**

COMMUNICATION FROM SINGAPORE

The following communication, dated 12 November 2018, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Singapore.

1. This paper serves to highlight the impact of export prohibitions or restrictions on foodstuffs purchased for non-commercial humanitarian purposes by the WFP.

Background

2. The WFP provided direct food assistance to some 91.4 million people around the world in 2017, including by delivering food assistance in emergencies. In 2017, 80% of the food purchased by the WFP came from developing countries. By buying food as close as possible to where it is needed, time and money can be saved on transport costs, while helping to sustain local economies.¹ The quantity of foodstuff purchased by the WFP relative to total world trade is small and does not distort trade.

Impact of export prohibitions or restrictions

3. Export prohibitions or restrictions engender significant inefficiencies in humanitarian food assistance delivery by the WFP. For example, according to the WFP, in recent years:

- An East African country implemented an export ban on maize. To provide maize to another East African country, the WFP had to source from another African country outside East Africa, and occasionally from the Latin America and the Caribbean region. This significantly increased the transport and procurement costs, tripled the amount of time to deliver the foodstuffs to people facing hunger, and resulted in at least 3.9 million meals lost. The export ban also depressed the prices of maize due to reduced demand in the country with the export ban. This resulted in small holder farmers achieving lower prices for their produce.
- A Middle Eastern country placed an export ban on rice. As the WFP needed this rice to feed people facing hunger in neighbouring countries, it had to purchase from a South Asian country instead. As the new source was much further in distance, more time and money was needed to transport the rice. The estimated increase in cost was US\$600,000 per month for some months. The WFP also faced losses due to water damage and infestation during transit of the produce, resulting in the WFP feeding fewer beneficiaries.

¹ <http://www.wfp.org/overview>.

4. The impact of export prohibitions or restrictions on foodstuffs purchased for non-commercial humanitarian purposes by the WFP thus includes:

- (i) Increased amount of time to deliver food when it is needed the most and hardest to access;
- (ii) Increased risk of food being lost due to longer transportation times and changes to the supply chain;
- (iii) Increased administration costs;
- (iv) Increased transportation and distribution costs;
- (v) Increased amount of lead-time needed to procure food, even though the situation may be urgent;
- (vi) Inability to ensure stable food supply to the most vulnerable; and
- (vii) Fewer beneficiaries receiving food from the WFP. Between 2015 and 2017: 54.5% of the WFP's direct expenditure went to Sub-Saharan Africa; 33.8% went to the Middle East and North Africa; 8.7% went to Asia and the Pacific; 2.2% to Latin America and the Caribbean; and 0.8% to Eastern Europe, Southern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Conclusion

5. According to the latest estimates, in 2017, around 821 million (1 in 9) people were undernourished, and data suggests that the number of people who suffer from hunger has been growing over the past three years, returning to levels from almost a decade ago.² While the WFP is working to deliver food assistance in emergency situations, export prohibitions or restrictions on foodstuffs purchased for non-commercial humanitarian purposes by the WFP affects their work and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 2 of ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture.

² FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2018, *"The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World - Building Climate Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition"*, Rome, FAO.