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BRINGING THE USAID/FFP FOOD ASSISTANCE RESOURCES WEBPAGES UP TO INDUSTRY STANDARDS

A Report from the Food Aid Quality Review

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Acronyms

AMS	Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA)
APS	Annual Program Statement
ARS	Agricultural Research Service (USDA)
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID)
CRD	Commodity Requirements Document (USDA)
DEC	Development Experience Clearinghouse (USAID)
FACG	Food Aid Consultative Group
FAQR	Food Aid Quality Review
FACET	Food Assistance Cost-Effectiveness Tool
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FFP	Office of Food for Peace (USAID)
FSMA	Food Safety Modernization Act (FDA)
FSN Network	Food Security and Nutrition Network
FY	Fiscal Year
IDEAL	Implementer-led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID)
REFINE	Research Engagement on Food Interventions for Nutritional Effectiveness
RFA	Request for Applications
RUSF	Ready-to-use Supplementary Food
RUTF	Ready-to-use Therapeutic Food
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WBSCM	Web-Based Supply Chain Management
WFP	World Food Programme

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I. Executive Summary

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) food aid products continue to improve, and food aid stakeholders require greater access to well-presented information and resources to inform their selection and effective programming. Historically, the Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR) project has supported USAID's Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) in improving their Food Assistance Resources webpages, including the development of the Food Aid Product Description Sheets, which present product information in a streamlined, modern format. In an ongoing effort to improve accessibility and transparency of information shared with stakeholders, USAID/FFP tasked FAQR in 2019 with further redesign and reorganization of the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages to better highlight information on U.S. food aid products and the available tools and resources for their selection and programming. Methods included reviewing past FAQR recommendations related to these webpages, conducting a survey of website users, and mapping existing webpage content. in the short and long term. This report provides actionable recommendations for how to update the Food Assistance Resources web presence in the short and long term. It is organized according to the si themes that emerged from FAQR's analysis of the current webpages and user experience (See Recommendations Table below). Instituting a system for regularly curating content on products, processes, tools, and resources to keep the pages and links current and easily accessible will enhance user experience for a diverse audience of FFP stakeholders and U.S. Government agencies and will assist USAID/FFP as the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance consolidates its web presence to support its mission going forward.

Three Priority Actions:

1. Update and Curate Webpages Regularly

An immediate action area for improving the webpages is to ensure that all hyperlinks lead users to the correct documents by fixing missing and broken links. Information within the webpages should also be updated and curated to reflect an increasing focus on food safety and more efficient, effective programming of food aid products and innovations. The links should be regularly checked on at a least quarterly basis to make sure the website information is current. There needs to be a person tasked with curating the webpages and updating the links and resources as new ones are developed as part of their job description.

2. Provide Resources and Organize Webpages Based on User Needs

The current structure of the website impairs stakeholders' ability to find relevant resources without having the specific link. Webpages should be designed with more intuitive organization and additional content and resources based on FFP priorities and stakeholder needs. This report provides recommendations for filling current resource gaps.

3. Increase Outward-Facing Communications

Website users report finding information and resources from the webpages through external newsletters or by searching keywords in a Google search. A system for communicating new resources to stakeholders should be considered, e.g., a subscription notification system, a homepage highlights section with new or updated materials, and/or a "Top Downloads" page.

Recommendations Table: USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources Webpages

Theme 1. Implement a Process for Information Updates and Link Checks

#1 (short-term): The simplest, quickest, and most impactful change that could be made to make the website more user-friendly is to fix broken or incorrect links.

#2 (short-term and long term): Designate a staff member in the FFP office with clear responsibilities for coordinating and managing the link and information update processes in order to ensure that the website provides accurate and current information. This should include checking all of the links in the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages once each quarter and submitting a list of broken links to the appropriate communications or information technology office with the correct replacement links and a short turn-around time for updating them on the website. This process should be ongoing for the life of the website. The time commitment to review all the links is small (roughly three hours per quarter), so this activity could be added to the job description of an existing position.

Theme 2. Improve Technical Guidance and Analysis

#3 (short-term): Increase technical guidance to implementing partners, particularly regarding information for food selection and programming. Include a training series for guidance on the full menu of food products and how they should be programmed.

#4 (short-term): Links to the FAQR decision trees for non-emergency programs, both with ([Flow Chart Decision Tree](#)) and without explicit nutrition objectives ([Flow Chart Decision Tree No Nutritional Objectives](#)), should be included on the page (or the images should be embedded on the page). A link to NutVal, a World Food Programme (WFP) tool used to design food aid rations, should also be provided to help implementing partners with ration planning. These are included in the “From Other Sources” sheet of the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#) but should be more prominent in the pages where they are most needed.

#5 (long-term): USAID should upload the decision tree for emergencies [Food Aid Emergency Response Decision Tree](#), and add it to the “Programming” portion of the page.

#6 (long-term): When the FAQR Food Assistance Cost-Effectiveness Tool (FACET) is available (now in beta testing), it should also be made available on the “Programming” section of the page.

#7 (long-term): Create a tool or algorithm for convenient guidance on food formulations to meet nutritional goals.

#8 (short-term): To make it easier to find the correct tool, every resource on the “Implementation Tools” page should come with a short statement on what the tool is, who the tool is for, and its intended purpose and a link to the tool or pdf to download. The Food Aid Product Information Guide, Commodity Management Toolkit 2017, and Web-Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) tools all have short descriptions and should serve as examples of recommended descriptions.

Theme 3. Improve Communication

#9 (short-term): Improve communication to stakeholders to inform them of new or updated resources as soon as they are available. Consider creating a subscription notification system to provide direct updates.

Theme 4. Promote Education on the Procurement Process and Product Innovation Opportunities

#10 (short-term): The “Steps in the Food for Peace Program Chain” graphic on the “Programming & Procurement” page provides a good overview of the process and some information on how USAID and USDA work together to procure the products, but no summary of the graphic is provided in the text. Adding a few sentences to summarize this image in the text on the page would solve this issue. This summary should also spell out the acronyms used and name the forms partners need to submit to FFP to request commodities.

#11 (short-term): A link to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) “[Become a USDA Foods Vendor](#)” page needs to be added within the “Procurement Process” section with a short description outlining the process. This is included in the “From Other Sources” sheet of the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#).

#12 (short-term): The current “Partner with Food for Peace” link at the bottom of the “Programming & Procurement” page leads to the “Partner With Us” page of the website, which does not provide information on how to sell food to USAID. This link should lead to the “[How to Work with USAID](#)” page of the USAID website.

#13 (short-term): The “Programming & Procurement” page should include links to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service “[Solicitation Information](#)” page, which links to the “FY 2020 Schedule for International Procurements” and the “[International Procurement and Sales](#)” page, which in turn links to the “USDA Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan” document, which gives an overview of how the quality assurance surveillance system works and who is involved. Both documents are included in the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#)’s “From Other Sources” sheet.

#14 (long-term): An explanation about whether USAID is procuring any food aid products on its own and if the USAID specifications are different from the USDA specifications for the four products should be provided. If USAID is doing any procurement independent of USDA, then the process for becoming a USAID food aid vendor (and under what circumstances) needs to be clearly outlined. Links to the USAID “[Business Forecast](#)” and “[Procurement Executive Bulletins](#)” websites and the new GSA “[Contract Opportunities](#)” website should be added along with this information.

#15 (short-term): Provide links to FDA’s webpage on the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) to help inform implementing partners of the updated standards for food safety in the United States. This resource is listed in the “From Other Sources” sheet of the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#).

#16 (long-term): Add a section to every product page in the Food Aid Product Information Guide that outlines the key food safety concerns associated with that product and the key warning signs of spoilage. Some of this information is in the Commodity Management Toolkit, which is already included on the “Implementation Tools” page, but that document is difficult to navigate. This is included in the “From Other Sources” sheet of the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#).

#17 (long-term): Develop an updated [USAID/FFP Food Safety and Quality Assurance Feedback Loop](#). Provide educational materials to USAID implementing partners on the purpose of the feedback loop, specific problems with products to look for, and how to report problems with products and packaging in a timely manner.

#18 (long-term): Work with USDA to add information on safe storage and handling into the CRDs. Create a resource to guide USAID’s implementing partners for safe warehousing, handling, and distribution within the country.

#19 (long-term): If FFP would like to highlight food safety, then the best way to accomplish this is to create a new “Food Safety and Quality Assurance” page under the “Food Aid Product Information” section of the website, including the recommended resources listed above and links to USDA/AMS’s [Commodity Testing Laboratory](#) and [Grain Inspection Services for Mycotoxins](#). Links to these resources can be found on the “From Other Sources” sheet of the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#). This webpage should also be revised to include updated food safety information as USAID makes it available.

Theme 5. Increase Opportunities for Institutional and Historical Learning
#20 (short-term): Create more opportunities for continued conversation across the supply chain to learn more about product use, successes, and challenges once they leave USAID's title.
#21 (long-term): Design a webtool that aggregates historical data at the country level, so stakeholders can review programming decisions and lessons learned.
#22 (short-term): Provide a direct link to the Baseline Studies for Title II Development Activities in the DEC.
#23 (short-term): Adds links to the FSN Network resource library and the REFINE website with the "Implementation Tools" and the "Partner With Us: Proposal and Legislative Guidance" materials. These could easily be added as related resources. REFINE should also be listed as a related resource on the "Programming & Procurement" page. These resources are listed under the "From Other Sources" sheet in the USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database .
#24 (long-term): The FACG meetings provide a valuable opportunity to bring participants throughout the food aid supply chain together. They should be better advertised and promoted by dedicating space on the webpages to these meetings. Meeting agendas, presentations, and summaries of what was discussed should be included on the webpages.
Theme 6. Improve the Organization of the Food Assistance Resources Webpages
#25 (long-term): Create a subscription notification system to inform stakeholders of new or updated resources.
#26 (short-term): Provide more contextual information/descriptive text on webpages to help users navigate the provided links.
#27 (short-term): Create a systematic method and style sheet for webpage fonts, which makes major headers distinct from body text and removes unnecessary bolding, standardizes colors, and overall improves ease of reading/navigation.
#28 (long-term): It would be better to add a list of the commodities within the Food Aid Product Information Guide to the description of the Guide on the "Food Aid Product Information" page (the list could contain the links to the correct page in the Guide) and list the USDA CRDs as a related resource on that page with a short summary of what the CRDs contain. Then the "Food Aid Product Descriptions" page could be removed to help streamline the website.
#29 (short-term): Use the landing pages to state the purpose of the document or tool. In most cases, the document or tool contains a section that states the purpose and this same section could be presented on the landing page.
#30 (long-term): Develop a way to upload new tools and documents without the landing page for PDF formats.
#31 (long-term): For Excel and Word format tools and documents that require downloading before they can be opened, the landing page should contain basic directions on how to use the form or tool, in addition to presenting a short description of the purpose of the tool.
#32 (long-term): All of the proposal guidance for both emergency and development activities should be available on the same page along with any necessary budget templates. OFDA has an " Application Guidelines " page that has a table with everything someone would need to submit a proposal (please see the "From Other Sources" sheet of the USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database). FFP should create something similar but also include the most recent annual program statement (APS) and active requests for applications (RFAs). All of the tools we recommend including on this page are on the "What We Do" sheet in the USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database .

#33 (long-term): All implementation tools and resources, including guidance on reports to FFP, need to be located in the same place. All of the tools we recommend including on this page are on the “Implementation and Reporting” section of the “Partner With Us” sheet and on the “Implementation Tools” sheet of the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#).

II. Background and Methods

a. Background

Tufts University leads the Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR) as one of the key activities of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Food for Peace (FFP) aimed at improving the quality of USAID Title II food aid programming and products. These efforts have been focused on a wide range of important areas, including improving stakeholders’ access to critical information and resources related to food aid products, enhancing transparency between USAID and its partners, and consolidating information on food aid products, programming, and processes.

In 2017, FAQR conducted a [USAID/FFP Commodities Resource Portal Landscape Analysis](#) that described and assessed the impact of the layout and content of USAID/FFP’s website. FFP implemented many of the recommendations from that report and has added many more resources to their Food Assistance Resources webpages since that review. As more resources have been added, it has become increasingly important to present the materials in a logical and organized manner and to keep links current. However, many resources that are or would be most useful to FFP’s current and potential implementing partners and food aid product vendors are scattered throughout the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages, are not available on the FFP website, or do not exist at all.

In 2019, FAQR was asked to provide further short- and long-term recommendations on how USAID/FFP could update the webpages to better meet current and future user needs. To do so, FAQR reviewed existing pages and conducted a survey of website users to determine how the website could be optimized to meet defined requirements. This latest website landscape analysis: 1) catalogs all resources currently available on the website and their current locations in the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#); 2) identifies gaps in the available resources; 3) determines existing resources that might fill these gaps; and 4) recommends basic changes to make the website more functional for users. The user survey, which was sent to major stakeholders, including implementing partners, FFP staff, and vendors, provides insights into users’ concerns related to improving website use and ease of navigation.

This report and its recommendations are provided to USAID/FFP as it updates its Food Assistance Resources webpages to reflect current user needs, agency priorities, and its merger with the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) into the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). Each stated finding is followed by recommendations to address the issue and provides a timeframe, either short- or long-term, for conducting the necessary revisions. Short-term means the change can be made quickly and almost immediately. Long-term means the change can be made within the next year or when the BHA is officially launched and the associated website redesign is underway or complete. If the recommendation includes adding a resource that already exists on another website, then the link to that resource and more information is

provided in the accompanying [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#). If the suggested resource does not exist, the recommendation spells out what content needs to be included in any future creation of that resource. The recommendation references the page of the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#) that contains the specified resource so that the reader can locate the correct entry. We also provide guidance on how to reorganize the website as FFP and OFDA merge into the BHA.

b. Summary of the 2017 FFP Commodities Resource Portal Landscape Analysis

The [USAID/FFP Commodities Resource Portal Landscape Analysis](#) reviewed the website as it existed in 2017. The report discussed issues relating to the website and its different pages. At the time, the website sections were titled “Resources,” “Products, Programming and Procurement,” “Commodity Selection Resources,” “Commodity Fact Sheets,” and “Implementation Tools.” Difficulty locating the commodity resource portal due to its embedded location within the overall USAID website was an initial barrier identified. Once on the portal pages, the following areas for improvement were identified:

1. Reorganize resources to improve functionality and ease of navigation;
2. Update content and improve presentation of commodity selection tools;
3. Streamline and summarize information on commodity fact sheets; and
4. Update information and reconcile redundancy in the implementation tools section.

Figure 1. Portal Structure Recommended in the 2017 Landscape Analysis

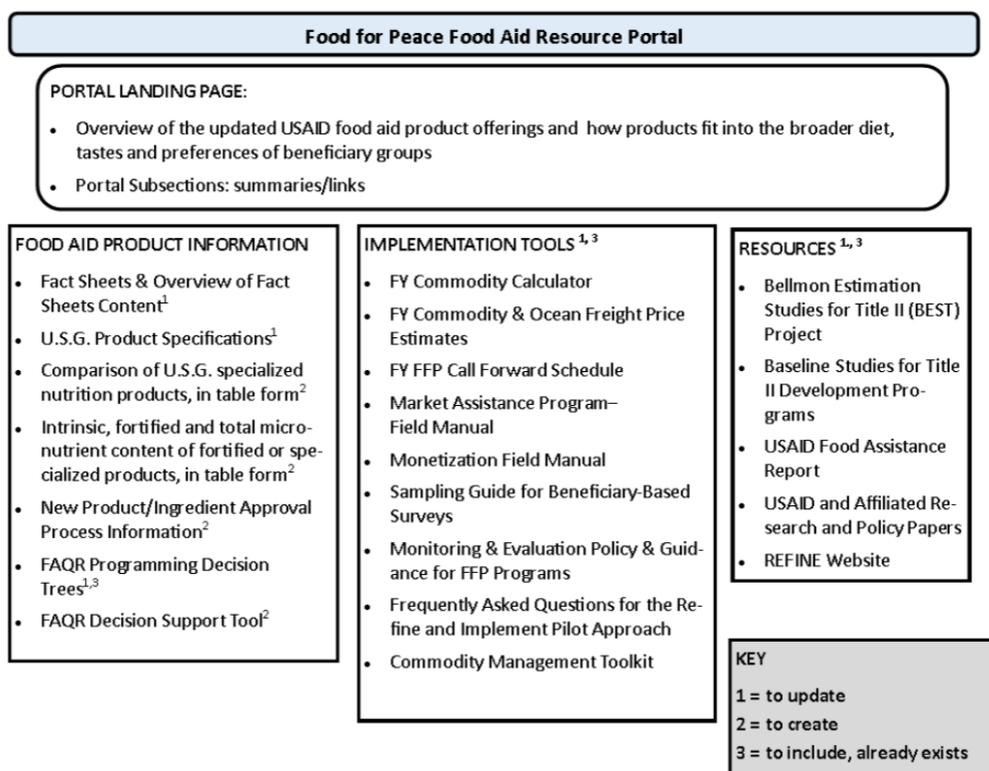


Figure I shows the recommended structure of the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages, then called the FFP Resource Portal, from the 2017 report. The three proposed categories—"Food Aid Product Information," "Implementation Tools," and "Resources"—were incorporated into the current structure of the USAID/FFP website during the 2018 launch.

While some of the specific recommended changes from the 2017 analysis were implemented, others were not. For example, a recommended "Food Aid Product Information" page was created, but the recommended product comparison table, programming decision tree, and other decision support tools were left out. These resources, listed as "to create" or "to update" in the report and figure above, may have been omitted because they were not finalized in time for the website reorganization and update. **These tools would help fill gaps that still exist in the resources currently available online and should be added once a final version is available.** The "Implementation Tools" page of the new USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages has been populated with all of the resources recommended in 2017.

However, in the recommended "Resources" section, the Bellmon analyses, baseline studies, and the [Research Engagement on Food Interventions for Nutritional Effectiveness](#) (REFINE) website are still not linked to the current "Food Aid Product Information" webpages. **Adding these resources to the current webpages would fill gaps in the currently available resources.** While the review of gaps in the previous website update provided a foundation for the current recommendations, further methods were used to gain insights into user experiences, structural issues, and additional content gaps.

c. Methods

We used a variety of methods, to obtain information about the current website and its functionality, including reviewing related, previously-produced FAQR reports, surveying website users, and conducting a thorough review of the website itself.

Report Review: Fourteen reports from the three phases of the FAQR project were mined for recommendations relevant to improving FFP's Food Assistance Resources webpages. Of the final deliverables, five were excluded for lack of topical relevance. The 2017 FAQR [USAID/FFP Commodities Resource Portal Landscape Analysis](#) was added as a guiding resource to provide context and understanding of prior website structure. See [Annex I](#) for the report inclusion criteria and [Annex 2](#) for a summary of all reports included in the recommendations review.

User Survey: To ensure that recommended updates reach the desired audience, a clearer understanding of how food assistance stakeholder groups currently use the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages and the existing barriers to use was needed. A survey of website users was designed for this purpose and disseminated to a variety of stakeholders working in the food aid sector. The survey was designed to: 1) understand how the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages currently do meet user needs; 2) identify the areas where the webpages could be improved to promote ease of use and provide the most current information on food assistance; and 3) determine whether website resources and updates are well communicated to users.

The 20-question survey covered five overarching areas: respondent demographics, website access, website structure, quality of content, and respondent use of outside resources. The survey was disseminated through FAQR's Mailchimp listserv of 325 subscribers representing a range of food assistance stakeholder groups. A link to the survey was also made public on the FAQR website, shared through Twitter, and distributed through other food aid stakeholder listservs. The survey was open for two weeks during which it was completed by 34 respondents. Most participating respondents were implementing partners and USAID staff (52 percent, collectively), while the remainder were a combination of suppliers, researchers, staff from the United Nations, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and other government agencies, or unspecified. See [Annex 3](#) for a percentage chart of the participating food aid sectors and a full list of participating organizations and respondent job titles.

Current Content Mapping and Analysis: The FAQR team reviewed the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages to catalog the resources that were available in 2019 and to understand the layout of the current site, which had been updated since the 2017 analysis. This analysis involved a thorough review of the Food Assistance Resources ([USAID Food Assistance Resources](#)) webpages, with a focus on the "[Food Aid Product Information](#)" section of the website. Resources connected to the programming and procurement of food aid products were also found within the "[What We Do](#)" and "[Partner With Us](#)" sections of the Food Assistance site, so these were reviewed as well. A list of all the resources currently available on the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages was compiled in the accompanying [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#) document, which is organized according to the location of the resources to provide a map of the website's content at the time of this review in December 2019 ([Annex 4](#)).

From this database/map of existing resources, gaps in the content of the resources and webpages were identified, along with issues with the current organization of the resources. A list of relevant related resources from FAQR, USDA, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Food Security and Nutrition Network (FSN Network) were compiled to try to fill these gaps with existing material. This list of resources from other sources is also provided in the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#) on a separate tab.

III. Findings and Recommendations

Overview of the Current Website and Its Use

FFP has made great strides in updating and reorganizing its website to make it more user-friendly. Nonetheless, there are still issues with the website content, function, and layout. Figure 2 shows the current navigation pane for the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages, with the “Food Aid Product Information” pages expanded. [Annex 4](#) has a diagram of the website with all of the subpages outlined.

The Resources landing page is the same as the “Fact Sheets & Reports” page and contains a list of FFP fact sheets and reports, resources for FFP partners, and study reports and analyses. There is also a “Frequently Asked Questions” link. The “Resources for Food for Peace Partners” section includes links to the “Food Aid Product Information,” “Implementation Tools,” and “Research and Policy Papers” pages. The “Food for Peace Information Bulletins” page provides a list of updated guidance for FFP programming.

The “Food Aid Product Information” page provides an overview and outline of the *Food Aid Product Information Guide*. The page has two subpages: “Programming & Procurement” and “Food Aid Product Descriptions.” The “Programming & Procurement” page has examples of food aid in emergency and development settings, a graphic illustrating the steps involved in FFP programming, and USAID product specifications for fortified rice, high-energy biscuits, ready-to-use nutritional food, and Super Cereal Plus.

The “Implementation Tools” page lists many of the resources for commodity procurement and development food assistance programming, while the “Research and Policy Papers” page provides access to FFP research papers and overarching policy documents.

The user survey collected information on how often respondents checked the website. The 34 survey respondents most often (47 percent) reported using the website only occasionally (defined as approximately one time per month); 30 percent reported rarely using the website (defined as a few times per year); 11 percent reported using the website on a weekly basis; 2 percent reported using it daily; and 2 percent reported never using the site.

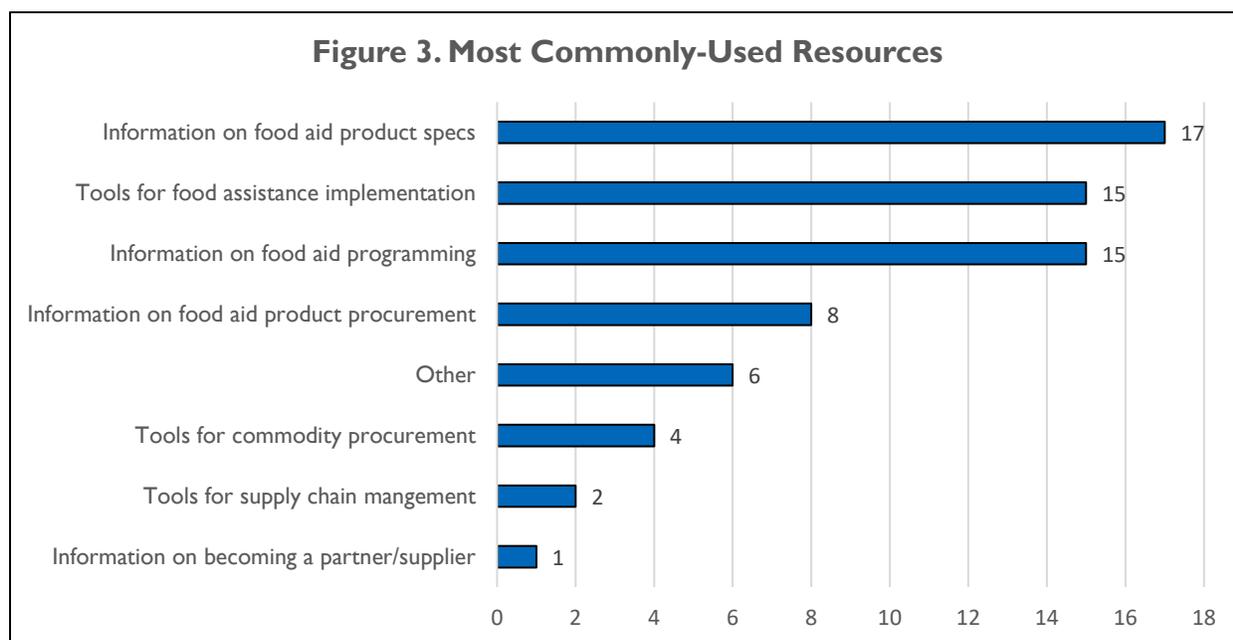
When asked how users access the webpages, the majority (63 percent) of respondents reported finding their desired resource through a search engine as opposed to going directly to the site. A follow-up question collected keywords used to search for resources through search engines; these keywords could be useful for updating USAID’s resource tagging method. The most commonly used search phrase was “USAID” or “Food for Peace” combined with “commodity,” the name of a specific commodity, or the title of the intended resource. For a full list of search keywords see [Annex 5](#). Eight respondents reported accessing commodity resources directly

Figure 2. Current Navigation Pane

Food Assistance
What We Do
Where We Work
Partner With Us
Resources
Fact Sheets & Reports
Food for Peace Information Bulletins
Food Aid Product Information
Programming & Procurement
Food Aid Product Descriptions
Implementation Tools
Research and Policy Papers
FAQ

through the USAID homepage. Two respondents noted that they accessed the website through links received via email listservs and through bookmarked links. Nearly all respondents reported accessing the website on a computer, with only one respondent most often using a tablet.

The survey asked participants to specify the resources they most often use. The results show that information on food aid product specifications, information on food aid programming, and tools for food assistance implementation are most commonly used. This makes sense given the large percentage of respondents who were implementing partners, as these are resources designed for their use. Figure 3 shows the frequency of response for each resource category. Only one participant reported using information about becoming a partner/supplier, but additional commentary identified a need for more information on how to become a supplier. This could be achieved by linking to USDA pages that currently provide information on [how to become a vendor to supply food to USDA](#) or further developing an online portal for new supplier applications as suggested in the FAQR [Improvements to the USAID/FFP Food Aid Basket: Product Upgrades and Innovations, Processes for Modifying the Food Basket, and Communications with Partners](#) report.



A section of the survey included questions relating to the Food Aid Product Description Sheets which were updated and made more streamlined and accessible during the 2018 website updates. Seventy-one percent of the 31 users that responded to this section reported having downloaded or accessed the Food Aid Product Description Sheets online. Of those who had used the Food Aid Product Description Sheets, 80 percent reported that they used the sheets to find additional information, while 70 percent said that the Food Aid Product Description Sheets helped inform appropriate programming.

Many of the user survey findings and the current website review mirror themes from FAQR's prior website analysis. FAQR's current recommendations are organized into six themes:

1. Implement a Process for Information Updates and Link Checks;
2. Improve Technical Guidance and Analysis;
3. Improve Communication;
4. Promote Education on the Procurement Process and Product Innovation Opportunities;
5. Increase Opportunities for Institutional and Historical Learning; and
6. Improve the Organization of the Food Assistance Resources Webpages.

Theme 1. Implement a Process for Information Updates and Link Checks

Many user problems are associated with outdated information. Broken links limit the usability of the website and can make trying to use it a frustrating experience for stakeholders. These issues are generally simple to fix and can immediately have a huge impact on the functionality of the website. The 2017 [Landscape Analysis](#) noted an issue with outdated links and/or a need for additional linked resources on many of the pages. Maintaining the relevance and functionality of links, as well as other content on the webpages, remains a key recommendation in all of FAQR's research outputs. In the user survey, outdated information was one of the most commonly reported website content concerns. Additional comments stated that links to PDF files are often broken and there is a need for revision of certain documents.

USAID/FFP is in the process of updating its website, including the Food Assistance Resources webpages, and the "What We Do," "Where We Work," and "Partner With Us" sections were updated in January 2020 to incorporate the integration of the Feed the Future initiative. webpages into these website sections The "Food Aid Product Information" section and subsections, however, have not been updated since February 2018. Several broken links were found within the "Resources" pages during the most recent review. Especially concerning are those on the "Food Aid Product Information" page, which links to a pdf that was posted on February 22, 2018; the links to the individual product sheets on the "Food Aid Product Description" page are correct, but the internal links on those pages also have not been updated since February 2018 and need to be. In addition to updating the links on those product pages, the content may need to be updated for product specifications that have been changed since February 2018. FAQR provided USAID/FFP with a [guide for how to update the Product Description Sheets](#) in 2019.

On the "Food Aid Product Information: Programming & Procurement" page, the links to the USAID specifications for fortified rice, high-energy biscuits, ready-to-use nutritional food, and Super Cereal Plus link to outdated or different versions of the product specification or are broken. For example, the link for "[Fortified Rice](#)" takes you to a landing page that was posted December 18, 2018 but that links to a USAID "Fortified Milled Rice" specification dated January 27, 2016, while the [USDA/AMS Commodity Requirements](#) webpage links to a "[USDA Commodity Requirements Milled Rice And Fortified Milled Rice \(CR C MR26\) for Use in International Food Assistance Programs](#)" dated July 13, 2018, which is different in content.

USDA purchases the same fortified milled rice for both the USAID and USDA programs, so the same specification should be referenced on both sites. USAID and USDA are working hard to

harmonize their specifications and keep them updated. Synchronizing timing and posting of updates is of utmost importance to make sure the implementing partners and other stakeholders are not confused about where the latest specification is to be found. Similar inconsistencies were found for the [High Energy Biscuits](#), [SuperCereal Plus](#), and [Ready to Use Nutritional Food](#) product links on the USAID/FFP “Food Aid Product Information: Programming & Procurement” page.

In addition, many links appear to lead to the wrong place. For example, on both the “Programming & Procurement” and “Food Aid Product Descriptions” pages, the “USDA National Nutrient Database” link leads to the homepage for the Methods and Application of Food Composition Laboratory of the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS). While ARS is responsible for the Nutrient Database, it would be much better for the link to lead to the homepage of the database itself. Within the *Food Aid Product Information Guide*, the USDA National Nutrient Database link leads straight to the database’s homepage, so this is the standard for other places on the website. For a list of all broken links found on the Food Assistance Resources webpages as of December 31, 2019, see [Annex 6](#).

Recommendation #1 (short-term): *The simplest, quickest, and most impactful change that could be made to make the website more user-friendly is to fix broken or incorrect links.*

In order to better engage stakeholders, material must be correct and up to date. Previous FAQR recommendations submitted to USAID on May 9, 2019 developed guidance on conducting regular, systematic updates to the Food Aid Product Description Sheets. FAQR recommends a process that includes frequently consulting with food technologists, nutritionists, and USDA staff to inform food basket content updates, documentation of product information and regular checks for link functionality. This systematic guidance for the Food Aid Product Description Sheets should be expanded to cover all of the webpages.

Assigning staff to implement a process for information updates was a recurring theme in past recommendations and in this report. In the FAQR [Improvements to the USAID/FFP Food Basket: Product Upgrades and Innovations, Processes for Modifying the Food Basket, and Communications with Partners](#) report, one of the high-urgency recommendations was to create a partner management system and assign staff to keep the page well-maintained. Similarly, the FAQR [USAID/FFP Food Safety & Quality Assurance Feedback Loop Analysis](#) report recommended a designated, dedicated staff member to manage the incident reporting questionnaire and database. Finally, the [Instructions for Updating USAID/FFP Food Aid Product Description Sheets](#) document suggests that a point person be assigned to updating the Food Aid Product Description Sheets, creating new ones as new products come on line and checking functionality of links on a regular basis.

Recommendation #2 (short-term and long term): Designate a staff member in the FFP office with clear responsibilities for coordinating and managing the link and information update processes in order to ensure that the website provides accurate and current information. This should include checking all of the links in the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages once each quarter and submitting a list of broken links to the appropriate communications or information technology office with the correct replacement links and a short turn-around time for updating them on the website. This process should be ongoing for the life of the website. The time commitment to review all the links is small (roughly three hours per quarter), so this activity could be added to the job description of an existing position.

Theme 2. Improve Technical Guidance and Analysis

The primary purpose of the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages is to provide information and tools to FFP implementing partners, but it also serves to educate food aid vendors and the general public. Currently, the website provides a great deal of information that would be appropriate for laypeople looking for information on how FFP works. Unfortunately, much of the information within the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages does not provide enough information to be helpful to the implementing partners or vendors. While few user survey respondents selected “lack of technical guidance” as a concern, many qualitative responses related to this issue: respondents desired more tools and guidance for partners. Specific guidance requests include: “information on estimating target numbers for beneficiaries” and for more country-specific information on FFP programs to be added to the fact sheets.

The FAQR [USAID/FFP Partner Perspectives on Food Aid Formulation, Selection & Distribution](#) report summarizes findings from a series of interviews conducted with stakeholders across the food aid supply chain, ranging from product suppliers to in-country collaborators. Among programmers, respondents noted an apparent lack of information on the nutritional differences among food aid products and how to use them (i.e., in what circumstance, for what population). Enhanced product guidance was the most urgent and important cited need for these stakeholders. The report recommended creating a training series discussing the menu of food aid products, what guidelines to follow for making food selections, and how to use food aid decision-making tools. Additionally, the report recommended creating more written technical guidance for products (such as specific nutrition goals) to be shared on the USAID/FFP webpages.

Similarly, the FAQR [Food Matrices: A Review of Critical Factors Impacting Nutritional Bioavailability](#) report recommends a tool for convenient guidance on food formulations to meet nutrition goals. The tool would include an algorithm that predicts the bioavailability of nutrients from different diets and efficiently provides reliable data on food formulations (which could be modified to meet intended goals). This tool would need to be created.

Further recommendations on necessary technical guidance are in the FAQR [Food Basket & Emergency Response](#) information brief, which includes the [Food Aid Emergency Response Decision Tree](#). The brief recommended sharing the updated decision tree as a technical guidance

tool for implementing partners. Additionally, the report recommended prioritizing the development of technical guidance on specific product rations for different population groups.

The review of the current website supports the findings of these reports. The “Programming & Procurement” page was found to have little to no information on how to program food aid products and limited information on the procurement process. The “Programming” portion of the page has very vague outlines of food assistance in emergency and development settings. While this would be appropriate in the “Fact Sheets & Reports” page, which is largely intended to educate the general public, it is less suited to this section of the website, which is largely intended for FFP implementing partners. The “Programming” section of the page needs to provide more specific guidance on when and how to use the food aid products.

Recommendation #3 (short-term): Increase technical guidance to implementing partners, particularly regarding information for food selection and programming. Include a training series for guidance on the full menu of food products and how they should be programmed.

Recommendation #4 (short-term): Links to the FAQR decision trees for non-emergency programs, both with explicit nutrition objectives: ([Flow Chart Decision Tree](#)) and without explicit nutrition objectives: ([Flow Chart Decision Tree, No Nutritional Objectives](#)), should be included on the page (or the images should be embedded on the page). A link to NutVal, a World Food Programme (WFP) tool used to design food aid rations, should also be provided to help implementing partners with ration planning. These are included in the “From Other Sources” sheet of the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#) but should be more prominent in the pages where they are most needed

Recommendation #5 (long-term): USAID should upload the decision tree for emergencies [Food Aid Emergency Response Decision Tree](#). and add it to the “Programming” portion of the page.

Recommendation #6 (long-term): When the FAQR Food Assistance Cost-Effectiveness Tool (FACET) is available (now in beta testing), it should also be made available on the “Programming” section of the page.

Recommendation #7 (long-term): Create a tool or algorithm for convenient guidance on food formulations to meet nutritional goals.

The “Implementation Tools” page provides a long list of resources that are useful to implementing partners. However, only three of the listed tools provide information about the tool, beyond its name, so the page is essentially a list of links. Adding descriptions of tools to the page would be helpful for people who are less familiar with the tools and may be unsure of what they need. This issue with floating links making it difficult to identify the correct resource was also highlighted by the user survey.

Recommendation #8 (short-term): *To make it easier to find the correct tool, every resource on the “Implementation Tools” page should come with a short statement on what the tool is, who the tool is for, and its intended purpose and a link to the tool or pdf to download. The Food Aid Product Information Guide, Commodity Management Toolkit 2017, and Web-Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) tools all have short descriptions and should serve as examples of recommended descriptions.*

Theme 3. Improve Communication

Clearly communicating with implementing partners and other interested parties when a new or updated resource is made available, as well as highlighting which resources are the most important and how to use them, will help improve the user experience and cut down on the time people spend looking for the correct resource. A need for better communication of resources and website updates was another priority theme across the FAQR research workstreams. The [USAID/FFP Partner Perspectives on Food Aid Formulation, Selection & Distribution](#) report found, as a general theme, that partners have differing access to information about USAID food aid products and operations. The report recommended developing a subscription service to automatically alert stakeholders about changes to available products, as well as other important announcements. The [Improvements to the USAID/FFP Food Basket](#) report also advised a better communication flow between partners and USAID/FFP. The communications flow would require: 1) partners to report more detail on ration information and effectiveness monitoring; 2) USAID to review the reported information and use this to make updates to products; and 3) USAID to implement an alert system to inform partners about product changes. The FAQR [Sustainability Plan for Regular Updating of Title II Food Aid Specifications](#) document also identified a need for improved communication, suggesting that the USAID/FFP website and associated newsletter regularly update stakeholders on newly-revised product specifications and how to program them. This should be done at least quarterly or as soon as a tool or resource is produced.

Recommendation #9 (short-term): *Improve communication to stakeholders to inform them of new or updated resources as soon as they are available. Consider creating a subscription notification system to provide direct updates.*

Theme 4. Promote Education on the Procurement Process and Product Innovation Opportunities

FFP's product procurement and development procedures are complex, and other agencies, specifically USDA, play a key role in the process. There is not currently one place to find comprehensive USAID/FFP guidelines on how a vendor or other stakeholder can become a supplier of current food aid products or present an innovation or new product. Therefore, it is essential to provide materials that will educate current and potential implementing partners and food aid product vendors on the process and different agencies involved as well as the steps required.

Manufacturers interviewed for the [USAID/FFP Partner Perspectives on Food Aid Formulation, Selection & Distribution](#) report indicated an interest in supplying new products to USAID/FFP. However, it is challenging for them to identify new product needs or improvement areas that would meet the desires and needs of all stakeholders in the decision-making chain. The report suggests adopting a set of guidelines for USAID/FFP products and making them public to help manufacturers identify needs when innovating. The [Improvements to the USAID/FFP Food Basket](#) report also recommends a continued effort to create an online system for suppliers to propose novel products or product updates.

The procurement section for the current "Programming & Procurement" webpage, which is the key resource for learning about product procurement, is missing some important information, and the information that is available is inadequate for implementing partners. For example, there is no information on how partners can order commodities or how a supplier could become a food aid product vendor for USAID or USDA. USDA currently procures most of the products used in FFP programs, so outlining this relationship is important for understanding how the procurement chain works. USDA has information on its website on [how to become a vendor](#). The page is also missing an explanation of why USAID is providing its own commodity specifications for four products and what this means for vendors.

Recommendation #10 (short-term): The "Steps in the Food for Peace Program Chain" graphic on the "Programming & Procurement" page provides a good overview of the process and some information on how USAID and USDA work together to procure the products, but no summary of the graphic is provided in the text. Adding a few sentences to summarize this image in the text on the page would solve this issue. This summary should also spell out the acronyms used and name the forms partners need to submit to FFP to request commodities.

Recommendation #11 (short-term): A link to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) "[Become a USDA Foods Vendor](#)" page needs to be added within the "Procurement Process" section with a short description outlining the process. This is included in the "From Other Sources" sheet of the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#).

Recommendation #12 (short-term): The current "Partner with Food for Peace" link at the bottom of the "Programming & Procurement" page leads to the "Partner With Us" page of the website, which does not provide information on how to sell food to USAID. This link should lead to the "[How to Work with USAID](#)" page of the USAID website.

Recommendation #13 (short-term): The “Programming & Procurement” page should include links to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service [“Solicitation Information”](#) page, which links to the “FY 2020 Schedule for International Procurements” and the [“International Procurement and Sales”](#) page, which in turn links to the “USDA Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan” document, which gives an overview of how the quality assurance surveillance system works and who is involved. Both documents are included in the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database’s](#) “From Other Sources” sheet.

Recommendation #14 (long-term): An explanation about whether USAID is procuring any food aid products on its own and if the USAID specifications are different from the USDA specifications for the four products should be provided. If USAID is doing any procurement independent of USDA, then the process for becoming a USAID food aid vendor (and under what circumstances) needs to be clearly outlined. Links to the USAID [“Business Forecast”](#) and [“Procurement Executive Bulletins”](#) websites and the new GSA [“Contract Opportunities”](#) website should be added along with this information.

There is little to no information on the website related to food safety, despite USAID’s increased interest and focus in this area. The *Food Aid Product Information Guide* does not provide any information on safe storage or handling. It also doesn’t clarify if any of the food preparation instructions are for safety reasons or if there is a specific food safety concern for the product. This information has also been removed from USDA’s [International Commodity Requirements Documents](#) (CRDs), as manufacturers are required to abide by the latest food safety requirements of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Although there is information on safe storage and handling in the [Commodity Management Toolkit 2017](#), which is found on the “Implementation Tools” page, it is difficult to locate a specific document in the toolkit, which comprises multiple tools. The USAID/FFP food safety and quality assurance feedback loop should be streamlined and updated as recommended in the FAQR [USAID Food for Peace Food Safety & Quality Assurance Feedback Loop Analysis](#) report. USAID/FFP is expanding its efforts on food safety, and new materials should be included as they are produced.

Recommendation #15 (short-term): Provide links to FDA’s webpage on the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) to help inform implementing partners of the updated standards for food safety in the United States. This resource is listed in the “From Other Sources” sheet of the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#).

Recommendation #16 (long-term): Add a section to every product page in the Food Aid Product Information Guide that outlines the key food safety concerns associated with that product and the key warning signs of spoilage. Some of this information is in the Commodity Management Toolkit, which is already included on the “Implementation Tools” page, but that document is difficult to navigate. This is included in the “From Other Sources” sheet of the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#).

Recommendation #17 (long-term): Develop an updated [USAID/FFP Food Safety and Quality Assurance Feedback Loop](#) Provide educational materials to USAID implementing partners on the purpose of the feedback loop, specific problems with products to look for, and how to report problems with products and packaging in a timely manner.

Recommendation #18 (long-term): Work with USDA to add information on safe storage and handling into the CRDs. Create a resource to guide USAID's implementing partners for safe warehousing, handling, and distribution within the country.

Recommendation #19 (long-term): If FFP would like to highlight food safety, then the best way to accomplish this is to create a new "Food Safety and Quality Assurance" page under the "Food Aid Product Information" section of the website, including the recommended resources listed above and links to USDA/AMS's [Commodity Testing Laboratory](#) and [Grain Inspection Services for Mycotoxins](#). Links to these resources can be found on the "From Other Sources" sheet of the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#). This webpage should also be revised to include updated food safety information as USAID makes it available.

Theme 5. Increase Opportunities for Institutional and Historical Learning

Over the years FFP has funded many successful projects around the world, but many of these past reports are not readily available, causing stakeholders to rely on individuals who have been with FFP and implementing partner organizations for many years for institutional memory. Making past resources more available and prominent will help current and future programs learn from what has already been done and identify best-practices within the country in which they work. The [USAID/FFP Partner Perspectives on Food Aid Formulation, Selection & Distribution](#) report revealed a need for more multisectoral conversation (such as forums for solving challenges shared across disciplines) across stakeholder groups. Respondents in the Partner Perspectives research desired more archival/historical programming information that could inform better decisions and appropriate responses. The report suggested developing a web tool that aggregates comprehensive historical programming information at the country level. For example, for every food assistance program completed, data should be collected and stored sharing the type of assistance used and the lessons learned. FAQR's [The Last Mile of Food Aid Distribution](#) report also exemplified the need for improved partnership harmonization via better communication channels across partners, decision trees to guide action, and circulating information to avoid repeating actions that have caused problems in the past

The [USAID/FFP Food Safety and Quality Assurance Feedback Loop Analysis](#) highlighted a need for more in-country information gathering and reporting back to USAID. Once a product leaves USAID title, little information is known about how it performs. Similar to the archival webtool recommended in the Partner Perspectives report, the Feedback Loop Analysis report suggested developing a database to provide faster, more relevant feedback and timely resolution when challenges arise.

The [USAID/FFP Food Safety & Quality Feedback Loop: A Proposed Questionnaire and Database for Collection of Food Aid Quality Incidents](#) report provided more detail on a proposed, simple questionnaire and spreadsheet. The tools would allow partners to report and USAID and USDA to store, analyze, resolve, and trend incidents. Questionnaire data would be automatically collected in a spreadsheet, allowing for systematic tracking of issues, resolutions, and trends. The result would be a searchable database with institutional memory of food aid incidents, providing an archive for stakeholders to both report incidents and search for corrective action. An additional web-based dashboard for agency and partner use was recommended in the [Improvements to the USAID/FFP Food Basket](#) report, with the goal of improving institutional learning. The tool would be a visual representation of procurement and product use trends. It would allow for regular cross-program reviews of effective product use.

Finally, the [Instructions for Updating USAID/FFP Food Aid Product Description Sheets](#) document also recognized a need for more harmonization in the efforts to improve specifications and commodity reference documents across agencies. The document recommends that agencies use an online sharing platform as an effective way to provide feedback between domestic and international agencies to verify information.

Recommendation #20 (short-term): *Create more opportunities for continued conversation across the supply chain to learn more about product use, successes, and challenges once they leave USAID's title.*

Recommendation #21 (long-term): *Design a webtool that aggregates historical data at the country level, so stakeholders can review programming decisions and lessons learned.*

The review of the current website found that the Baseline Studies for Title II Development Activities were missing from the website. They are not “found under individual country fact sheets pages” in the “Where We Work” section as stated on the “Resources” landing page. These are also not easily found in the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC). These documents could help meet user demands for more information on individual countries and the work that has been done in them.

Recommendation #22 (short-term): *Provide a direct link to the Baseline Studies for Title II Development Activities in the DEC.*

Over the years, USAID has funded initiatives to develop best practices based on scientific studies and the experiences of their implementing partners. The findings of these studies can provide valuable information to current and potential implementing partners. The [FSN Network resource](#)

[library](#) and the [REFINE](#) library maintained by Tufts University/FAQR provide valuable information and tools that are not mentioned on the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages.

Recommendation #23 (short-term): Adds links to the [FSN Network resource library](#) and the [REFINE](#) website with the “Implementation Tools” and the “Partner With Us: Proposal and Legislative Guidance” materials. These could easily be added as related resources. REFINE should also be listed as a related resource on the “Programming & Procurement” page. These resources are listed under the “From Other Sources” sheet in the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#).

The Food Aid Consultative Group (FACG) brings together government agencies, food aid vendors, and USAID’s implementing partners to discuss issues with food aid products and programming in official public meetings that are held every six months. Although summaries of what was discussed in the FACG meetings are included in FFP’s annual reports, there is no dedicated space on the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages to describe the group and its scope or to post meeting agendas. The FSN Network website has a few agendas and meeting announcements, but the information they supply is incomplete, and very few agendas or summaries are posted there.

Recommendation #24 (long-term): The FACG meetings provide a valuable opportunity to bring participants throughout the food aid supply chain together. They should be better advertised and promoted by dedicating space on the webpages to these meetings. Meeting agendas, presentations, and summaries of what was discussed should be included on the webpages.

Theme 6. Improve the Organization of the Food Assistance Resources Webpages

Simple and logical website organization is essential to a positive user experience, while a disorganized and confusing structure is a major barrier to website use for the target audience. When surveyed on the overall ease of website navigation, participant responses varied greatly. Both “somewhat difficult to navigate” and “somewhat easy to navigate” received 30 percent of responses. With the remaining responses split between “very difficult,” “neutral,” and “very easy.” While this direct question received conflicting responses, responses to additional questions relating to website navigation made it clear that website structure is a concern to users. When users were asked to identify concerns, almost 30 percent of respondents reported that information is difficult to find. Write-in responses confirmed difficulty finding resources, with one participant sharing that pages are “difficult to find/poorly organized within and across pages—overall the structure is a bit unclear.”

Users expressed wanting a more organized method for finding popular resources. One respondent shared that finding quality resources is currently more of a cat-and-mouse game than

a systematic process, explaining “I often just Google what I want to find and then stumble upon something that is a new draft, updated guidance, or a good resource.” Some respondents offered solutions to improving access to popular resources, suggesting an additional dashboard for FFP programs and results, a subscription notification system for document updates, and an auto-updating “top downloads” archive page for fast access to popular resources.

Recommendation #25 (long-term): *Create a subscription notification system to inform stakeholders of new or updated resources.*

A number of themes relating to structural issues were also revealed in the qualitative survey responses, including the need for more standardized font sizes, fewer tabs, and clearer labeling in the left-hand navigation menu; and fewer floating links, some of which are broken or outdated. A need for organization was repeatedly mentioned, with text-response concerns stating: “every page is just a bunch of links. And the links take you all over the place, not necessarily where or to what you thought you were going.” One user shared that there are “too many tabs, format is crowded which makes it difficult to read, too many subheadings and too much bolded text makes it difficult to focus.”

Recommendation #26 (short-term): *Provide more contextual information/descriptive text on webpages to help users navigate the provided links.*

Recommendation #27 (short-term): *Create a systematic method and style sheet for webpage fonts, which makes major headers distinct from body text and removes unnecessary bolding, standardizes colors, and overall improves ease of reading/navigation.*

The overall layout of the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages is very good, as is the main structure of the Resources portion of the website. Since this overarching structure works well, it was used as the basis for many of the recommendations. However, there are significant issues with the current organization of the subpages of each section. Many pages are redundant, which clutters the website and requires users to click through extra pages before getting to the material they need, which can be a deterrent to seeking information on the website.

For example, the “Food Aid Product Descriptions” page only provides a list of links to the corresponding page in the *Food Aid Product Information Guide* with no other information given. This is redundant given that the *Food Aid Product Information Guide* is already on the “Food Aid Product Information” page, which is a parent page of the “Food Aid Product Descriptions” page. The “Food Aid Product Descriptions” page just adds another item to the navigation bar without adding substantial content.

Recommendation #28 (long-term): *It would be better to add a list of the commodities within the Food Aid Product Information Guide to the description of the Guide on the “Food Aid Product Information” page (the list could contain the links to the correct page in the Guide) and list the USDA CRDs as a related resource on that page with a short summary of what the CRDs contain. Then the “Food Aid Product Descriptions” page could be removed to help streamline the website.*

Many links to tools and other resources lead to a blank landing page that then contains a link to the PDF or an Excel or Word document to download. In a few cases, the landing page contains a summary of the resource or tool, but for the most part the landing page only contains the title of the document. As with the redundant pages, these clutter up the website without adding useful information. The existence of these landing pages may be due to the way documents are uploaded to the website, but there is no consistency as to whether or not there is a landing page.

Recommendation #29 (short-term): *Use the landing pages to state the purpose of the document or tool. In most cases, the document or tool contains a section that states the purpose and this same section could be presented on the landing page.*

Recommendation #30 (long-term): *Develop a way to upload new tools and documents without the landing page for PDF formats.*

Recommendation #31 (long-term): *For Excel and Word format tools and documents that require downloading before they can be opened, the landing page should contain basic directions on how to use the form or tool, in addition to presenting a short description of the purpose of the tool.*

In some cases, all the needed resources exist, but are spread out across the website or are in an illogical place. A notable example of this is the materials for proposals. The necessary materials are housed under the subpages of the “What We Do” section with links to these pages in the “Partner With Us: Proposal and Legislative Guidance” section, while some tools that could be used when crafting a proposal are in the “Implementation Tools” section. A similar issue exists with tools for implementing partners where the resources are spread out over the “Resources: Implementation Tools” page and the “Partner With Us: Implementation and Reporting” page with no overlap between the resources on the two pages.

Recommendation #32 (long-term): All of the proposal guidance for both emergency and development activities should be available on the same page along with any necessary budget templates. OFDA has an [“Application Guidelines”](#) page that has a table with everything someone would need to submit a proposal (please see the “From Other Sources” sheet of the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#)). FFP should create something similar but also include the most recent annual program statement (APS) and active requests for applications (RFAs). All of the tools we recommend including on this page are on the “What We Do” sheet in the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#).

Recommendation #33 (long-term): All implementation tools and resources, including guidance on reports to FFP, need to be located in the same place. All of the tools we recommend including on this page are on the “Implementation and Reporting” section of the “Partner With Us” sheet and on the “Implementation Tools” sheet of the [USAID/FFP Website Content Map and Resource Database](#).

IV. Conclusions and Next Steps

Three Action Areas

The findings of the review of past FAQR deliverables, the results of the user survey, and the analysis of the current USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages all identified similar issues with the website leading to many overlapping recommendations. The consistency of the issues and potential solutions allow us to make strong conclusions in three action areas: (1) better organize webpages based on user needs; (2) update information regularly; and (3) increase outward-facing communications.

I. Better Organize Webpages based on User Needs

User feedback indicated that the current structure of the website makes it difficult for stakeholders to locate resources that are relevant to them. Users would benefit from webpages that are more intuitively organized and curated around stakeholder needs. Users also felt that there are currently too many tabs and crowded formatting. Suggestions for improving organization include creating a more systematic format for text (i.e., header font size, bold-faced text).

The review of the current USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages revealed some key problems with the organization of the webpages overall and within individual pages. The five major topic areas covered by the current USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages can be used to guide the website redesign:

1. **Proposal Information** includes annual program statements, requests for applications, budget and budget narrative templates, other forms that must be submitted as a part of the application process, and information about how to work with USAID for both emergency and non-emergency programs.
2. **Programming Guidance** includes implementation tools, FFP information bulletins, reports that partners must submit to FFP, FFP program indicators, monitoring and evaluation guidance, environmental regulations, and guidance on surveying beneficiaries.
3. **Product and Procurement Information** includes a list of available products, information on the appropriate time to program each product, information on the major food safety concerns, the nutrient content of the products, and the procurement process.
4. **General Information** includes information on what FFP does, where they work, how many people they have reached, how much money they spend, what Title II food aid is, and the different types of food assistance.
5. **Research, Regulations and Reports** includes information on the legislative framework for FFP programs, agency regulations, research commissioned by FFP to improve products and programs, the FFP strategic framework and other policy documents, and reports from FFP to oversight bodies.

The first three topic areas contain specific technical information and the last two topic areas contain broader information.

When working on reorganizing the website for the merger into the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, there are a few questions that need to be asked when determining the layout. These questions include:

- Is this information already located somewhere on the FFP website?
- Does the information on the page provide more detailed information than on other webpages?
- Can all of the information on one technical topic area (the first three areas outlined above: proposal information, programming guidance, and product and procurement information) be found on a single page?

If the information already exists on another page of the website, then adding that information to the website in another location will not contribute anything to the website and will confuse the user. If the information provides more detail on something that is already mentioned or outlined in another place, then consolidate the information into one location. When organizing and curating the website, try to keep information on one technical topic area in the same place and separate from information on other topic areas.

2. Update Information Regularly

While some users reported a need for revised documents, the primary concern in this category was with missing links. The review of the current USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages also found a number of links that were broken or led to the incorrect resource or webpage. An immediate and simple action area for improving the webpages includes resolving any broken hyperlinks to ensure that they lead users to the correct place. Information within the webpages also needs to be updated to better reflect the recent focus on food safety and the more efficient and effective programming of food aid products. Much of this information already exists on other websites and could easily be pulled into the FFP webpages. Since there are fewer existing food safety resources, many of the recommended additions would need to be created. When a new resource is made available to the public, FFP must decide whether the resource should be posted to the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages. Asking the following questions will help curators determine whether the resource should be added:

- Was the resource created by FFP or was the resource commissioned by FFP?
- Does the resource provide information that a current or potential implementing partner must have in order to submit a proposal and implement a food assistance program? Is it a template they must use or a form or report they must submit?
- Will the resource better educate implementing partners, food aid vendors, and the general public on how FFP works, what FFP has done, how to work with FFP, or what tools FFP makes available?
- Does the resource provide guidance on what FFP considers programming best-practices or help with decision-making?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, then the resource should be included on the USAID/FFP Food Assistance Resources webpages. If the answer is no to all of the questions, then the resource should not be included.

3. Increase Outward-Facing Communications

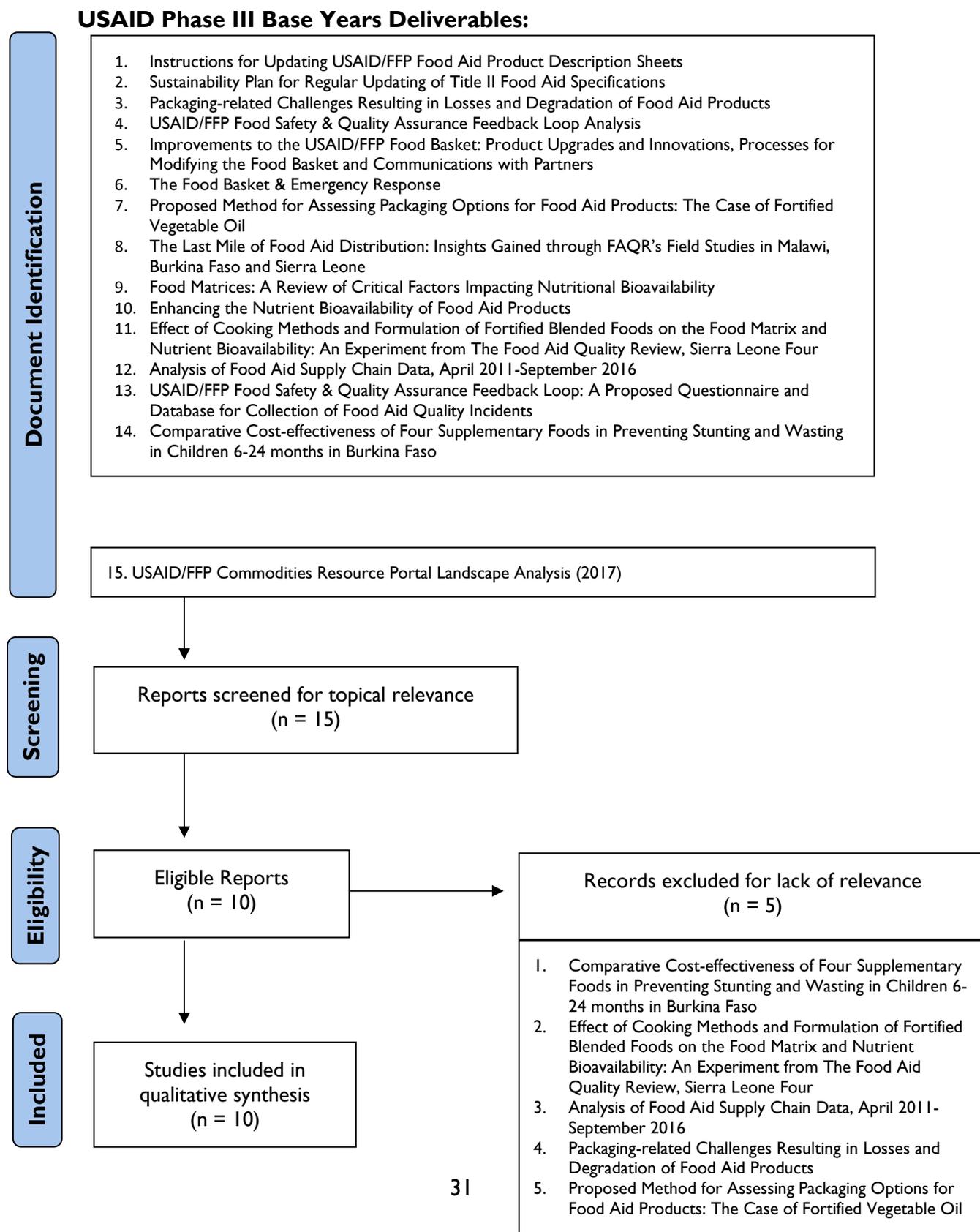
In the user survey, respondents revealed difficulty accessing the webpages unless a link was sent directly through a newsletter or the user knew the keywords to access the resource through a Google search. Users requested a more organized system for finding resources that would be useful to them without having to seek it out. Suggestions for improved communication of new resources included a subscription notification system, a “Homepage Highlights” section that shares new or updated materials, and/or creating a “Top Downloads” page. The survey also indicated that floating links were an issue and suggested adding more guiding text to identify links. The review of the webpages also encountered this issue and recommended always providing a short summary of what the link leads to and to avoid floating links wherever possible. By providing stakeholders with direct notification of new or important resources, they will have better access to the webpages. However, improving the page formatting to include more guiding text will also improve user access to resources by helping them navigate the pages.

Conclusion

The recommendations outlined are meant to provide USAID/FFP with short-term actions to enhance website usability for stakeholders as soon as possible. Additionally, they provide a guide for key considerations as FFP and OFDA combine website pages as part of the BHA to ensure that commodity-related information is easily accessible and up to date. Finally, there needs to be a curator or group of curators to identify, update, and compile this important body of information, tools, and resources to guide programming. It is ever more important as food aid products and requirements continue to evolve, innovations occur, priorities shift, and new modalities come on board in the food assistance arena.

V. Annexes

Annex I. FAQR Report Inclusion Chart

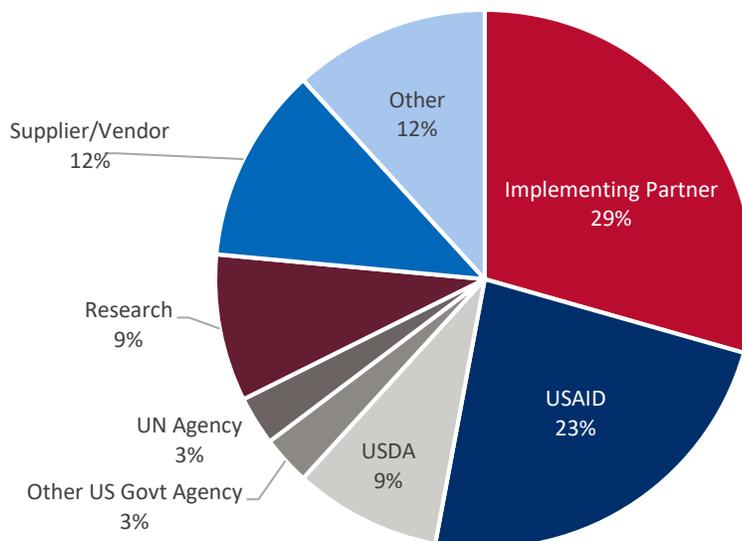


Annex 2: FAQR Final Reports included in Recommendations Review

Enhancing the Nutrient Bioavailability of Food Aid Products	The report reviews how food matrices impact nutrient bioavailability and outlines challenges and opportunities for the effect of nutrients consumed. The report was reviewed for recommendations that relate to improving stakeholder access to food selection and formulation decisions.
The Food Basket & Emergency Response	The report identifies and defines product criteria necessary for fulfilling emergency response needs and discusses updates necessary for emergency programming updates. Recommendations were reviewed for website-related suggestions.
Food Matrices: A Review of Critical Factors Impacting Nutritional Bioavailability	The report discusses how food product formulation must evolve with food science and technology, with respect to nutrient bioavailability and the food matrix. The report was reviewed for recommendations that relate to improving stakeholder access to food selection and formulation decisions.
Improvements to the USAID/FFP Food Basket: Product Upgrades and Innovations, Processes for Modifying the Food Basket and Communications with Partners	The report provides a set of recommendations for improving the USAID/FFP food basket products as well as communicating updates and changes to partners. Recommendations are categorized by data system and tracking recommendations, product approval process recommendations, and suggestions for modifying the product mix.
Instructions for Updating USAID/FFP Food Aid Product Description Sheets	The document includes instructions for making and maintaining the Food Aid Product Description Sheets. It is intended to provide USAID/FFP with guidance on how to create and update the sheets to ensure that they remain current. It was reviewed for recommendations that can inform maintenance of the website at large.
The Last Mile of Food Aid Distribution: Insights Gained through FAQR's Field Studies in Malawi, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone	The report reviews experiences from FAQR's field research to describe challenges that occur during the "last mile" of food aid distribution. The report was reviewed for challenges and recommend solutions relating to coordination and communication that may be addressed via website tools and resources.
Sustainability Plan for Regular Updating of Title II Food Aid Specifications	The guidance document provides USAID/FFP with instructions for working on product specifications and recommendations for updating the specifications. It was reviewed for recommendations and processes for reviewing and improving products, programs, and processes applicable to the webpages.
USAID/FFP Food Safety & Quality Assurance Feedback Loop Analysis & Proposed Questionnaire and Database Reports	The report evaluates existing food safety and quality assurance feedback loops and informs efforts to improve FFP's current FSQA system in the supply chain. The report recommends a modernized and accessible tool and questionnaire and database for capturing and transmitting data. The report was reviewed for recommendations relevant to the website update.

Annex 3. Participant Reported Affiliations and Job Titles

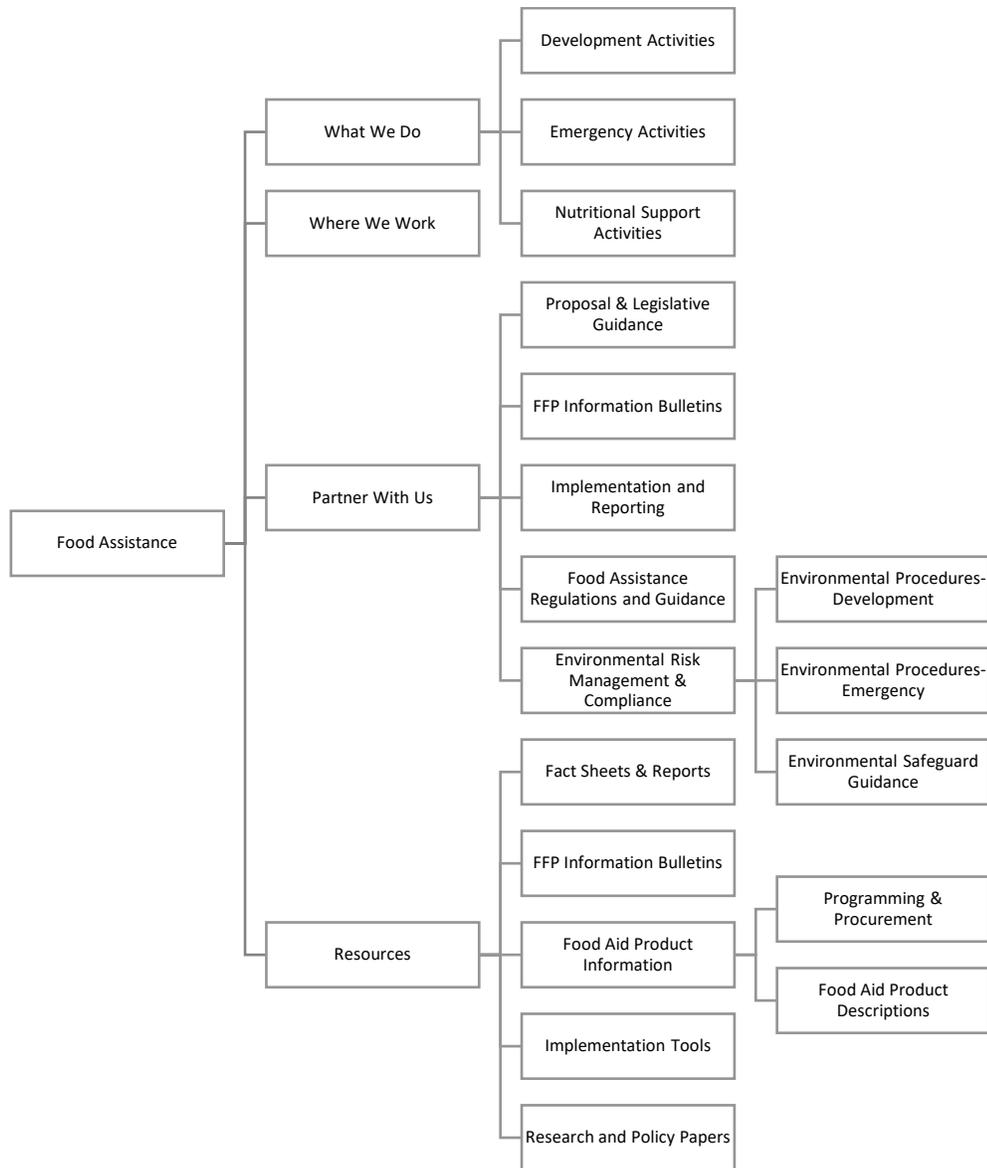
Figure 4. Participant Demographics: Food Assistance Sector



Organizations
ACDI/VOCA
Action Against Hunger USA
Ajinomoto Co Inc
CARE International
Challenge Dairy Products, Inc.
Edesia
Food Aid Quality Review Team/ Tufts University
Food for the Hungry
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
JSI Research and Training Institute
Macfadden
New York Academy of Sciences
Oxfam Intermon
REACH Initiative
USAID or USAID/ FFP
USDA or USDA AMS
WFP
World Vision

Job Titles
Assessment Officer
Assistant Branch Chief (USDA Audit Services)
Branch Chief (USDA Contract Services)
Consultant
Coordinator Global Food Program (CARE)
Data & Technology Specialist
Emergency Operations Specialist
Food for Peace Officer
Food Technologist
General Manager
Humanitarian Donor Advisor
IT
MEAL Manager
Nutrition Advisor/Nutrition Technical Advisor
Nutrition Research and Policy Manager
Project Coordinator/Senior PC
Research Associate
Sales & Operations Planning Manager
Senior Health and Nutrition Technical Advisor
Student
Technical Advisor-Food Security and Livelihoods
Technical Sales Manager

Annex 4. Map of Current Website Layout



Annex 5. Reported Keywords for Finding Resources via Search Engine

Commodity/Commodities
FAQR
Food Aid
Food Assistance
Food Assistance Delivery in [Country X]
Food Distribution
Food for Peace/FFP
Food for Peace + [Resource for Implementing Partner]
Food for Peace + [Specific Commodity]
Food for Peace + [Tool/Procurement/Information Title]
Guidance + [Specific Topic]
Humanitarian
Nutritious Food
RUSF
RUTF
Specification
USAID/USAID FFP

Annex 6. Broken Links as of December 31, 2019

Below is a list of the broken links as of **December 31, 2019**:

Page Name	Issue	Incorrect Material	Correction to be Made
Programming & Procurement	Broken link	“emergency” to https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/food-assistance/programs/emergency-activities	https://www.usaid.gov/food-assistance/what-we-do/emergency-activities
Programming & Procurement	Incorrect link	“USDA National Nutrient Database” to https://www.ars.usda.gov/northeast-area/beltsville-md-bhnrc/beltsville-human-nutrition-research-center/nutrient-data-laboratory/	https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Bulgur*	Incorrect link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/Comm-Operations/procurement-and-sales/export/pdfs/bwsf16.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/bwsf16.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Corn*	Incorrect link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/Comm-Operations/pdf/kcbg11.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/kcbg11.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Corn Soy Blend Plus*	Broken link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/csbp2.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/csbp2.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Cornmeal*	Broken link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/cm6.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/cm6.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Defatted Soy Flour*	Incorrect or out-of-date CRD link	BWSF15 (August 6, 2015): https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/Comm-Operations/procurement-and-sales/export/pdfs/bwsf15.pdf	BWSF16 (July 17, 2017): https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/bwsf16.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Dehydrated Potato Products*	Incorrect or out-of-date CRD link	DPP7 (November 6, 2013): https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/dpp7.pdf	DPP9 (January 14, 2015): https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/dpp9.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Dry Edible Beans*	Incorrect CRD	PL6 (August 10, 2015): https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/Comm-Operations/pdf/pl6.pdf	DEB7 (August 10, 2015): https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/deb7.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Dry Peas*	Broken link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/Comm-Operations/pdf/pl6.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/pl6.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Fortified Milled Rice	Broken link	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID%20Fortified%20Rice%20Specification%20March%202016_508%20compliance_UPDATED.pdf	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID_Fortified_Rice_Specification.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Fortified Vegetable Oil*	Broken link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/Comm-Operations/procurement-and-sales/export/pdfs/vo15.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/vo15.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: High Energy Biscuits	Broken link	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID%20HEB%20Specification%20March%202016_508%20compliance_UPDATED.pdf	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID_HEB_Specification.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Lentils*	Broken link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/Comm-Operations/pdf/pl6.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/pl6.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Milled Rice*	Broken link and out-of-date link	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/Comm-Operations/pdf/MR25A.pdf	MR26 (July 13, 2018): https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/mr26.pdf

Food Aid Product Information Guide: Ready-To-Use Supplementary Food	Broken link	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/document/s/1866/USAID%20RUF%20Single%20Spec%20Final%20Dec%2021%202015.pdf	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID_RUF_Specification.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Ready-To-Use Therapeutic Food	Broken link	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/document/s/1866/USAID%20RUF%20Single%20Spec%20Final%20Dec%2021%202015.pdf	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID_RUF_Specification.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Sorghum*	Broken link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/Comm-Operations/pdf/kcbg11.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/kcbg11.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Soy Protein Ingredients*	Broken link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/vasp4.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/vasp4.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Soybeans*	Broken link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/Comm-Operations/pdf/kcbg11.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/kcbg11.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Soy-Fortified Bulgur*	Broken link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/Comm-Operations/procurement-and-sales/export/pdfs/bwsf16.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/bwsf16.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Soy-Fortified Cornmeal*	Broken link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/Comm-Operations/pdf/sfcm4.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/sfcm4.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Super Cereal Plus	Broken link	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/document/s/1866/USAID%20SCP%20Specification%20March%203%202016_508%20compliance_UPDATED.pdf	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID_SCP_Specification.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Textured Soy Protein*	Broken link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/vasp4.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/vasp4.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Wheat*	Broken link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/Comm-Operations/pdf/kcbg11.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/kcbg11.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Wheat Flour*	Broken link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/Comm-Operations/pdf/wfbf7.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/wfbf7.pdf
Food Aid Product Information Guide: Whey Protein Concentrate*	Broken link	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/ddi2.pdf	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/ddi2.pdf
Food Aid Product Descriptions	Incorrect link	“USDA National Nutrient Database” to https://www.ars.usda.gov/northeast-area/beltsville-md-bhnrc/beltsville-human-nutrition-research-center/nutrient-data-laboratory/	https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/
Food Aid Product Information	Incorrect link	“Resources to Become a USDA Food Vendor” to https://www.ams.usda.gov/	https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food
Food Aid Product Information	Incorrect link	“Resources to Partner with FFP” to https://www.usaid.gov/food-assistance/resources/implementation-tools	https://www.usaid.gov/food-assistance/partner-with-us
*USDA KCCO maintains the CRDs. In 2018, KCCO moved from USDA Farm Service Agency to AMS, so all CRD links should include ams.usda.gov.			