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IMPACT ASSESSMENT DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 1

**IFPRI AND THE ABOLITION OF THE WHEAT FLOUR
RATION SHOPS IN PAKISTAN: A CASE-STUDY ON
POLICYMAKING AND THE USE AND IMPACT OF RESEARCH**

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→ *To maintain confidentiality where necessary, we have used a letter code to identify the interviewee, rather than the actual name.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In February 1987, the Government of Pakistan (GOP) announced its decision to abolish the wheat ration shop system, an institution that in one form or another had existed prior to the birth of modern Pakistan. What started as a food rationing program during World War II in colonial India had degenerated by the 1980s into a wasteful corrupt system that failed to reach the poor, and that was, in the words of a former joint secretary in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, a "monument to institutional corruption" [Interview A]. Though we suspect few in Pakistan would disagree with this statement, why did it take so long for this monument to come tumbling down? Was this simply fortuitous, or was it a well-planned and timed demolition? Our findings suggest that IFPRI research on this issue, commissioned and conducted in Pakistan, played a key role in this historic decision.

A case study of this decision represents one means by which IFPRI can gauge the impact of its work on policy choices.¹ In order to understand IFPRI's contribution to the outcome, this paper looks closely at how the information was produced, communicated, and used in the policymaking process leading to the decision. This analysis can suggest whether, and how, IFPRI's work mattered in the final decision to eliminate the ration shops, and provide lessons about what IFPRI can do to increase both the relevance and impact of its research activities. Understanding how information is used in policymaking at the country-level should also provide valuable insights that can be applied when analyzing the impact of research at the regional or international level (international public goods), a hallmark of IFPRI's research strategy. This case study is also important because it is one of the few attempts to identify a particular body of IFPRI research and trace its use by policymakers in the decisionmaking process.²

In this section, we briefly discuss the reasons for evaluating impact of social science research and some of the issues it raises. In Section II, we discuss the case study approach and why we chose the abolition of wheat ration shops in Pakistan as the topic for this study. In Section III, we describe the conceptual framework of the case study. In Section IV, we provide some background on the wheat economy of Pakistan, which provides a context for discussing the case study in Section V. In Section VI, we analyze the case study and derive some insights from

¹In general, we consider research information has an "impact" on policymaking when policymakers use it to inform their policy choices, even if a direct correlation between research findings and decision cannot be made.

²For other examples, see Adams (1983).

our findings to assist IFPRI in thinking strategically about how to enhance its impact on policymaking. Finally in Section VII, we conclude with some lessons learnt.

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF POLICY RESEARCH

Practitioners of policy research increasingly find themselves in the difficult position of having to justify their research in terms of its impact. The impact of policy research is frustratingly difficult to evaluate as it depends upon the absorption, processing, and use of information ("knowledge") by policymakers. Unlike the transfer of a discrete technology to farmers in the production sciences, policymakers receive information on an issue in many different forms from many different sources. Policy research is only one source of information. However, just as the environment constrains the farmer, so as policymakers constrained in their actions by the larger policy environment in which they operate, including pressure by various interest groups inside and outside the government.

Additionally, although it can often be ascertained how and when production technologies were used, it is often not so easy with policy information. Policy research can be used for multiple, often unforeseen, purposes. It can be used for the specific engineering of a policy decision or the general enlightenment of the user. It may be brandished as a weapon in the policymaking debates of the day, or it may rest on the shelf untouched for a decade without ever being used, then dusted off and employed. All these factors make it very difficult to assess the impact of a piece of policy research in terms of its use, but they also suggest that a variety of approaches and perspectives may be needed to get a handle on how policy research has impact.

Difficult as it may be, there are good reasons for attempting to evaluate the impact of policy research: it provides feedback for improvement of research and outreach programs and ensures their continued relevance; it can instill a sense of worth and achievement in its practitioners; and it provides justification to donors for continued support of the research program (Islam and Wanmali 1996). This last reason is often perceived as the driving force behind impact evaluation, especially as funding for public policy research becomes increasingly scarce.

Assessing the ultimate impact of policy research on the well-being of the poor is a valid and worthwhile objective. However, IFPRI's avenue of influence on these outcomes is primarily through the provision of information to policymakers, and so its impact, is at best, indirect. The yardstick by which IFPRI's *direct* impact can best be measured, in the first instance, is the impact of its research on policymakers, that is the extent to which its research is *used* in decisionmaking

by policymakers concerned about alleviating hunger and poverty.³ To gauge this impact, we first need to better understand *how* IFPRI's research is used by policymakers to make such decisions.

Analysis of a particular example of use of research information by policymakers can provide insights into the questions we have raised. A case study is especially helpful in identifying the multiple socio-political factors that affect the use of information by policymakers. Most important, a case study can tell a story which, once told, may suggest appropriate indicators and methodologies to measure the impact of research on policy choices and outcomes and to help identify leverage points at which IFPRI's research and related activities may have the greatest impact. Yet few case studies of this nature exist, especially with regard to policymaking in developing countries.

II. THE CASE STUDY APPROACH

In this section we describe the specific goals of our case study, why we chose the abolition of the wheat ration shops in Pakistan as the first choice for this study, and our activities in Pakistan. From the point of view of an evaluator, the real-world nature of the case prevents an experimental-control-type evaluation; neither a control group nor a genuine counterfactual can be constructed. Nor can the contribution be precisely quantified, both because of the nature of the contribution and because of the nature of the decision.⁴ Such quantification is not, however, essential to the evaluation. As in comparative historical and political analyzes, a careful examination of the facts surrounding the event can provide an opportunity to see if we can plausibly argue that IFPRI research mattered to the policy decision, and if so, why, how, and to what extent.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CASE STUDY

³Attempting to define and precisely identify "use" is a tricky business, as there are many different "uses" that research information is put to and many different definitions of what constitutes "use." See Garrett and Islam (1997) for further discussions on this.

⁴With respect to nature of the IFPRI's *contribution*, its information was one of many, hard-to-quantify inputs, and the policymaker–researcher interaction was one of many hard-to-quantify factors that contributed to the decision. With respect to the nature of the decision, the direct impact of the research was on the policy debate. As a result of that debate, a decision was made to abolish the ration shops. Which characteristics of that decision, including its effects on the poor and food insecure, can be appropriately quantified is open to discussion.

As Garrett and Islam (1997) note, policymakers tend to refer to an inventory of information built up over time, rather than to a specific report, when they make decisions. A pure and direct translation of research recommendations to policy action is rare. Yet, such a direct translation would be most helpful for illustrating how decisionmakers use knowledge and would make the role of information easier to trace. For a case study, it was important to carefully choose a policy decision and a related piece of IFPRI research that would clearly illustrate the use of information by policymakers. Although policy research may typically have a more diffuse effect on policy decisions than that noted here, the knowledge gained from such a case study can inform methodologies to analyze more typical cases as well. It should also be remembered that our main purpose was to expose the workings of the policymaking process and the movement and transformation of research information through it, not to comprehensively evaluate the impact of IFPRI's activities on policymaking in Pakistan.

WHY DID WE CHOOSE PAKISTAN?

Pakistan was initially chosen as a site for this study because it was a country with which IFPRI had an unusually long affiliation of almost a decade, and in which IFPRI even maintained a field office. Project expenditures during this period were approximately \$6 million, and IFPRI generated a vast amount of research on Pakistan (Farrar 1997). IFPRI's unusually long institutional presence in Pakistan, its close ties with Pakistani policymakers, and the prodigious output over the nine-year period increased the likelihood, even if it did not guarantee, that IFPRI research was used by policymakers.

We spent three weeks in February and March 1997 in Islamabad, Pakistan, conducting the case study, and a related survey on the use of research information by policymakers. Our collaborating institution was the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), an institution with which IFPRI has collaborated in the past. PIDE provided us with logistical and administrative support and, most important, helped guide us in our endeavor to meet with researchers, policymakers, and others involved in the IFPRI-Pakistan Research Program. We also made a presentation to students and faculty and PIDE who provided us with feedback on our proposal.

IDENTIFYING THE CASE STUDY

In Pakistan, we met with Pakistani researchers and policymakers to determine what example of use of IFPRI research we should select as a case study. The abolition of the wheat

ration shops by the Pakistan government in 1987 came up repeatedly as the most memorable and significant instance of use of IFPRI research by policymakers, even though it occurred quite early in the IFPRI-Pakistan collaboration. Although exactly a decade had passed since the flour ration shops were abolished, several of the key researchers, policymakers, and other actors who were involved in this issue were still in Islamabad, and were able to meet with us. A list of all people we met with in connection with the case study (in Pakistan and the U.S.) is shown in Appendix 1.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE CASE STUDY

In this section, we begin by outlining IFPRI's research program cycle. This provides a logical breakdown, by stages, of the research program, and is particularly useful in organizing the findings of the case study. Each stage can be linked to the production, communication, or use of information, which are the key activities we wish to highlight. We briefly describe the policy process and the factors that influence it, finally making connections between information and the policy process.

IFPRI'S RESEARCH PROGRAM CYCLE

IFPRI's research and outreach activities in developing countries generally follow a five-stage research program cycle as shown in Figure 1.⁵ These five stages are: (i) Client Consultation and Research Program Design, (ii) Research Program Implementation, (iii) Communication of Research Results, (iv) Policymaking, and (v) Impact Assessment.

Though the lines separating the different stages are somewhat fluid, the model assumes that there is a logical and chronological progression from one stage to the next.

At stage one, a program for research and outreach activities is devised jointly by IFPRI and its collaborators in a developing country. At stage two, data are collected and processed. At the end of this stage it is expected that there will be a body of completed research that is ready to be converted into a research product and communicated to key policymakers. At stage three, the main goal is to disseminate research findings and facilitate the use of information by

⁵This five-stage model was first proposed in Outreach Division Discussion Paper 7 (Wanmali and Islam 1996). Much of this section draws heavily from this source, and the reader is referred to it for more detailed information. We have made some modifications to the original model in this paper.

policymakers through a communications strategy. During stage four, policymakers actually formulate policy, based at least in part on the research information communicated to them during stages two and three. At stage five, after sufficient time has elapsed for IFPRI's research findings to have achieved their potential impact in the policymaking realm, IFPRI needs to critically assess the impact of that research, even though the actual project itself may be long finished. Both IFPRI outputs and the outcomes of the policy choices made can be evaluated at stage five.⁶

A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING IMPACT

The policy space within which decisions are made, in any country, exists within a larger policy environment. Larger socio-cultural, political, and economic factors determine how environmental actors, such as external interest groups like the World Bank, mold or reshape a particular policy space. Within the policy space there are different interest groups inside and outside the state who are in constant interaction. Their interactions, in turn, define the policy process. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

The research program cycle provides the basis for a framework within which the use of information in the policy process can be identified and analyzed. This framework is shown in Figure 3. Information is largely *produced*, *communicated*, and *used* at stages two, three, and four respectively. At each stage, the key *actors*, *activities* they engage in, and resulting *outputs* can be described. Connections can be drawn between activities related to the production, communication, and use of information, and the policy process, as shown in the lower half of Figure 3. There is an emphasis on information as the essential link between research and policymaking. Information emanating from the research program enters the action channels, or policymaking process, through which decisions are made. At stage four, this culminates in actual policy decisions, which become the basis for impact evaluation at stage five. These three interrelated components of the framework, (i) the *activities*, *actors*, and *outputs*, (ii) the

⁶This case study can be viewed as a partial implementation of stage five with respect to IFPRI-PIDE research on wheat ration shops.

Figure 2- THE 'AMOEBIA' MODEL OF POLICYMAKING

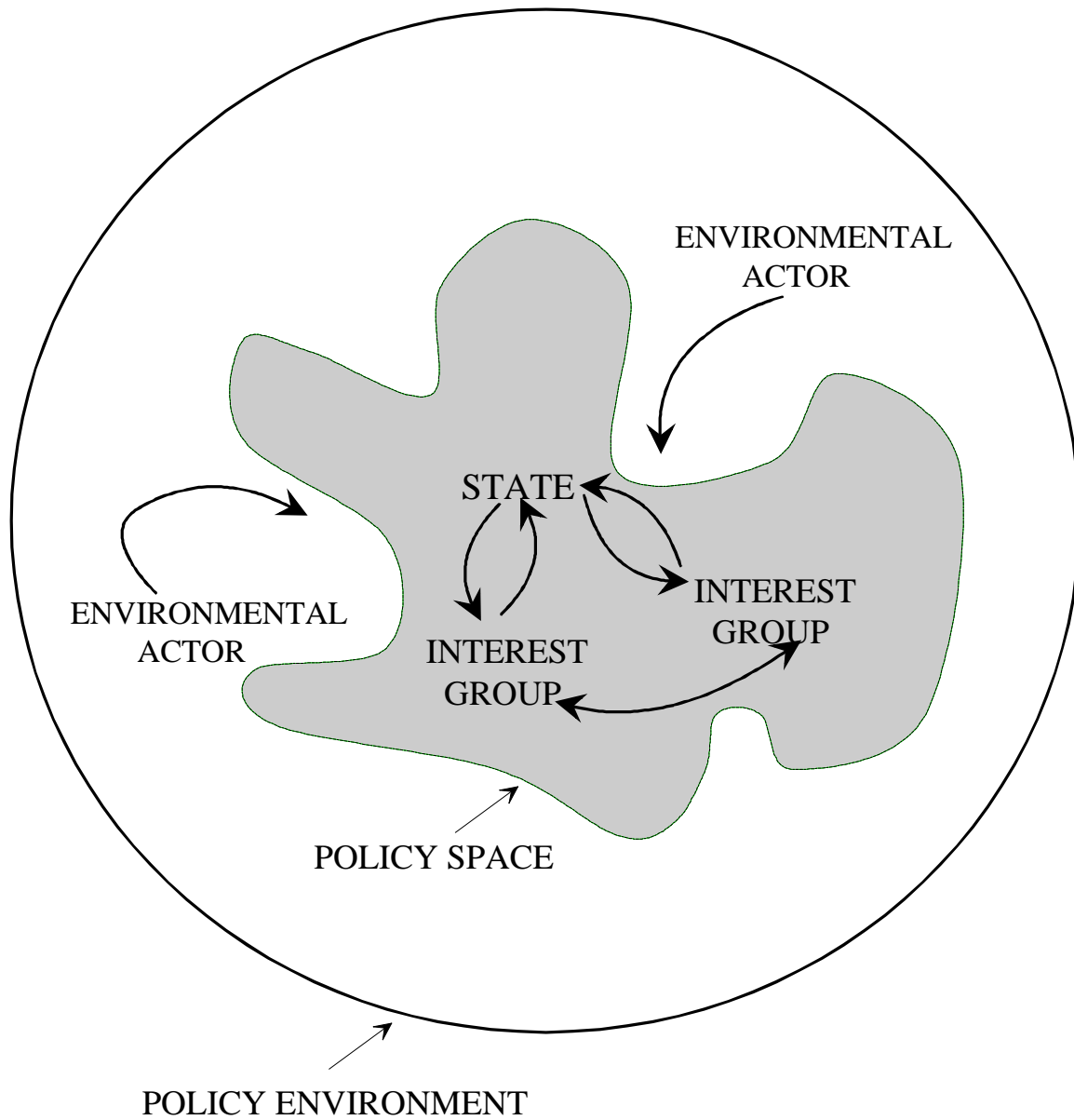
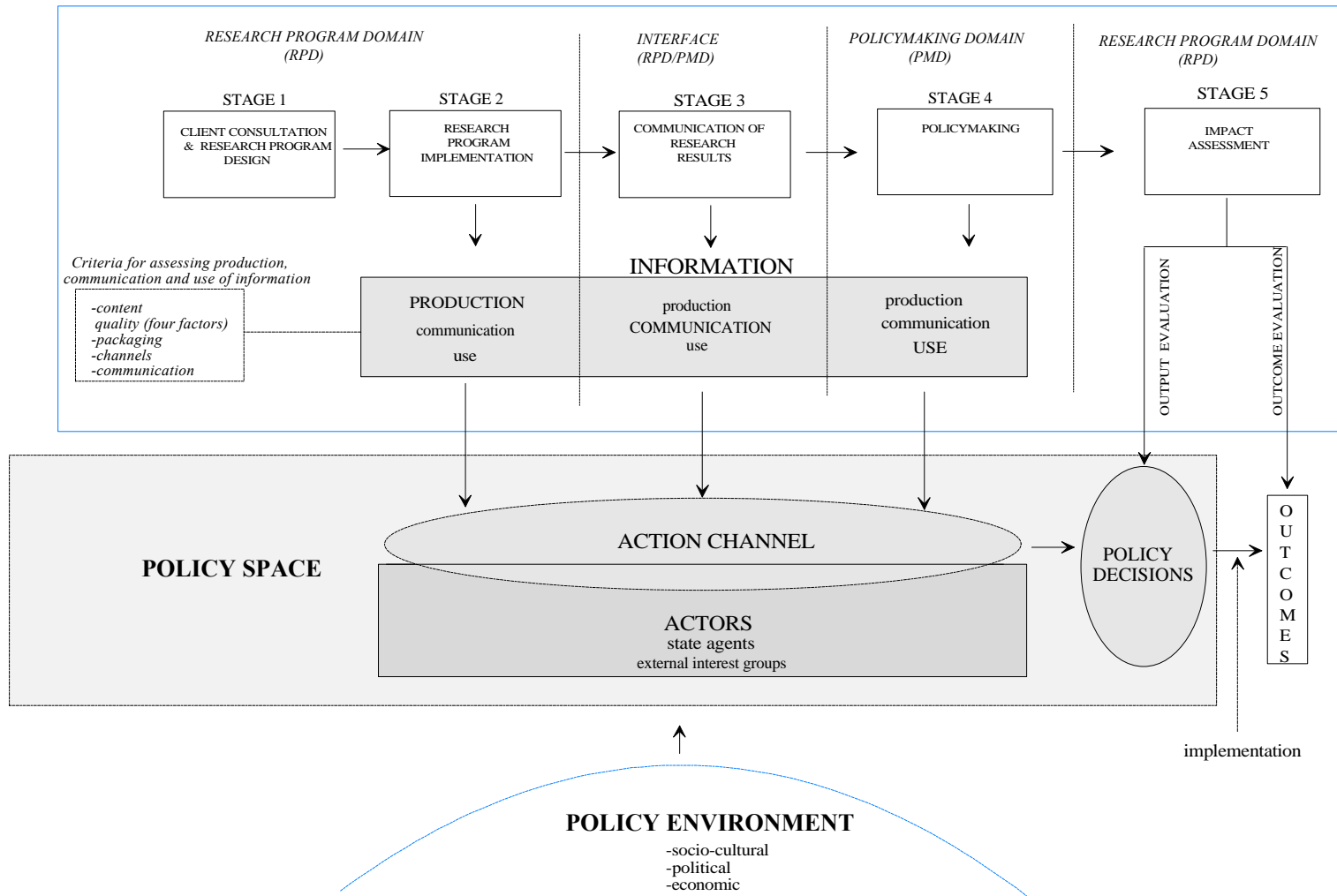


Figure 3-A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSING GENERATION AND USE OF INFORMATION



production, communication, and use of information, and (iii) the larger policy environment and the policy process, provide the conceptual underpinnings of the case study.

In writing the case study, our narrative is driven chronologically by the stages we have described. We also recognize that some activities identified with a particular stage overlap, or take place "out of turn," in a real world setting. We have discussed some of these overlapping activities, not necessarily when they happen, but at points where they serve to illustrate most clearly how information is produced, communicated, and used. Appendix 2 provides further details on the methodology employed for the case study.

Hypotheses and Ideas

The use of research information by developing-country policymakers has seldom been studied. Although the case study does not contain detailed information on all the ideas about the use of information in policymaking presented in an earlier paper (Garrett and Islam 1997), it does provide an opportunity to examine a number of them. Specifically, we can hypothesize that:

1. Policymakers are frequently unable to specify the exact information they need in advance, and so they tend to develop an inventory of information which they can draw upon when needed (Feldman 1989). Research information is thus added to this general inventory without being closely evaluated as to whether it will be able, eventually, to provide context-specific recommendations calibrated to the particular situation at hand.
2. Because a number of individuals participate in and influence policymaking, and because they receive information from a number of different sources, research information influences the policy debate by reaching various audiences with different products through a number of different channels.
3. The characteristics of the research are likely to influence its use by policymakers. Research is more likely to be used if it is of high quality, conforms to the user's expectations, suggests a specific course of action, or challenges existing assumptions or institutional arrangements. Research is also more likely to be used if the solution it proposes is not costly and if it is relevant for resolving a high-priority issue at hand (Weiss 1980). Policymakers are also

more likely to use research if it is readily available when they need it in a format they understand.

4. The characteristics of the policymakers, including their personal attributes and goals, ideological inclination, professional expertise and training, and position in the decisionmaking channel affect their use of the research (Grindle and Thomas 1991).
5. In addition to direct translation of policy findings into specific policy actions, policymakers can "use" research in various ways: to identify problems and suggest policy solutions; to provide context and ideas for understanding a problem; to buttress arguments and decisions, and expand the policy space (Grindle and Thomas 1991; Weiss 1991).
6. Moments of change in the economic, political, or social environment provide "windows of opportunity" for research to be used as the topics on the public agenda change or are given new emphases (Adams 1983; Kingdon 1984).
7. Furthermore, " in times of crisis, there is likely to be strong pressure for reform " (Grindle and Thomas, 1995, 5), which can open the windows of opportunities for change even further.

The use of information by Pakistani policymakers as exemplified by this case study can shed some light on these hypotheses and suggest ways to make IFPRI's work more useful to them.

IV. THE WHEAT ECONOMY OF PAKISTAN

It is important to appreciate the context in which IFPRI began its research on the partial provisioning of wheat. In this section, we describe the wheat economy of Pakistan and highlight the level of government intervention in this sector. This intervention is exemplified by the wheat ration-shop system, the workings and abuses of which will be briefly described.

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN THE WHEAT SECTOR

Because of the importance of wheat, there has been strong government involvement in the wheat sector since the late 1950s. In 1959-60, the government fixed the domestic price for wheat, as it did for other crops, higher than international prices to promote domestic production. During this period, a ban was also placed on inter-provincial wheat trading by the private sector, in order to facilitate government procurement of wheat from surplus production areas. These policies signaled the beginning of more active intervention by provincial and national governments in the agricultural sector, and the wheat sub-sector in particular. Government wheat procurement policies resulted in domestic wheat prices being pushed below international prices by the onset of the 1970s.⁷ In the early 1980s, procurement centers were introduced near farms, and resulted in gradually increasing levels of wheat procurement by the government. In the period 1980-83, for example, on average the government procured more than 25 percent of the wheat produced in Pakistan. Naqvi and Cornelisse (1984, 8) report that this represented "nearly 70 percent of the amount actually marketed." In the mid 1980s, wheat, the most important food crop in Pakistan, covered approximately 35 percent of total cropped area.

Government wheat stocks from 1975/76 to 1979/80 averaged only 486,000 tons while from 1980/81 to 1982/83 they more than tripled to 1,563,000 tons (Cornelisse and Naqvi 1984). These healthy wheat stocks resulted largely from increases in domestic production. With confidence in domestic wheat production bolstered, the government's more complicated and compulsory procurement program was replaced by the late 1980s with a voluntary one (Alderman, Garcia, and Chaudhry 1988).

RATION SHOPS AND THE PARTIAL PROVISIONING OF WHEAT

The partial provisioning, or the system of wheat-rationing, had its origins in the pre-independence statutory ration shops. These shops were set up to provide households with full "rations" of necessities, such as sugar, wheat, tea, yarn, and matches, as a response to shortages during World War II. In 1947, the rationing of commodities other than wheat and sugar was discontinued, heralding the transition of the program into a "poverty-oriented subsidy" (Alderman, 1988, 246). The wheat rationing system, started in the Punjab in the early 1950s, and

⁷The implicit tax on farmers was partially offset by an increase in fertilizer subsidies (Cornelisse and Naqvi 1984).

through which subsidized surplus wheat was provided to consumers during years of poor harvest, was followed some years later by similar systems in the provinces of Sind, NWFP (North-West Frontier Province), and Baluchistan (Cornelisse and Naqvi 1984). During the 1960s, rationing per se was abolished and replaced by the partial provisioning of wheat, through which only a portion of the total wheat flour required by a household was provided. It was expected that households would supplement this by purchases on the open market to meet their needs (Alderman, Chaudhry, and Garcia 1988).

The system worked as follows: The government established a monthly quota of wheat flour per head which was provided at a subsidized price through ration shops to consumers. Ration cards were obtained by household heads from the provincial government food departments in the area where they lived. Alderman, Chaudhry, and Garcia (1988) report that by the mid-1980s, this policy was not strictly followed, and in some regions consumers did not need ration cards to purchase flour.

The ration shops, though privately owned, were licensed by the government, but controlled largely at the provincial level by the food departments. The federal government set prices at which (i) wheat was procured from growers, (ii) released to the flour mills, (iii) sold to the ration shops, and (iv) purchased by consumers. Ration shop owners were restricted to purchasing flour from an assigned mill at the regulated price, with the exact quantity they received determined by the number of ration-card holders registered at their particular shop (Cornelisse and Naqvi 1984; Alderman, Chaudhry, and Garcia 1988).

Abuses of the Ration Shop System

According to Cornelisse and Naqvi (1984), this system of subsidies, involving transactions among a number of agents, provided ample opportunities for corruption. Ration shop owners would often inflate the number of registered ration-shop holders and sell the surplus flour that they received at a higher price on the open market. Consumers were also sometimes charged higher prices by the ration-shop owners than those set by the government. Additionally, the flour was sometimes adulterated or under weighed before being sold to consumers. Consumers, too, were not above taking advantage of the system, for example, by applying for more than one ration-card or inflating the number of family members. Alderman (1988) reports that almost 70 percent of the subsidized wheat released by the government was not drawn by consumers from ration shops or subsidized bakeries. It was beyond the scope of the one-month IFPRI-PIDE

surveys to determine where the leakages took place at the wholesale or retail level, and at which particular point in the complex transactions they were most severe, but these leakages appeared to be symptomatic of institutional corruption of the ration shop system as a whole.

REVISITING THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

As government procurement of wheat increased from the 1960s through the 1970s, so too did the system of wheat flour rationing. By the end of the 1970s, "this heavily subsidized distribution system, fondly built up in the preceding two decades, had become a burden on the government" (Cornelisse and Naqvi 1984, 8). Alderman, Chaudhry, and Garcia (1988) report that during the fiscal years 1974-1985, the Pakistan government spent a combined total of more than Rs. 36 billion on flour subsidies (at 1985 prices), the equivalent of US\$ 2.3 billion dollars.⁸ Between 1973-79, flour subsidies represented 40 percent or more of all subsidies, although from 1979 to 1985, they were never more than 30 percent. Thus, flour subsidies, even though they declined in the 1980s, were a drain on government revenues, and contributed to concern about government subsidies in general.

At the same time, in the political realm, there was also significant broader government interest in deregulation. The Zia-ul-Haq military regime put considerable emphasis on decentralization and denationalization. Furthermore, there was pressure by international actors such as the World Bank and USAID to reduce government intervention in the economy. Along with pressure from international organizations, Pakistani officials, such as Minister of Finance and Planning Mahboob ul-Haq, had helped to convince the military government to reduce government control of the economy [Interview B]. This atmosphere of privatization and liberalization may have led to the derationing of sugar in 1983, even though no formal research on which to base this decision had been undertaken [Interview H].

With a cushion provided by ample stocks of stored wheat, policymakers, concerned about widespread corruption of the ration shops and keen to reduce the government's subsidy costs in an atmosphere of deregulation, felt the time was ripe to reexamine the wheat ration shop system [Interview I]. It was in this context that IFPRI began its research program on the ration shop system in Pakistan.

⁸Rs. 15.93 were equivalent to US\$1.00 in 1985 using the period average of the market exchange rate IMF (1986).

V. FROM CONSULTATION TO POLICY: A STORY IN FOUR STAGES

STAGE ONE: CLIENT CONSULTATION AND RESEARCH PROGRAM DESIGN

The Food Security Management Project

Given Pakistan's geopolitical importance to the U.S. in the early 1980s, as a result of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, USAID maintained a high profile in Pakistan, and was an important source of funding for the Pakistan government. USAID, in line with its prevailing free-market philosophy, pressured the Pakistani government to reduce its control of the economy. It could do this not only through political pressure, but also by funding research that would help convince the government that it was in its best interest to do so [Interview C].

The Food Security Management Project (FSMP) was a USAID funded \$39-million project designed to assist the Government of Pakistan in achieving food security. It was divided into three components, one of which was Economic and Policy Analysis (EPA). The goal of the EPA component was to strengthen analytical capacity in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MINFA), as well as help develop an institutional capacity for making policy decisions (Mangum et al. 1991). The EPA in turn consisted of two principal sub-components: an Economic Analysis Network (EAN) and a Special Studies Program (SSP).

The SSP was charged with addressing two key policy issues on food security over a two-year period: projections of long-term demand for food up to 2000, and food supply management. Under the SSP, the winning contractor would work to carry out a number of research studies in collaboration with MINFA and regional research organizations, and in doing so, help build research capacity in the country. The study of the partial provisioning system of wheat, otherwise known as the wheat rationing system, would be one of the most important studies carried out under the SSP.

USAID invited competitive bids on the SSP, and in "one of its rare successes in competitive procurement," IFPRI was awarded the USAID contract for the SSP in 1985 (Farrar 1997, 36).⁹ This success was most likely due to the fact that IFPRI had recently completed similar work on food subsidies in Egypt. In fact, an independent final evaluation of the FSMP concluded that:

"IFPRI was selected to conduct the special studies [program] because of its prior experience in similar efforts. A major IFPRI study of consumer subsidies and consumption patterns in Egypt was particularly pertinent to the situation in Pakistan" (Mangum et al, 1991, 9)¹⁰.

Additionally, there were USAID officials in the USAID Pakistan office who had previously been posted with USAID in Egypt and who may also have been familiar with IFPRI.

The Key Players

The key IFPRI individuals involved in discussions with USAID and the GOP during this stage were Per Pinstруп-Andersen, director of the Food Consumption and Nutrition Policy Program (FCNPP), and Harold Alderman, a research fellow in FCNPP, who had also been involved in the food subsidy research in Egypt.¹¹ Together, they were responsible for that part of the IFPRI bid for the USAID contract pertaining to the wheat ration system. Once IFPRI was awarded the contract, Alderman became the project task leader. The USAID contract also required a full time IFPRI presence in Pakistan to supervise the project and interact with USAID and GOP on a regular basis. Marito Garcia, also a research fellow in FCNPP, was appointed as IFPRI's resident Chief of Party for this project and posted to Islamabad from January 1995

⁹Other organizations in Pakistan, such as PIDE or the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), may have been capable of carrying out the study on their own, but given their lack of resources and the need felt by some government officials that the study needed to be done by an objective, "outside" institution, a decision was made to contract internationally.

¹⁰According to Farrar (E-mail communication), IFPRI, over a ten year period, had completed a dozen country studies of subsidy issues. A book describing these findings was not published until 1988. Nevertheless, numerous publications (including research reports) had appeared before this.

¹¹The Food Consumption and Nutrition Policy Program became the Food Consumption and Nutrition Division in 1990.

through September 1996. Alderman traveled back and forth to Islamabad from the IFPRI Washington D.C. office.

The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) was selected as the local collaborator for this research program. Mr. Ghaffar Chaudhry, Chief of Research at PIDE, worked with Harold Alderman and Marito Garcia on this project. Zakir Hussain, the USAID-Pakistan officer who coordinated the IFPRI research program, was the main link between IFPRI-PIDE researchers, the USAID office, and MINFA. The institutional collaborator within the Government of Pakistan was to be the Economic Wing of MINFA, headed by A. H. Maan.¹² Maan's office "provided IFPRI with full logistical and administrative support, while allowing IFPRI to maintain its professional independence" [Interview D]. During the project IFPRI did indeed operate quite independently of Maan's office, in an apparently mutually agreeable arrangement. Many government bureaucrats we spoke with believed that IFPRI's credibility was enhanced by being an independent, and thus objective, "outsider."

Although technically IFPRI worked with and under the MINFA, the most influential Pakistani involved in consultation for the focus and design of the research program was undoubtedly Sartaj Aziz, who was a special advisor to the prime minister of Pakistan. Aziz had previously held bureaucratic positions within the government but had most recently returned from a post at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Rome, where he apparently knew of IFPRI's work. Aziz had a reputation for being a dynamic, assertive individual. He was seen primarily as a technically capable, politically astute bureaucrat concerned with making sound policy, not a politician [Interview E]. His international experience gave him additional credibility, and he was also a trusted adviser of the prime minister's. As the USAID project got underway, Aziz highlighted a number of issues that he wanted IFPRI to study, foremost of which was the ration shop issue. Aziz apparently also favored reducing the government's role in the wheat provisioning system, but he had keenly identified the impact on consumers, especially on the poor, as a significant issue (for political and policy reasons) on which he needed more information if the ration shop system were to be modified.

¹²The economic wing was the analytical unit of MINFA. Its membership was drawn from a group of selected economists. There were other similar "groups," such as a "policy group," within the government. These groups were formed of technicians and analysts with similar backgrounds that served similar functions in various ministries.

The Research Question

Actors both inside and outside the state (such as Aziz and USAID) had defined the broad parameters of the research fairly well by the time IFPRI researchers became seriously involved. The policy environment, with its emphasis on privatization and liberalization, encouraged the policymakers to look for ways to reduce government expenditures and interventions in the market. Minimal consultation with IFPRI's clients (GOP and USAID) was necessary to define the broad research question. The project proposal, apparently with Aziz's input, clearly identified the key issue for the researchers:

"It has been argued that many of the poorest families do not benefit from the subsidized rations because they do not have an established residence or they are unaware of how to get a ration card. However, there is little evidence to support or refute this assertion. It has also been hypothesized that the cost effectiveness of the program is perceived by many to be inefficient in reaching the poor, too costly, generally outdated, and suffers from misuse and frauds of various kinds. The GOP is currently considering ways to improve the management of the ration shops or to replace it with some other alternatives. Such considerations should ideally be based on the ramifications of the existing and selected alternative programs" (GOP/USAID 1985).

Research Program Design

To design the research program, IFPRI researchers drew primarily on their own disciplinary perspectives and previous experience, particularly in Egypt. As the proposal noted, some limited information on the ration shops system did exist, even if this was not widely known or available to policymakers. A paper by Khan (1982) was based on a survey undertaken in Rawalpindi, and a more extensive research enterprise by Cornelisse and Naqvi (1984) examined the entire wheat sector. Both are discussed in Box 1. However, neither analyzed the impact of the ration shop system on the food consumption or expenditure patterns of the poor in significant detail. Identification of the gaps in this earlier research may have suggested, then, how IFPRI could shape its work to be especially useful to policymakers, and IFPRI research would refer to and build on this work.

The research would primarily involve collecting data on household expenditures and use of the ration shops from a sample drawn from both rural and urban areas. PIDE was to handle data collection for the household survey in both rural and urban areas, although ultimately it only

worked to help collect data in the urban areas. The research would analyze the ration shop program with an emphasis on the distribution of program benefits among income groups, especially its impact on the food consumption and nutritional status of the poor, and on the cost-effectiveness on the program in improving income distribution and food consumption among the urban and rural poor (GOP/USAID). With the primary clients for the information (Aziz and USAID) anxiously awaiting results, it was this that the IFPRI-PIDE research team set out to do.

STAGE TWO: RESEARCH PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Although IFPRI planned to undertake a full-scale household survey to answer these questions, it was under pressure to provide some quick answers on the ration shop issue. Alderman, through his Urdu language tutor, learned that the Gallup poll organization regularly conducted surveys in Pakistan on a broad range of issues. To quickly obtain some initial information, IFPRI arranged to have Gallup add four questions on the public's perceptions and use of the wheat ration shops to a survey. Two nationwide surveys were conducted by Gallup in 1986, an urban survey in January and a rural survey in April. The results of these surveys provided some baseline data on the availability and use of rations shops that were in line with prevailing perceptions and that were useful in starting a dialogue between IFPRI researchers and Pakistani researchers and policymakers. It also provided some "quick and dirty" estimates that were urgently desired by the GOP, and Aziz in particular.

The Gallup surveys were followed by a more "traditional" in-depth IFPRI-PIDE household survey, in which 998 urban households were surveyed from April to August 1986 (Alderman, Garcia, and Chaudhry 1988). Chaudhry was primarily responsible for data collection. He organized a survey team of about eight enumerators, who were trained in Lahore, and supervised them during data collection. To facilitate this, IFPRI brought in 6 IBM personal computers to enter and process survey data. IFPRI also trained local staff in data entry and the use of the statistical package SPSS, which considerably speeded up the process.

Alderman and Garcia were largely responsible for analyzing the survey results and writing the report. Although survey information was available from late 1986, it is notable the final report, entitled "Household Food Security in Pakistan: The Ration Shop System," was not published as an IFPRI working paper until May 1988, more than a year after the decision to abolish the wheat ration shops had been made.

What were the main findings of the IFPRI report? Most important was a quantitative estimate of the failure of the program to ensure that the subsidized wheat reached the intended users. The report states that "while 3.1 million tons of subsidized wheat were released by MINFA in 1985/86, between 64 and 72 percent of the wheat was not drawn by consumers" (Alderman, Chaudhry, and Garcia 1988, 64). While the ration shops were more heavily used by low-income groups, there had been a decline in use since 1977. In 1986 only 5 percent of the rural population and 19 percent of the urban population used the ration shops. These findings, though more specific, confirmed what previous research studies had found.

STAGE THREE: COMMUNICATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

Communication of the research results to policymakers began well before the final IFPRI report was released in May 1988. Preliminary findings from the Gallup surveys were shared with Pakistan collaborators as early as June 1986, and further meetings were held to discuss results of the IFPRI-PIDE survey as they became available¹³. The key collaborators at this point were Aziz (GOP), Hussain (USAID), and Inam ul-Haq, the joint secretary of Food in MINFA, and second only to the secretary of Agriculture.

Aziz was keen to see the preliminary findings, and in the words of one person connected to the project, "showed an interest in this work that was unique " [Interview F]. Garcia recalls that he sent Aziz and Hussain , tables and analyses, "as they literally came out of our computers" (E-mail communication). These initial findings discussed the utilization of the rations shops and leakages from them and were presented as brief memos with simple tabulations. Garcia also met regularly with Hussain, and presented quarterly reports to USAID. Hussain in turn, would incorporate these tabulations into preliminary reports, and send them out to people in MINFA and elsewhere for information and comments.

¹³Garcia notes that the introduction of high speed computers enabled the rapid processing of survey results, within 30 days of the last survey interview.

Inam ul-Haq was the main channel of substantive policy discussions and research findings to the GOP. Over the course of the next few months, he would work closely with Aziz in drawing up MINFA's policy statement and recommendations regarding the ration shops, which will be discussed in the next section. PIDE's annual meetings in 1986 also provided a forum for disseminating some of the initial tabulations, as well as related findings from other IFPRI research to a wider audience. As a result of the ensuing discussions, Garcia and Alderman received plenty of feedback and found themselves involved in the policy dialogue on derationing that was taking place. Though they were open to providing partial findings from the research before the analysis was complete, but he was less willing to make specific policy recommendations at such an early stage. USAID was pushing for a clear-cut statement of conclusions, especially regarding the leakage and corruption in the system, and an outline of specific policy options for the government. USAID wanted to use the information to convince government of the need to eliminate the ration shops. Still, they needed data to justify their recommendations, data that IFPRI research was providing. Aziz himself

BOX 1: What were the findings of previous studies on the wheat ration shops?

The 1982 study by Riaz Ahmad Khan, entitled "Food Distribution in Pakistan," looked at the functioning of the ration card in the city of Rawalpindi. Khan was the first social science researcher at the then relatively new Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC). He was asked by an international agency to organize a forum on food issues in Pakistan and decided to contribute a paper on the wheat ration shops. Khan's interest was triggered by the observation that his servant (who had a ration-card) could withdraw unlimited amounts of flour from the ration shop, but that a poor worker he had temporarily employed, who lived in a tent and didn't have a street address, could not withdraw any. His study argued for a reduction in rationing in urban areas because the subsidy benefitted higher income groups. This study also alluded to earlier research in 1976 that described how ration card holders as well as depot owners "cheat the system." His paper was presented at the forum, where the Egyptian experience with food subsidies was highlighted, and was also distributed to other researchers and ministries of the GOP.

The 1984 study by Peter Cornelisse and Syed Naqvi, entitled "The Anatomy of the Wheat Market in Pakistan," gave an overview of the wheat production and distribution system. It was a more detailed academic enterprise, yet it also found that the ration shop system was abused by both consumers and sellers of wheat. The authors called for the redesign of the ration shop system so that it could selectively and effectively serve the needs of the poorest consumers who depended on it.

remained particularly concerned about the impact of derationing on the poor. Government offices and USAID also asked the IFPRI-PIDE team to develop scenarios for different levels of the government wheat subsidy, with their implications for the government budget and the impact on the poor. Early conclusions reached were that ration shops were poorly managed, that corruption was rampant, and that most of the subsidized wheat did not reach its intended users. The full results would later provide quantitative data to support these claims.

In responding to these demands, Garcia became an ambassador of sorts, shuttling between the various agencies and ministries with initial research findings in the form of tabulations. In essence, much of this activity can be viewed as an informal information dissemination campaign run on the basis of tables, conveyed to numerous people through preliminary reports, seminars, and personal briefings. Garcia's presence on the ground ensured continuity of dialogue and flow of information, and was punctuated by the visits of larger IFPRI teams from Washington. In this way, information was provided not only to the Prime Minister's Office (via Aziz), MINFA (via ul-Haq), and USAID (via Hussain), but to other key players who could further disseminate the findings and also influence the policy process, including the Ministry of Planning and Finance. Given the multiple channels of communication and the pre-existing demand for the information, the research findings probably reached most of the key policymakers involved in agricultural policymaking in Pakistan by the time the final analysis was complete in late 1986.

STAGE 4: POLICYMAKING

The Summary Paper

In Pakistan, the lead ministry on a particular policy issue to be put before the cabinet was responsible for preparing a summary paper, with additional input and review from other affected agencies. Along with endorsements or criticisms from these agencies, these summaries went directly to the cabinet for a decision. They were, in essence, an action-memo, which in four to five pages provided the necessary background on the issue and a series of policy recommendations.¹⁴ In late 1986, Rafiq Akhund, secretary of food and agriculture since 1983, asked joint secretary Inam-ul-Haq to prepare such a summary paper on the wheat ration shop issue. Akhund, a farmer with a background in finance, had long been persuaded of the need for

¹⁴The summary papers occasionally went first to the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet, chaired by the Minister of Finance. Although it is not clear, it seems that the summary paper on the wheat ration shops went straight to the cabinet.

reform of the wheat provisioning system. He was convinced of the corruption in the wheat ration shops and the burden it placed on the government budget as well as on farmers, who at times would have to sell their crop to the government for less than the world-market price.

During the three months in late 1986 and early 1987 that it took to prepare this summary paper, ul-Haq was in close contact with Aziz, Hussain, and the IFPRI team. Aziz worked closely with ul-Haq, continuing to explore options and to revise the summary to better reflect how consumers would be affected by the elimination of the ration shops. Aziz apparently updated and strengthened the points he wished to make as IFPRI data became available, making numerous revisions. Nevertheless, it was ul-Haq who provided the technical leadership in framing the cabinet paper and who was the main user of IFPRI research findings [Interview J].

However, there were other sources of information that the policymakers had access to in preparing this summary, other than IFPRI-PIDE. The role that these might have played in shaping the summary are discussed in Box 2. In trying to evaluate the impact of such studies, we had few ways of directly assessing their "use," other than references to them in subsequent research and participants' recollections of actually reading and using them, which may be subject to error. Furthermore, as Weiss (1977) points out, pieces of information tend to seep into the mind of policymakers, uncatalogued and without citation, so "users" may not remember or even know where the information came from. As we were unable to obtain a copy of the summary, we also don't know whether these studies were directly quoted or used in the formulation of the summary. No decisionmaker we spoke to, however, recalled seeing or using these studies, although they were quite aware of the IFPRI research. Consequently, we believe that the direct impact of the Khan and the Cornelisse and Naqvi studies was minimal, though they played an important role in framing the problem and providing background information that the IFPRI-PIDE research could build upon.

Other key ministries prepared complementary reports, some of which may have been absorbed into the final summary paper. The Minister of Finance, Mohammed Tariq Siddiqui, discussed the costs, and savings, of various options to the government. He also advocated an increase in salary for low-level government employees who might be hurt by derationing. Moiid Aftab, deputy secretary in the Auditor General's office, also reviewed and added some paragraphs to the summary.

In late 1986, Akhund was transferred to the Ministry of Finance, periodic transfers being common for government civil servants. He was replaced by Fateh Khan Bandial, a former Chief

Secretary of both Punjab and NWFP. Upon his arrival, Bandial encountered a political climate that favored derationing, and Aziz was dealing directly with Inam-ul-Haq in preparing the summary for the cabinet. Still, as secretary of agriculture, the summary required his signature. Although concerned about the impact of derationing on the poor, Bandial, along with others in the government, was especially worried that the loss of government control over the wheat production and distribution system could cause a famine. Because of his lack of background in food and agriculture issues, Bandial looked to Inam-ul-Haq, who favored derationing, for advice. Ultimately Bandial decided to approve the summary recommending abolition of the ration shops. In early 1987, the summary was ready to be signed. Since Bandial at this time was unwell and on leave, the acting secretary, Muzzafar Ahmed, actually signed the summary, which was then forwarded to the Minister of Agriculture.

Derationing: Problems and Prospects

The concerns expressed by Aziz, Bandial, Siddiqi, and others reflected those of many in the government and policymaking realm. Winning over key players in the policymaking process and countering potential political reaction meant responding to a number of concerns. The summary and decision were carefully crafted to allay these fears, directly through Aziz and also through the contributions of key ministries. What were the major concerns? First, many worried that eliminating the ration shops would hurt consumers, which might lead to unrest, especially in urban

areas. Among these consumers were a large number of low-level government employees,

How valid were these concerns? On the first issue, press reports continually decried the corruption in the system, dampening the perceived validity of consumer and ration-shop owner protests. The possibility of protest could not be ruled out, but it seemed unlikely. Furthermore, in a finding that appeared to have special resonance among cabinet members, IFPRI-PIDE research highlighted the enormous leakages away from poor consumers that were occurring and the minimal impact that the subsidy had for them, and that few consumers relied on the ration shops for their needs. The Ministry of Finance reports also outlined the potentially large savings for the government if it abolished the system, in itself an attractive proposition.

On the second issue, the IFPRI-PIDE research, however, found that the "hardship claims" of the ration-shop owners were exaggerated, as most ration shops operated on a part-time basis and

sold other items besides rationed flour, which accounted for their profits. It also appeared that the number of registered ration shops was overstated (Alderman, Garcia, and Chaudhry 1988).¹⁵

¹⁵The press claimed that there were over 100,000 ration shop owners, while official government records indicated that there were 40,000 (Alderman 1988).

Furthermore, given the widespread corruption in the system, ration-shop owners received little sympathy from policymakers and, it seems, the public, and were not perceived as a major threat.

On the third issue, government policymakers had doubts about whether the private sector

BOX 2: What sources of information were used in preparing the cabinet summary paper ?

Inam-ul-Haq reported that he relied on his own previous studies from the early 1980s on the corruption in the storage system (there were large differences in reported and actual wheat storage levels) and discrepancies between the census and the numbers of ration-card holders (the number of ration cards exceeded the population as given by the census in some localities). The two other critical studies were the ones by Khan and Cornelisse and Naqvi (see Box 1). Khan recalls that he received a request for his paper by MINFA sometime during this period. He noted that his paper had already been sent out about two years before to all the relevant ministries. "When the government starts thinking, it takes at least two years to do the thinking," he joked. Khan believes that "something extraordinary" must have happened that led to the placement of the ration shops on the policy agenda, and he recalls extensive press coverage of the issue. However, he was not called in to discuss his paper, nor was he informed before the official announcement that the ration shops had been abolished. Khan, however, notes that at this time, he was serving with the Agricultural Prices Commission (APC), and engaged in other issues. Furthermore the APC was seldom involved in decisions related to subsidies, which could partially explain why he was not notified.

If, by focusing only on ration shops in Rawalpindi, Khan's research was too limited, Cornelisse and Naqvi's research, which examined the wheat sector as a whole, was perhaps too broad, thus limiting the appeal of both these studies to policymakers at the time. Cornelisse and Naqvi's book was probably available to both government and USAID officials, but with its recommendations buried in the back and its somewhat academic orientation, it does not seem to have made much of an impression on them, or the policymakers we spoke with.

Although both studies pointed out the demerits of the ration shop system and suggested how it could be improved, neither directly advocated the dismantling of the system, though this might have been seen as a logical next step. But with their limitations, the studies were not a sufficient basis for a decision to abolish the wheat ration shops. Nor, so far as we can tell, did their authors follow up their analyses either verbally or in writing, other than Khan's distribution of his own paper to the relevant ministries. Although not used directly in policymaking, they did inform IFPRI's own research on the issue and Khan's work at least attracted the attention of the GOP. Perhaps the most significant factor explaining the lack of direct "use" of these studies was that they were both a little ahead of their time. Khan's research, for example, caused few ripples when first released, and was virtually ignored until it was later requested by MINFA. If anything, Khan's research could be seen as pointing the way for a more in-depth countrywide study on the wheat ration shops, one that IFPRI would eventually undertake.

could handle wheat flour marketing. Would the system collapse? Would the private sector take advantage of the lack of government intervention to hoard supplies, to create artificial scarcities, and raise prices? That was a subject that the available research did not address, but the recent experience with elimination of sugar subsidies four years earlier, may have assuaged policymakers. Some had argued then that sugar would become scarce and prices would increase if the government withdrew from the marketing system, but instead the prices fell, and the government was able to save what it had previously spent on sugar provisioning. Both government and consumers realized the benefits from privatization. Although wheat was a politically more sensitive crop, sugar derationing provided a successful model that the government could refer to as it considered the derationing of wheat [Interview G]. General fears of famine were perhaps unwarranted, given that there were significant wheat stocks held by the government that could be mobilized to ward off any impending scarcities.

The Abolition of the Wheat Ration Shops

Much thought and time had gone into preparing the summary and the main issues of concern had been exhaustively discussed. The months of hard work and rigorous paid off, leading to the concurrence of the different ministries consulted, including the the key ministries of Agriculture and Finance. Aziz, who was special advisor to Prime Minister, Mohammed Khan Junejo, had apparently also received Junejo's support which was critical to the outcome. When the summary was presented to the cabinet in early February, the stage had already been set for its endorsement by the highest decisionmaking body in the land.

Confronted with figures detailing corruption in the system, and data and arguments indicating that abolishing the ration shops would not significantly harm the poor or lead to riots, the cabinet endorsed the elimination of the ration shop system. On February 9, 1987, the government announced that from April 15, 1987, the wheat ration shops, the subject of much controversy for years, would finally be discontinued.

Simultaneously, the government announced three critical, related decisions to make the decision more politically acceptable. First, to address concerns about potential wheat scarcities and famine, the government decided it would release unlimited quantities of wheat at one fixed

price of Rs 2000 per ton, and remove all restrictions on the movement of this wheat¹⁶. This was less than its prevailing "open market" wheat price of Rs. 2600. By releasing wheat at a price *lower* than the market price, the government would in effect provide a general wheat subsidy so that market prices would fall by the time derationing took effect, as indeed they generally did (Alderman, Chaudhry, and Garcia 1988).

Second, to respond partially to fears of consumer unrest, on April 1, 1987, the government would increase the salaries of low-ranking government employees to compensate for the loss of lower-priced, rationed wheat flour. The fall in the open-market price for flour, which was of a higher quality, further benefitted government employees, and their opposition was minimal.

Third, in what could be characterized as a pre-emptive strike, the government announced that it would provide loans of up to Rs 25,000 to help ration shop owners convert their ration shops into fair price shops where they could still sell wheat with a small mark up above the release price. Nevertheless, the most vociferous reaction to the government's announcement before derationing was to take place came from the ration-shop owners, who continued to insist that they would lose their means of a livelihood. The association of ration-shop owners wrote letters to the MINFA, and at one point, even marched to the Ministry of Agriculture to protest. Both actions were largely ignored by the government. The tide had turned against the ration shop owners, and they had insufficient political power to evoke a response. Ahmed recalls that the ration shop owners "went on shouting for the next couple of years," but to no avail.

Those who had predicted riots in the streets of Karachi, as had taken place in Egypt, whether by consumers, ration-shop owners, or government workers, were proved wrong. The wheat ration shops were a controversial and politically volatile issue and sensitivity and care were paramount in dealing with it. The government appears to have handled the task well and had taken careful steps to address different facets of the problem. As Alderman (1988) noted, "the absence of a significant popular reaction to derationing is noteworthy. It may be attributed both to characteristics of the ration system and to deliberate measures taken by the government to minimize adverse reaction" (Alderman, 1988, 251).

¹⁶Under the previous system, some wheat was released to mills at Rs. 1703 per ton (Alderman, Chaudhry, and Garcia 1988).

EPILOGUE

Was this an unequivocally happy ending to this story? Not quite. It should be noted that though the government abolished the wheat ration shops, it in essence replaced an inefficient and poorly targeted subsidy program with two classes of wheat with a general subsidy on the open-market price of wheat. Derationing, therefore, transformed the subsidy "from unauthorized rents or benefits accruing to upstream administrators and mill owners to a general consumer surplus. This was achieved, however, at the cost of a loss of benefits to those families, chiefly low-income, who did in fact use the system" (Alderman, Garcia, and Chaudhry 1988, 22-23). The IFPRI-PIDE study, however, showed these losses to be relatively small. In 1986, only 19 percent of the urban population and 5 percent of the rural population purchased ration flour. Abolition of the wheat flour ration shops, it was projected, would increase the cost of living for the poorest third of urban ration shop users by less than 2 percent (Alderman, Garcia, and Chaudhry 1988). In conjunction with the new policies, abolition of the wheat flour ration shops was estimated to save the government only 20 percent of the wheat subsidy bill, after accounting for wage hikes and the cost of interprovincial transport, handling, and storage of wheat. While the savings were "not inconsequential, it may be less than the advocates of derationing expected" (Alderman, Garcia, and Chaudhry 1988, 22).

Alderman, Garcia, and Chaudhry (1988, 66) feared that any attempt to provide subsidized wheat flour to those households most affected by the policy decisions would result in an "unplanned return to a de facto ration system...." Instead, they suggested that the best way to reach those households would be through targeted poverty programs and health programs, both lacking in Pakistan, that were likely to provide more long-term benefits¹⁷. We are not aware that these suggestions were ever acted upon, and this issue merits further investigation.

VI. ANALYSIS OF THE CASE STUDY

The ways in which information gets used to make policy, and the policymaking process itself, are complex, even when it appears that the problem to be fixed is relatively straightforward. In this case, it was apparent that the ration shops were wasteful, corrupt and of

¹⁷Similar generalized conclusions on the merits of targeted subsidies had also been reached by other IFPRI studies on food subsidies.

little real benefit to the majority of the poor, yet nothing was actually done about this for years. Why did it take so long to address the problem? What were the circumstances that led to this issue finally being placed on the policymakers agenda? How did policymakers and other key actors use information to guide their decisions and influence others? What role did research play in the decision? This section attempts to answer these questions by analyzing the case study using the analytical framework described in Section II. We then conclude in Section VII, by deriving some lessons learnt from this case study that can be instructive to IFPRI in thinking strategically about how to enhance its impact.

THE RESEARCH PROGRAM CYCLE AND THE PRODUCTION, COMMUNICATION, AND USE OF INFORMATION

The stages of IFPRI's research program cycle are intimately tied to the production, communication, and use of information. We will briefly describe each stage in turn, and attempt to highlight these linkages.

Stage One: Client Consultation and Research Program Design

First of all, why was IFPRI, at stage one, awarded the contract for the SSP? First, IFPRI, as an international organization, was perceived as more objective than many of the Pakistani research institutes. The final evaluation of the FSMP reports that under the SSP, "independent research isolated from daily crises would facilitate more consistent and rational policy decision-making" (Mangum et al. 1991). Second, IFPRI was seen as an institute that did "good research" and that had the necessary expertise to undertake the survey-based quantitative research that was required. PIDE, at the time, was seen by some as somewhat "closed" and without the necessary resources to do such a study [Interview F]. PARC was still a relatively new entity, and the economic wing of MINFA apparently did not have sufficient analytical capacity, and was itself being strengthened under a different component of the FSMP (Mangum et al. 1991). Third, IFPRI had relevant and recent research experience on food subsidies in Egypt, which further enhanced its credibility. Fourth, both Aziz, and certain USAID officials, were familiar with IFPRI's work in Egypt, and perhaps elsewhere, which may have worked in IFPRI's favor.

IFPRI's presence in Pakistan beginning from stage one was generally marked by close collaboration between IFPRI researchers and Pakistani researchers and policymakers, within the parameters of research as previously determined by the clients.

Stage Two: Research Program Implementation

The focused nature of the research enterprise and the timeliness of the issue resulted in completion of stage two in about one year. Critical to this, was IFPRI's introduction of powerful computers for data entry and analysis, which were used in the field and which allowed for more efficient data cleaning and analysis in Islamabad.

What was also unusual about IFPRI's approach in this project was its use of Gallup polls to get some initial rough estimates to describe the issue and answer policymakers' questions. This proved to be valuable in initiating a dialogue with Pakistani counterparts. By the time more complete research results from more "traditional" surveys were available, the channels of communication between researchers and policymakers were already established and operational. The "tone" of policy discussions based on the Gallup findings had also been set; there were no surprises to come.

Though researchers can be reluctant to share incomplete or preliminary research findings, the GOP and USAID pressed for the IFPRI-PIDE team to do so. Even as the research was being conducted, initial results were being shared with key Pakistani researchers and policymakers. Findings were not delivered in the form of formatted and finished products but as memos and tabulations. The actual final product, a working paper on food subsidies, was not completed until after two years later, long after the decision had been made. By the time stage two formally ended, the basic facts on the ration shops were known and had already been widely communicated to policymakers. Stages two and three thus overlapped significantly.

Stage Three: Communication of Research Results

Notably, there was no formally designed strategy to communicate research results to policymakers and other key actors. This is not to say dissemination of the findings was *ad hoc*, but much of it was informal, and relied heavily on a network of contacts. Nevertheless, it was extremely effective. What were some of the reasons for its success?

1. First, it was predicated in part on the close collaboration of IFPRI researchers with their host country counterparts right from the start. Crucial to this was the full-time presence of an IFPRI researcher as Chief of Party in Islamabad.

2. Second, given the currency of the topic, the timeliness of the research, and the ownership of the project by the government, there was no need to spend time figuring out how to attract the attention of the policymakers; IFPRI already had an audience for its research information. As Mangum et al. (1991, 15) note, " this component [SSP] had access to policy-makers at the highest levels and was able to present materials in a format that led to policy decisions in some cases, and to reasoned debate in others."

3. Third, the IFPRI-PIDE team had built good relationships with three key actors, each representing a different set of stakeholders: Zakir Hussain from USAID, Inam ul-Haq from MINFA, and Sartaj Aziz from the Prime Minister's Office. Not only did they ensure that the research information was communicated to other key players in their own offices but to other relevant organizations or ministries as well. By having multiple channels through which information could be communicated, it was unlikely that any key players would be left out. Furthermore, each actor had an underlying commitment to the project as a whole, but at particular stages would utilize his respective skills and abilities to advance the process. Having a key advocate at each stage, thus ensured a successful outcome; Zakir Hussain facilitated the production and communication of information at stages two and three; Inam-ul-Haq, a senior bureaucrat, was a primary user of the information and subsequently communicated the findings to policymakers during Stage three; and Sartaj Aziz was an influential advisor to those who held true decisionmaking authority, thus playing a key role at all stages, but particularly stages one, three and four.

Stage Four: Policymaking

At stage four, it was the GOP that was now responsible for using the information communicated by IFPRI-PIDE both for a "reasoned debate" and resulting "policy decisions." Both the key actors involved in the formulation of the all-important summary paper, ul-Haq and Aziz, had established effective communication channels with Garcia and Alderman, who in turn had met with a large number of government bureaucrats, researchers, and policymakers, throughout the earlier stages. The summary brief relied on the findings of the IFPRI-PIDE research, and the IFPRI-PIDE surveys were apparently cited as a source of data, on the basis of which policy recommendations were made [Interview J]

THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT AND THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS

The Policy Space

The policy environment in Pakistan was conducive to both the research program and related policy debate on derationing. Without such a favorable policy space, successful implementation of a research program and effective communication and use of findings in policymaking would have been difficult. Internal and external groups were pressuring the government to reduce control of the economy and government expenditures. There was a general belief that the wheat ration shop system was inefficient and corrupt, and that "something needed to be done" about it. Coupled with these factors, healthy stocks of wheat and a favorable outlook for future production fostered a climate in which to explore alternatives to the wheat ration shops.

The Key Decisionmakers

The nature of the issue at hand largely determines who participates in the decisionmaking process. In this case, the key players came from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, notably ul-Haq, the Ministry of Finance, and the Prime Minister's office. Aziz, who was among the most senior policymakers, was favorably disposed toward reviewing and potentially abolishing the ration shops.

Within the action-channel, or decisionmaking process, Aziz was a high-level advocate for change. Once he arrived at his post, he pushed hard for an examination of the wheat ration-shop issue, and then shepherded the policy issue through the policy process for a final decision by the cabinet. Using his position as a confidante of the Prime Minister, he furthered his arguments using available research information. This required, of course, a network of linkages between researchers, policymakers, and government agencies. The collaborative nature of the IFPRI-PIDE research program, involving extremely competent and well-trained individuals from the Ministry of Finance, MINFA, IFPRI, PIDE, and USAID, helped forge these links. Yet without a forceful advocate like Aziz at the helm, it is not clear if research on ration shops would ever have been conducted, or if the decision to abolish the ration shops would have subsequently been made.

Aziz clearly used research information to support his arguments and convince others of the need for institutional reform, and relied on ul-Haq to provide him with the technical backing. Information by itself, however, does not change the institutional or personal perspectives that drive a player's actions in the policy process. Any of the participants in the process could have

used their position or power to stifle, sidetrack, or oppose debate, if the research findings didn't conform to their own strongly-held beliefs or expectations. The apparent lack of political infighting, seems to indicate that there was a consensus among key policymakers, and that they agreed on the research findings and the implied policy action.

External Interest Groups

The press was particularly active in calling attention to the issue, but the general public, who as the research confirmed hardly benefitted from the ration shops, showed little interest [Interview J]. Ration-shop owners made up the only relatively organized interest group that vocally opposed a critical examination of the ration shop system, but they did not prove to be particularly influential. Note that the day-to-day handling of flour took place at the provincial level, and although ration-shop owners may have enjoyed some power at this level, it did not amount to a large political voice at the federal level. If there were other similar interest groups with vested interests in maintaining the system, they were either a small minority or kept silent. The cabinet's own analysis also apparently identified interest groups that would react negatively to the decision, and the announcement to abolish the ration shops made special provisions for them. Interestingly, USAID, along with the World Bank, had a role in affecting the general policy environment, but it also had a role as a concerned interest group with direct involvement in the decision.

Lastly, given that Pakistan was under the Zia-ul-Haq military regime, greater effort may have been required by policymakers to convince politicians and other politically appointed bureaucrats *within* the government of the need to deration. However, such a regime might easily have stifled voices of protest *outside* the government and thus also eased implementation of the policy decisions once taken.

THE USE OF RESEARCH INFORMATION

This case study provides a number of insights into the hypotheses about the use of information by policymakers presented earlier.

1. The research inquiry on ration shops was clearly demand-driven and, as such, was relatively focused. Consequently, although IFPRI research did not specifically spell out the possible effects of all policy options in the same way as an action-memo would, it did contribute

insights specific to the situation at hand rather than simply provide general information. Its focus on an issue of special interest to policymakers at that time increased the possibility that it would be used in policymaking.

Nevertheless, the idea that policymakers draw on an inventory of information still seems valid. Previous research on ration shops did exist, though subsequently superseded by the IFPRI-PIDE study. Although perhaps not used at the time of production, those reports did serve as an inventory of information on which policymakers and researchers could draw. In fact, one can argue that the summary and actual policy decision, the ultimate expressions of "use," did rely on an inventory, an array of information, coupled with personal observations and political and economic considerations.

Even the initial presentation of the information was not of a single report or finding. Rather, IFPRI information was presented to a number of audiences in a fragmented way that built up a description and a case for abolition of the ration shops over time. Instead of relying on a single "IFPRI report," policymakers relied on an entire series of interactions with IFPRI researchers and IFPRI data to help them form their decisions. The implication of this observation for impact assessment is that, once again, the determination of attribution of a policy decision to a specific piece of information is exceedingly difficult because there are, in fact, many pieces of information from many different sources that are being used as inputs into the policy decision. Furthermore, the actual visible "output" that represents the "impact" of the information—in this case, the summary statement and the policy decision—itself obscures the sources and the considerations that went into the decision and tells little about how the various bits of information actually affected the outcome. An attempt to quantitatively correlate inputs and outputs in this situation, then, would likely be hopelessly imprecise.

In contrast to the assumption that policymakers may not know ahead of time what information they need, in this case policymakers were able to be fairly specific and, in return, IFPRI was able to present fairly context-specific information. The validity of this assumption, then, appears to revolve around the level of detail that is needed, the resources available, and the urgency of the issue. Here, the IFPRI team had sufficient resources and was flexible enough to provide requested information in a short amount of time. Also, although policymakers were pushing for results, there was no crisis requiring immediate action. Policymakers were able to interact with researchers to shape the research question to answer their questions and to make a decision only after they received those answers.

The case study highlights the fact that the same research can be used in a specific case as well as for general information. For example, IFPRI's research likely is geared toward demands of a specific client, so the recommendations are calibrated to a particular situation. But the later dissemination of these findings, such as the IFPRI working paper on the ration shops, go beyond the initial client and are added to the general inventory of knowledge of other policymakers in other similar situations. In evaluating the impact of policy research, delays in the use of information resulting from policymakers' needs to look to knowledge that has been "consolidated" or "built up" over time should be taken into account. Trying to correlate policy research to contemporaneous policy change in such instances, would be misleading.

2. Production of information that could be used as a basis for policy decisions, rather than effecting policy change per se, seems to have been the principal goal of IFPRI's work, yet policy change can be viewed as the ultimate goal and a primary indicator of impact. And policy change comes about through the interactions of not just one but a number of players in the policy process. IFPRI's "strategy" to effect policy change (implicit in its communication of results) seems to have taken this into account. Although it is hard to state the influence that IFPRI's information had on each of the players, IFPRI relayed its information to many of them.

The relatively simple messages that were taken up by the policymakers were that the system was corrupt and that abolition of the ration shops would not significantly harm poor consumers. As a communication strategist might suggest, as a way of increasing impact, these messages were conveyed repeatedly over time to key audiences in a number of ways: written briefs, verbal briefings, interactions in seminars, and the press.

3. Interviews suggested that the same characteristics that Weiss (1980) identified as increasing the usefulness of research for policymakers were at work here. Policymakers and other players paid attention to the research because it came from a respected research organization whose "product" they trusted, both in terms of its objectivity and its adherence to the accepted canons of research; it confirmed their own expectations and experiences with the ration shop system; it highlighted a course of action, which would even save the government money; and it challenged an existing institutional arrangement. Perhaps unusual in this case is that all of these characteristics came together in one instance, and their convergence probably contributed to a heightened prospect for use of IFPRI's research information.

4. The characteristics of those receiving the advice do seem to have been as important as those who gave it. In this case, those in key positions to affect the policy decision had personal and institutional commitments that increased their disposition toward the use of IFPRI's findings.

Sartaj Aziz, in this case, played a decisive role. He was a player in position to make things happen, and did. He put the issue of ration shops squarely on the policy agenda, and his almost single-minded goal was to arrive at a decision on the ration shops in short order. His commitment to sound policies that favored the public interest, rather than narrow political aims; his technical understanding of the research; and his familiarity with researchers, and IFPRI in particular, suggest he was especially receptive to research information.

Other key players shared the idea that the ration-shop system should be reformed. USAID had an ideological bent toward reducing government involvement in markets, and had the financial and political resources to back up its position. Bandial and Inam-ul-Haq were keenly aware of the corruption in the system and its potential negative impact on farmers. As civil servants with backgrounds in agriculture working for the MINFA, which had an institutional mission to promote and protect agriculture, they were receptive to data that supported the need for reform.

5. Players in the policy process put IFPRI research to many interlinked uses, in the ways suggested by Weiss (1991). However, at this stage, IFPRI research was used more to corroborate existing, but limited, research on the ration shops and provide specific data on the basis of which to formulate policies, rather than to identify a problem. Previous experiences and research had already done that.

IFPRI-PIDE research, however, was important because it provided comprehensive, quantitative evidence that supported and justified existing perceptions of the system. This data enhanced the background information that policymakers already had, filling in gaps and rounding out the context so that policymakers could more completely, and confidently, understand the extent of the problem and their options, including the potential impact of change on key interest groups. Interviews with participants in the policy process suggested that the evidence on the amount of leakage and the potential impact of derationing on the poor was especially useful. This information effectively expanded the policy space in which the primary players (Aziz, USAID, and MINFA) could act by convincing other actors of the need for reform and reducing their potential opposition to abolition of the ration shops.

6. Although perhaps we cannot identify any stark "moment of change" in the economic, political, or social environment, a number of different factors did converge to create a unique "window of opportunity" for policymakers to take action and for research to influence the course of events.

The ration shops had persisted because Pakistan had been able to support their cost through the government budget and because wheat and bread were such important commodities. The original food emergencies had long since passed, and the subsidies were consuming a large portion of government expenditures. External institutions, such as the World Bank and USAID, were now questioning their purpose. With the arrival of Sartaj Aziz and the new USAID project, the question of whether to reform the ration shops came to the fore. The positive experience with the derationing of sugar and the availability of wheat stocks reduced the government's concerns with abolishing the ration shops, although the government maintained some controls over production and distribution through regulations for marketing and milling.

This created the environment for research, but the personalities of the players were important as well. Aziz and ul-Haq were in favor of reforming the system and were receptive to research; the IFPRI-PIDE team was able to produce high-quality information on short notice and to convey it well. These factors outside and inside the government had converged to place reform of the ration shops at the top of the public agenda, but if IFPRI-PIDE research had not been available, and if IFPRI-PIDE researchers had not been quick enough to respond to policymakers' concerns, researchers could have lost a chance to introduce their findings into the policy debate.

Moments of change do matter, and researchers must be aware of them. They must, however, also acknowledge that they may do the research but then have to wait for the "moment" to occur. Khan and Cornelisse and Naqvi, for example, had done important work that ultimately informed the decision, but because the policymakers were not yet ready to take action when their studies appeared, the studies were not "used" immediately. An evaluator of the impact of social science research must be especially attuned to the frequent delays involved between when research is done and when research is used, and researchers must constantly look ahead to prepare research to take advantage of these "moment of change."

THE ROLE OF IFPRI

More difficult to answer is the counterfactual question: If IFPRI had not undertaken this research, would the decision to abolish the wheat ration shops have been made? We have already established that (i) Pakistani policymakers wanted further research on the ration shops in order to guide their decision; (ii) IFPRI was seen as having the credibility, skills, experience, and objectivity to do the required research, and (iii) IFPRI-PIDE research adequately met the information needs of Pakistani policymakers.

IFPRI research was thus a key input in the decision to abolish the wheat ration shops, and one could thus conceive of IFPRI's role as a catalyst that helped resolve the problem. As the independent evaluation of the FSMP concluded, IFPRI "contributed to a 1987 GOP decision to terminate this means [wheat ration shops] of distribution" (Mangum et al, 1991, 15). Without a substantial body of evidence to show that the wheat ration shops were indeed wasteful and corrupt, and that they failed to significantly benefit the poor, it seems unlikely that pressure from the press alone would have been enough to somehow dismantle this institution, especially under a military regime. By, adding to the findings of previous studies, the IFPRI-PIDE research was the final "nail in the coffin"[Interview H]. It provided to policymakers, a clear, quantified justification for eliminating the ration shops and came from a reputable research organization.

Without IFPRI-PIDE research, it is of course possible that the decision to dismantle the wheat ration shops would eventually have been made, as this seemed to be the general inclination of policymakers. However, it is unlikely that the proposal would have had as relatively smooth a passage as it did through the choppy waters of policymaking. Aziz and others might actually have had to use extensive political capital, weakening their position in later debates, if they did not have the IFPRI-PIDE research at hand.

But it was not information alone that resulted in change. The policy space had shifted enough to allow a long enduring institution to be scrutinized in a harsher light. A moment of change created a window of opportunity, a relatively brief and critical period to act, during which the policy environment, players, and information all favored a singular resolution of the key issue. IFPRI rose to the challenge by making the necessary research information available to policymakers when they needed it. As one government bureaucrat told us, "if the decision had to be taken today it would be quite different" [Interview I]. We do not know how different the outcome might have been, but without the IFPRI-PIDE research, the wheat ration shops may well have persisted to this day under a different guise.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

LESSONS LEARNED

The wheat ration shop abolition is a rare example of direct policy impact that policy research organizations would like to achieve. That many policymakers were already open to, or even advocating, abolition of the wheat ration shops prior to IFPRI's arrival, and that IFPRI found itself in the prime position of conducting timely research for which there was already an audience, does not detract from the relevance and necessity of the type of research IFPRI was asked to do. Admittedly, this was an unusual case, and unlike most instances of IFPRI impact on policymaking in Pakistan which appear to be less direct, more diffuse, and of a lower profile. Nevertheless, success is never automatically guaranteed. What are some factors that contributed to success and insights can be derived that will increase the likelihood of future success?

1. *"Useful " research exhibits certain key characteristics.* The case study anecdotally confirms our suppositions, noted earlier, that certain characteristics of research enhance its usefulness to policymakers. In this case, the following attributes stand out: (i) research dealt with a high priority issue, (ii) research conformed to policymakers' expectations, (iii) research findings were consistent with previous research, (iv) research provided needed quantitative data, (v) research challenged existing institutional arrangements, and (vi) research was objective and of good quality.

2. *Effectiveness of research program implementation may be improved by the use of non-traditional methodologies or context-specific innovations.* IFPRI's use of the Gallup polls was a non-traditional method of getting some "quick and dirty" estimates that would guide a more formal research survey. The use of computers in the field, and the development of a data entry program specifically for this project, considerably speeded up the process of data entry, validation, and analysis. The benefits of this were to be fully realized in stages three and four. Getting the research completed "on time", was especially critical given the "window of opportunity" for change at the policymaking level.

3. *To have impact, "useful" research must be communicated effectively to those who are in a position to use it.* IFPRI's credibility ensured that its research would be well received, but the effective communication of that research to policymakers, or to those who had access to them, was just as vital to ensure that it would be used. The nature of "use" will vary, depending on the particular needs of policymakers. Only through close collaboration throughout all stages of the research program cycle will IFPRI researchers be able to put their finger on the pulse of the types of research information that policymakers need to make effective policies and how best to convey it. An awareness of the policy environment, as much as of policymakers, is also necessary to provide the context in which to determine how best to collect data and extract and analyze the information desired by policymakers. As demonstrated here, communication of initial findings can be important to initiate a dialogue, to adapt reports of information to policymaker needs, and to build productive working relationships with local counterparts. This type of responsiveness can pave the way for increased impact of information further down the road.

4. *Research information must be targeted to all influential audiences.* Policy decisions are not usually made by one person but by several, each of whom brings different perspectives to the table. Research information needs to be communicated to each of these audiences, and adapted to their needs both in terms of content and format. In this case, besides Aziz, researchers had to communicate with officials at USAID, MINFA, and the Ministry of Finance as well as the press. All of them saw a different "face" of the issue and had different technical backgrounds through which they would view and understand the issue. IFPRI-PIDE researchers had to take these differences into account as they communicated the research findings to them.

5. *Building relationships with influential actors is important.* Researchers need to build relationships with researchers, bureaucrats, policymakers, opinion leaders, and even journalists, who are in positions to positively influence the policy environment or policy process, beginning with stage one. For example, without a direct relationship with Aziz, right from the start, IFPRI's impact may have been considerably lessened down the line at the policymaking level. A key component of a strategy to increase the impact of policy research is thus to first identify critical issues and key players (and positions) at each stage of the process, including bureaucrats and technical analysts who support the policymakers, and then keep these actors informed and

engaged throughout the research program cycle. As we noted, Hussain, ul-Haq, and Aziz played distinctive, yet crucial roles, at each of the four stages in this instance.

Also, as actors can change between the time consultations are initiated and decisions are taken, forging relationships with departments and institutions, not just individuals, is crucial; regardless of changes in personnel, issues and governments remain. Although some actors change, others remain to inform incoming actors about the issue and the available "stock of knowledge." Promoting broader "awareness" of the research, thus allows it to permeate the policy process to greater effect, not only because this helps compensate for lacunae resulting from changes in personnel, but because a variety of actors influence this process, and receive information from a number of sources, including both outside researchers and their own staffs.

6. *Researchers need to have strong communications skills and be comfortable interacting not only with fellow researchers, but with policymakers, NGOs, and the press.* Researchers cannot rely on passive dissemination of their research findings to bring about change. Some level of advocacy and active communication of the findings is essential to getting the message across. Simply publishing a final report or journal article is a poor means of having impact in a developing country. For example, in this case, were we to judge IFPRI's impact by the publication date of the final working paper, we would incorrectly conclude that IFPRI's impact was negligible and that the research was completed and delivered a little too late. As this case study illustrates, pro-active communication of the research findings prior to their publication resulted in significant impact, which had little to do with the final publication of the research. This also suggests that IFPRI should carefully consider how much emphasis it places on the publication of reports and articles as indicators of impact, or as measures of a successful research program.

Most of these insights pertain to the communication of research information by policymakers and its use in the policy process, the primary focus of this paper, rather than how the decisions then made effect the economy, government expenditures, or the poor. Though the consultative process of stage one is of interest, the client --the host country government-- had already decided what its research priorities were. The decision to conduct a research study on a particular topic had already been made, and IFPRI was asked to do it. IFPRI appears, in this case, to have done its job well and satisfied its clients. The evidence for this comes not from a detailed analysis of the working paper produced or a dissection of the research methodology

employed, but from the observation that the IFPRI-PIDE research was used directly by policymakers and helped shape the final policy decision.

To some extent, each research program has a "personality" of its own, determined by the research and policymaking domains, the members of the research team and their interaction. Further research programs in Pakistan under the aegis of USAID differed markedly in this respect, and can provide examples of success, and indeed, failure. Each research program has a unique story to tell, and different lessons may emerge from similar case studies. By reconstructing stories of both successes and failures we will be able to derive further insights into the complexities of research program implementation and policymaking. Furthermore, through such an endeavor, policy research organizations such as IFPRI will be in a better position to propose appropriate indicators for the impact of social science research and learn to recognize the hallmarks of a successful policy research program.

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTACTS

The following is a list of people that we communicated with, or interviewed, in connection with the case study. We met more than once with many of the people listed.

Pakistan

1. Muzaffar Ahmed (former secretary of agriculture, GOP), Public Services Commission, GOP
2. Zafar Altaf, member, Planning Commission, Government of Pakistan (GOP)
3. M. Ghaffar Chaudhry, joint director, PIDE
4. Inam ul-Haq, former joint secretary for food, MINFA, GOP
5. Zakir Hussain, cotton commissioner, Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MINFA), GOP
6. Riaz Ahmed Khan former chief, social science division, Pakistan Agricultural Research Council(PARC)
7. A. H. Maan, director general, economic wing, MINFA, GOP
8. Akhter Mahmood, former secretary of statistical office, GOP
9. Amir Mohammed (former secretary of agriculture, GOP), head of Asianics Agro-Dev International.
10. Safraz Khan Qureshi, director, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE)
11. Nargis Sultana, World Bank

USA

12. Richard Adams, IFPRI
13. Harold Alderman, The World Bank
14. Curt Farrar, IFPRI
15. Marito Garcia, The World Bank
15. Sohail Malik
16. Ruth Meinzen-Dick, IFPRI

We also attempted to meet with others, such as Sartaj Aziz , who were unavailable during the time we were in Pakistan.

APPENDIX 2: CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

The case study used semi-structured interviews and a review of available documents to understand the policy process and the use of information.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

We were interested in how policymakers used information in making the decision to abolish the flour ration system in 1987. Below is the questionnaire that we used during the case study interviews. There are four main sections, though not all questions were posed to all those interviewed. Instead, the questionnaire was adapted to the person being interviewed depending on the particular role that they played.

USE OF INFORMATION BY POLICYMAKERS AND FLOUR DERATIONING IN PAKISTAN

1. History of the Decision

-Describe the decision announced in February 1987. When was that decision made? How was it modified, if at all, before its announcement?

-Relative to other general issues of government attention at the time, how important was the issue of flour rationing?

-What were the principal factors (political, socio-economic, informational, financial) that led the government to consider derationing flour and eliminating the ration shop system in late 1986 / early 1987, rather than some other time?

-Were there any particular individuals or institutions who were pushing the government to consider the flour rationing issue at that time? Why?

-What previous analysis had been done, or decisions made regarding the ration system? How had they affected the development of the issue? When were these done, or these decisions made?

2. Research Program Cycle

One could classify questions on production, communications, and use of information according to a roughly chronological process of research and outreach.

Stage One: Client Consultation and Research Program Design

-What led to the choice of IFPRI to conduct the Special Studies Program of the Food Security Management Program funded by USAID?

-What led to the ration shop issue being placed on the research agenda of that program?

Stage Two: Research Program Implementation

-Who were the primary collaborators for the research program? What were the collaborative arrangements?

-What were the main activities conducted to gather the needed information and carry out the research?

-Who conducted these activities?

-What were the main outputs (related to the ration system issue)?

Stage Three: Communication of Research Results

-What were the main products (research products) from research that were provided to policymakers or other actors in the policy process? (INVENTORY OF PRODUCTS)

-How were these products communicated to policymakers? What channels and formats were used to deliver the research findings to policymakers (formal and informal)?

-Who was responsible for identifying who would receive the information, and how? How were the individuals or institutions who received the information identified?

-Who received the information, in what format, and through what channels?
(Inventory of Audience)

-What primary message did each disseminated product convey to the decisionmakers?

-Were the products provided only in response to specific requests or were they generally distributed (general mailings, mass media, for example)?

Stage Four: Policymaking

-Describe the decisionmaking process leading up to the decision to abolish the ration system and its announcement in February 1987. (The process can include formal and informal structures and consultations.)

-What individuals and institutions participated in this process at key points in time? (Individuals and institutions include donors and external interest groups, such as ration shop owners and government bureaucrats.)

-What formal structures and informal understandings determined who would be involved in the decisionmaking process?

- For those individuals and institutions who participated in the process, what were their primary concerns as they thought about the issue? What were their short- and long-term objectives? What were their perceptions of feasible policy options?

-What actions did they take to promote their points of view? What concerns motivated their actions? How successful were they in achieving their points of view? Why? (Here consider sources of influence, including financial, political, economic, technical advantages.)

-Did the individuals and institutions involved change over time? If so, how did this effect the decisionmaking process and the policy outcome?

-What external interest groups were involved in or tried to influence the decision (e.g., ration shop owners, low-level government bureaucrats)?

3. Sources and Use of Information

-What sources of information were available to the actors? What sources did they use in debates or in coming to a decision?

-How did the actors acquire their information on the issue, from research or other sources? How was information communicated to them (via what channels, in what forms, from what organizations?)?

-What were the key points made by each different source of information? Did the information the actors have address their primary concerns?

-What were the characteristics of that information (i.e., did it provide background, data on the scope and consequences of the problem, specific recommendations, link research to feasible policy options, etc.)?

-How, and to what extent, did they use the information in making their arguments and coming to a decision (as ideas, data, or argument? for “enlightenment” or “engineering”)?

-Did the actors use certain sources of information over others? What factors or characteristics of the information led them to do so (research quality, reputation of research organization, action-orientation, etc.)?

-How did the policy outcome relate to the recommendations, if any, of the studies? In the end, what role did research-based information play in shaping the policy outcome? How did its influence relate to the power (and characteristics) of those who used it, such as their receptivity to the usefulness of research?

-Were there further studies done after the August 1986 IFPRI-PIDE study? What was their purpose? How did further ideas, objections, modifications filter into the decision process and affect the final decisions announced in February 1987?

4. The Role of IFPRI-PIDE Research

-What was the role or importance of information provided by the IFPRI-PIDE team in affecting the final outcome?

-What was IFPRI's role or importance relative to that of other available information and sources of information?

-If the IFPRI-PIDE information had not existed, would a decision have been made anyway? How might the decision have changed?

-If IFPRI hadn't done the research, would it have been done anyway by someone else?

-If IFPRI hadn't done the research, would the decision have been made at that time? Could it have been postponed? With what consequences?

THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT

The larger policy environment also needed to be understood and described, as did the more restricted policy space pertaining to food and agricultural policy. A broad understanding of both the policy environment and policy space was developed through general discussions with researchers and policymakers. Numerous indirect questions on this topic were also embedded in the sections described above. By pursuing these different lines of enquiry, a composite picture of the policymaking context emerged.

REVIEW OF PRINTED MATERIALS

In addition to interviews, reviewing documents and other printed materials related to the project, was generally helpful. In many instances, project documentation was poor but where it existed, it gave a "behind the scenes" perspective of the project. The summary decision of the cabinet was in government archives and unavailable to us. Research papers pertaining to the policy decision being studied were reviewed, as these existed in the IFPRI and PIDE libraries.

PROBLEMS

Because of the time that had elapsed, many individuals involved in the wheat ration shops decision could not recall some of the exact detail. Given that a decade had elapsed since the research was completed, government documentation on the ration shops was unavailable.

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Figure 1-IFPRI'S RESEARCH PROGRAM CYCLE

