Filing and Reporting

Reporting mechanisms aim to consolidate and communicate all monitored data, especially those signs requiring further action.

There are two types of report:

1. Regular reports.
2. Ad-hoc reports.

Regular reports should be produced in useful time intervals, normally: weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly. Reports contribute to general program management, help with following up a specific inventory items, assist supply chain strategic decisions, and help update forecasting figures and critical stock thresholds.

The intervals for reports can be set based on the turn-over of the articles and/or the location of the storage facility. As an example, reports from health facility storage running a nutritional program with daily patients and deliveries of medication might want to establish reports in weekly intervals.

Regular reports can include information such as:

- Stock Summary: A record of the relevant transactions and stock levels. For all or a particular list of relevant items during a pre-set time period, this might include opening and closing stock levels, average consumption, and total receipts and dispatches. The value of the transactions and the value of the balance quantity may be relevant for some inventories. Perishable products must be included in this summary.
- An outline of those items reaching a pre-established stock threshold requiring re-ordering or other action.
- An outline of those items approaching their date of expiry.
- Key performance indicators, based on the information mentioned in the Monitoring section on the performance of the inventory management.

Title
Template - Monthly Stock Report

Fig.: Weekly inventory monitoring report from an outreach stock, part of a Nutritional program with daily distribution of food items and non-food items

Regular reports should be shared with relevant stakeholders, especially those making use of regularly stored items. It is a common practice to cross-check information in the inventory reports with the expected and current number of beneficiaries.

In addition to regular reports, storekeepers should inform the pertinent individuals when relevant inventory events occur:

- The stock level of an article reaches the re-order level.
- One or several stock items are lost, damaged or spoiled. In such cases, a loss report should be completed.
- A stock discrepancy is identified.
- A project is reaching to its end.

Data management

Reliable, up to date and accessible information is key for inventory management. Data

management will enable making the correct information available to the correct people in the required moment. Furthermore, data management is a cornerstone for accountability.

Procedures and means should be in place to ensure that records are properly kept for internal and external use. Basic information to be recorded and kept updated is mentioned in the systematic recording and keeping support documentation section.

Formats: Physical or Electronic

The means to store and manage stock data can be physical (hard) or electronic (digital). According to the needs, both methods can be combined and used to complement each other. In case of using both systems simultaneously it is highly recommended to keep one as a "master file", and the other as back-up.

Considerations to choose the most appropriate data format may include:

- **Urgency to setup inventory operations**: Physical data record formats can be set immediately, always accompanied by a basic training. Digital formats can take longer time-frames depending on the operational environment and the organisational culture.
- **Existing funds**: The level of investment is considerably higher for the setup of electronic data management means.
- **Digital literacy of staff**: In some particular contexts, staff will be better able to adopt and use digital systems, while in other some resistance may occur.
- **Environmental conditions**: Access to reliable power supply and reliability of the internet connection.

In general, working with digital records can improve data reliability and access to information, make working processes more efficient, reduce space to store physical files, and increase data recovery. Also, digitising records will reduce the use of paper and other stationary.

Similar to physical filing, digital records should be kept under certain order and logic. Folders and files related to inventory management should follow an agreed standard in terms of name and location, enabling searching for a specific file or group of files. Persons accessing digital files data should be trained in the process, and access granted to only relevant people.

Physical file data management is recommended in temporary setups, such as opening new emergency operation or in locations with unreliable power supply or with limited access to information systems.

Physical records require proper format and labelling, ideally in a standardised manner. A secure but still accessible location should be designated within the storage facility to keep hard files, while files from past periods should be kept aside in a secure place. The time period to be covered for the active physical files should be defined in a coordinated manner with other relevant departments. It is a common practice to make use of natural years, though this may differ depending on the organisation and the type of data. For example, waybills or delivery notes may be archived as per natural years while stock cards may follow a different logic.

When using physical records, consider that carton or heavy paper is more expensive and less environmentally friendly, but more durable during intensive use. It is recommended to use carton or heavy paper for files requiring frequent access and updating, such as stock cards.

Using physical data management formats still require frequent consolidation of stock record information into a system / excel spreadsheet. A daily or weekly consolidation is advised. More frequent consolidation will improve data backup, will provide faster access to information in

case of need, and will avoid additional burden in particular periods of the month.

Coding

Whatever physical or digital file formats are used, a coding system should be in place to ease information flow. Standardised codes and labels serve as a shorthand, or abbreviated item description. The use of codes should speed references to files and entities of interest such as locations, providers, clients, donors, etc. In addition, a proper coding system will enable data segregation, cross-referencing and ultimately, analysis.

Typical inventory information to be coded is:

- Geographic information: Region, country, district, office, etc.
- Supply chain entities: Suppliers and sources, clients and destinations, departments, warehouses, etc.
- Locations within the storage facility where items may be stored: Rooms, corridors, shelves, stacks, etc.
- Operational information: Program, project, donor, etc.
- Units of measure: “pcs”, “Kg”, “bags”, etc.
- Time scales: Date, year, week, etc.

Carton Labelling/Coding	Shelf Labelling/Coding

As preliminary step, a consistent, unique and well-organised set of descriptions per inventory function should be designed and agreed upon in advance, including: covered geography, relevant stakeholders, locations, type of stored items, etc. Critical elements to be identified through codes should be outlined. Avoid over-coding: not all the fields above mentioned are always relevant to be coded.

Labels and codes should be easy to read, unambiguous, and harmonisation with other departments and other supply chain units within the organisation. An agency's finance department may be a key collaborator in this task.

The use of codes should be central to inventory management, therefore it should be included in inventory management procedures. Staff should be trained on how to follow codes, making the way inventory is handled and records are kept consistent across the operation.