



REPORT

SOWING THE SEEDS OF GOOD NUTRITION

Making Agricultural Policies Deliver Better Nutrition

In 2013, 870 million people are still undernourished while 2 billion people are affected by micronutrient malnutrition or “hidden hunger”. Agriculture is a major component of local food systems, the systems through which people produce, transform, distribute and consume food. Making agricultural policies deliver better nutrition represents one of the greatest challenges as well as one of the greatest opportunities to achieving good nutrition for the hungry and undernourished people of the world.

The report focuses on the challenges of making food systems deliver better nutrition outcomes. It aims to assess to what extent the global agenda on nutrition and agriculture is actually translating into action at country level, based on three country case studies conducted in Burkina Faso, Kenya and Peru, that answer the following questions:

- How do national agricultural policies integrate nutritional issues?
- What are the main constraints to agricultural policies improving efforts to end undernutrition?
- How best could these constraints be alleviated?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, a higher priority should be given to country level nutrition-sensitive action to leverage and accelerate the actual implementation of nutrition-sensitive policies. Countries, donors and international organisations should do more, do it better and begin doing so now.

1. **Prioritizing the nutrition goal within agricultural policies and programmes**
2. **Incorporating nutrition and food consumption indicators into agricultural information and monitoring systems**
3. **Strengthening policy coordination around nutrition**
4. **Ensuring nutrition training opportunities for agriculturalists**
5. **Increasing the level of funding for the implementation of nutrition-sensitive agricultural strategies**

The report and country case studies can be downloaded:

www.actioncontrelafaim.org/en/content/seeds-of-good-nutrition (ENGLISH)

www.actioncontrelafaim.org/fr/content/graines-bonne-nutrition (FRENCH)

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WHY DOES AGRICULTURE NOT AUTOMATICALLY DELIVER NUTRITION OUTCOMES?

Linking agriculture with nutrition and improving the nutritional impact of agriculture programmes and interventions is the topic of a growing international agenda. However, agricultural development does not automatically result in improved nutrition at the household or community level. In fact, agriculture provides food and income but is requesting investments, physical workload, time, etc., which compete with other uses that might also impact (positively or negatively) nutrition.

There are 7 main pathways between agriculture and nutrition, which show that agriculture can have both positive impacts and potential negative impacts on nutrition, particularly with respect to women's use of time and control of income. Agricultural policies should maximize positive impacts while mitigating negative impacts with appropriate measures.

From the agriculture side →	To the nutrition side
Household production	Food consumption
Income	Food purchase
Income	Healthcare purchase
Food prices	Food purchase
Women's use of time	Care capacity
Women's workload	Maternal energy use
Women's control of income	Resource allocation



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source: IFPRI

FINDINGS: GOOD PRACTICES AND REMAINING CHALLENGES AT COUNTRY LEVEL

Burkina Faso, Kenya and Peru are three countries that have recently committed to improving the alignment of their agricultural policies on nutrition outcomes. There is in fact a double challenge to be taken up at country level: integrating agriculture as a key sector in national multisectoral under-nutrition reduction strategies while also mainstreaming nutritional concerns, objectives and actions into sectoral agricultural policies, to increase their sensitivity to nutrition.

In the three studies, we have found that there is actually a lag between what is increasingly being promoted at the international level and the responses of actors in the field. Even in countries that have ambitious multisectoral strategies against under-nutrition, the agriculture sector has not necessarily dedicated a high priority to nutrition. In particular, our research has found that the main constraints to unleashing the potential of agriculture for nutrition are:

- The limited priority given to nutrition within the agricultural sector
- The difficulties in adequately integrating nutrition into monitoring and information systems to allow cross-sectoral analysis on nutrition
- The poor inter-sectoral coordination around nutrition between agriculture and other sectors
- The lack of implementation of nutrition-sensitive interventions in the agricultural sector
- The inadequate level of funding for nutrition-sensitive agricultural interventions and programmes

It is possible to alleviate these obstacles in order to transform the vicious circle of low prioritisation and under-investment into a virtuous circle of mutually reinforcing actions that would unleash the potential of agriculture for better nutrition.

The experience from Burkina Faso, Kenya and Peru provide interesting illustrations of good practices that are able to fill these gaps. The identified good practices are: setting up nutrition within the agriculture sector agenda, such as the CAADP nutrition-sensitive agriculture investment plans (Kenya and Burkina Faso); integrating of nutrition courses into the training of agriculturalists in national agriculture schools (Burkina Faso); integrating nutrition indicators in agriculture information systems and surveys (Burkina Faso); integrating nutrition into cross-sectoral policy coordination against poverty (Peru); increasing donor support to multisectoral coordination mechanisms, such as food security and nutrition donor working groups (Burkina Faso); reinforcing the nutrition mandate of Ministries of Agriculture and increasing support to nutrition-sensitive programmes (such as with the Department of Food and Promotion of Nutritional Quality in Burkina Faso and the Home Economics section in Kenya); and establishing results-based budget mechanisms that hold different sectors accountable for common goals (Peru).

AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL: FAST-TRACKING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NUTRITION-SENSITIVE AGRICULTURE

Our research in countries has shown that the growing attention on nutrition-sensitive agriculture at the international and national level has not yet translated into practice. We were also interested to see how the international donors and organizations leading this agenda at the global level are actually supporting the implementation of nutrition-sensitive agriculture approaches and playing a leverage role to move towards an agriculture which is more accountable to nutrition.

We have looked at the role of a limited number of emblematic organisations and initiatives, including the European Commission, USAID, the FAO, the IFAD, the World Bank and the G8 supported New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition. Most of them are members of the SUN movement and have recently committed to improving their work on nutrition-sensitive agriculture at the G8 2013 Nutrition for Growth event. However, despite undeniable progresses and growing commitments, we have found that actors have not yet given nutrition-sensitive agriculture the level of priority it requires.

Building a stronger international consensus around nutrition-sensitive agriculture is highly needed as it would reinforce the priority dedicated to nutrition within agricultural sector. The recently established “Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition” could be a vehicle for this, if it associates enough countries and civil society organizations to its work. Nutrition should also be made a high priority in international agriculture forums, particularly the CFS (Committee on World Food Security), as the most inclusive international policy forum focusing on agriculture, food security and hunger reduction. A future HLPE report on the challenges of making food systems and agricultural policies work better for nutrition would represent a good opportunity for this.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

The main finding of the report is that despite a rapidly growing agenda at the international level, including increased commitments from international institutions and donors, nutrition-sensitive agriculture is long overdue and toils to materialize at the level where it matters most.

The constraints identified at country-level need to be addressed jointly, to transform the vicious circle of low consideration and underinvestment into a virtuous circle. To make agriculture more sensitive to nutrition at country level, the right set of incentives should be developed and embedded at different levels, from the highest policy framework to the day-to-day activities of extension workers in the field.

These incentives should compensate for the lack of common language between agriculture and nutrition, the low level of knowledge on nutrition from the agriculture side and the weak accountability of the agriculture sector vis-à-vis nutrition. This last point is particularly important: the agriculture sector has for long been evaluated on the basis of its contribution to income generation and economic growth, not on the basis of its contribution to better nutrition.

1. MAKING EXPLICIT WHAT IS AGRICULTURE CONTRIBUTION TO BETTER NUTRITION

At the field level, the pathways between agriculture and nutrition are not so well-known. The role agriculture can play for nutrition should be made more explicit. The agriculture sector and the nutrition community should work together to identify what contributions the agriculture sector could bring to the fight against under-nutrition in the country, depending on the context-specific determinants of under-nutrition and characteristics of the agriculture and food systems.

GOOD PRACTICE: The Home Economics section of the Ministry of Agriculture in Kenya

In Kenya, the Home Economics section of the MOA is an important actor which implements the nutrition mandate of the Ministry and supports to nutrition-sensitive programmes. In fact, HE officers are key nutrition information relays to change behaviour on the long term both at the national and at the local level.

2. INCORPORATING NUTRITION AND FOOD CONSUMPTION INDICATORS INTO INFORMATION AND MONITORING SYSTEMS

Agriculture information systems rarely include nutritional and food consumption related indicators (such as the Household Diet Diversity Score for instance) into their methodologies and surveys. However, information is a key to adequate decision making. Therefore, it is required to establish better information and monitoring systems linking agriculture and nutrition data. Such systems will support building and improving cross-sectoral analysis and dialogue around nutrition. This should include plans to monitor and mitigate the potentially negative consequences on nutrition that may arise from large scale intensive agricultural investments.



GOOD PRACTICE: Integrating nutrition indicators in agriculture data collection in Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, the Permanent Agriculture Survey implemented on a quarterly basis by the Ministry of Agriculture has been collecting the Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) of a sample of children under 5 since 2004. This was initially done following a recommendation from regional institutions, to better understand the Sahel 'cereal balance failure' showing that agricultural availability does not automatically result in an adequate nutrition situation.

3. STRENGTHENING POLICY COORDINATION AROUND NUTRITION

Multisectoral coordination mechanisms around nutrition, when they exist, are often primarily related to the health sector, especially at the national level. There is thus an institutional challenge to increasing the participation of the agriculture sector to such coordination body, to facilitate cross-sectoral dialogue around nutrition. Better coordination between agriculture and other sectors around nutrition are needed and must be supported to build effective governance for nutrition at country level.

GOOD PRACTICE: Integrating nutrition into cross-sectoral policy coordination against poverty

In Peru, the MCLCP is a consultative body facilitating consultation and communication in the fight against poverty. Created in 2001, it is an instance in which State institutions and civil society collaborate to adopt agreements and coordinate activities to combat poverty in each region, department, province and district. Its mandate integrates nutritional issues, for each sector to contribute to common goals. Its main functions are to monitor the implementation of the different government programmes but also to carry out joint advocacy messages.

4. ENSURING NUTRITION TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE

The knowledge and understanding of nutrition is very heterogeneous at the level of Ministries of Agriculture. Furthermore there is a lack of both basic and on-the-job training on nutrition available for agriculturalists and extension service staffs. There is a need for training on both general nutrition knowledge and specifically on the links between agriculture and nutrition. The training efforts should focus in particular on extension agents, whose role makes it possible to spread messages on nutrition to farmers and communities, but should also include civil servants from Ministries of Agriculture at central level.

GOOD PRACTICE: Nutrition courses in the training of agriculturalists

Burkina Faso is currently reforming the National Agriculture School curricula to include nutrition courses in the basic training of agriculture students. This reform has been identified as an important step to change the mindset of agriculture civil servants vis-à-vis nutrition. It will bear fruit in 3 or 4 years, when the current students will be working in the field and at the ministry level.

5. DEDICATING MORE FUNDING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NUTRITION-SENSITIVE AGRICULTURE PROGRAMMES

The low level of funding available for nutrition-sensitive programmes unfortunately reflects the level of priority dedicated to nutrition within the agricultural sector. More funding is therefore needed for agricultural programmes and interventions that will in particular take on board the following issues (only marginally integrated into 'traditional' rural development programmes):

- set up targeting tools to ensure vulnerable communities will benefit from agricultural investments;
- dedicate a specific attention to the role of women in agriculture (in particular through increased access to land, inputs and income) while making sure nutrition gains are maximized for both mothers and children (through introduction of timesaving technologies, childcare nurseries when appropriate, and nutritional education and awareness-raising).



ACF, Christina Lionnet - Kenya

GOOD PRACTICE: Innovative result-based budget mechanism

In Peru, RBB (results-based budgeting) is a public management system that ties the attribution of resources to measurable results. This mechanism is implemented through budgetary programmes under the Ministry of Finance, and reflects priority areas of public investments by local governments. The possibility to fund food security and agriculture programmes which fully integrate nutrition and incentivise cross-sectoral collaboration through this RBB tool is currently being discussed at the government level and seems promising.

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