PERSPECTIVES ON THE AFRICAN FOOD SYSTEMS: SOME POLICY, PROGRAMMATIC AND RESEARCH DIMENSIONS FOR IMPROVED NUTRITION

Victor Ajieroh, Adeyinka Onabolu, Shelly Sundberg & Shawn Baker

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WHAT IS A FOOD SYSTEM?

We define food systems as the production, marketing, transformation, and purchase of food, and the consumer practices, resources, and institutions involved in these processes.

This is the Global Panel for Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition’s definition of food systems.
WHY FOOD SYSTEMS MATTER

In Africa:

- The poor spend more than 60% of their income on food
- Starchy staples dominate diets
- Low consumption of nutrient-rich foods, particularly those from animal sources
- Contaminated food is prevalent
- Undernutrition impacts rural poor more than those in urban areas (though urban areas still affected)
- Rising rates of overweight and obesity
AFRICAN COMMITMENTS TO AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program: Launched in 2005

Malabo Declaration: 2014
Household agricultural production has direct and important linkages with dietary patterns and nutrition of individual household members, including women and children.

1. Focus on smallholder women
2. Incorporate nutrition behavior change communication
3. Fortification: staple food fortification and biofortification
4. Production diversity, especially with a focus on ownership and production of small livestock
5. Increase market access

There are four main pathways through which agriculture can influence nutrition at a household level:

1. Own consumption
2. Income for food
3. Income for health
4. Women’s empowerment
EVIDENCE GAPS—KEY REMAINING QUESTIONS

How can agricultural interventions be designed to improve nutritional outcomes for individuals in farm families and communities as a whole?
- How do we take into account the multiple roles of women and support agriculture to take those roles into account?
- What is the effect of agricultural labor on women and children’s health and nutrition?
- How can we effectively increase demand for nutrient-rich foods and strengthen markets for more diverse and affordable food?
- What are the most appropriate indicators to measure progress?
- What is the true extent of food loss and what interventions are most promising to address loss in nutrient-rich foods?

What are the best—and most cost-effective—delivery mechanisms through which agriculture can affect nutrition?
- Which entry points along the agricultural value chain have the greatest potential impact for improving women and child’s nutrition?
- What are the best delivery mechanisms for educating farming households about nutrition?
- What are the quantifiable linkages and leakages in the agriculture-nutrition pathways?

What are the best bets from a policy perspective?
- What are the impacts of agriculture policies on consumers, including the effects of price, food expenditures, and food consumption?
- How can agricultural growth and nutrition be more tightly connected?

What role does food safety have in nutrition and health?
- Does aflatoxin cause stunting?
- What other food safety challenges are most important from a nutrition perspective?
Holding the agriculture sector accountable for nutrition-related outcomes
Identifying and implementing appropriate nutrition-sensitive policies
Scaling up best bet interventions
Prioritizing and financing interventions that are most cost-effective

**NEXT BIG CHALLENGES**

**In agriculture’s domain:**
- Nutritious food production and supply
- Seasonal fluctuations in food accessibility
- Affordability of nutritious foods
- End-user demand
- Consumption of nutritious foods
- Safety of food supply
- Women’s empowerment in agriculture

**MATERNAL AND CHILD UNDERNUTRITION**

- Inadequate dietary intake
- Disease
- Household food insecurity
- Inadequate care and feeding practices
- Unhealthy household environment and inadequate health services

**Immediate causes**

**Underlying causes**

**Not solely in agriculture’s domain:**
- Child anthropometry (stunting and wasting)
- Maternal nutritional status
- Anemia

**Not in agriculture’s domain:**
- Exclusive breastfeeding
- Low birth weight
- Access to safe water and improved sanitation
- Access to health care services

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### WHAT COULD A FUTURE FOOD SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Future</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>R&amp;D</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nutrition prioritized in agricultural R&amp;D</strong>, resulting in improved nutrient content of staples and increased productivity of nutrient-rich agriculture products</td>
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<td><strong>Seasonality</strong></td>
<td><strong>Value chains and food processing industry strengthened</strong> to extend the availability of nutritious foods year-round</td>
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<td><strong>Fortification</strong></td>
<td><strong>Large scale food fortification</strong>, including salt iodization, meets micronutrient gaps among vulnerable consumers</td>
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<td><strong>Safety</strong></td>
<td><strong>Strengthened food safety systems</strong> eliminate toxins from the food supply</td>
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<td><strong>Consumer knowledge</strong></td>
<td><strong>Consumers understand and value the importance of nutrition</strong> and have the ability to choose those products</td>
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<td><strong>Affordability</strong></td>
<td><strong>Absolute prices of nutrient-rich foods</strong> make them affordable for all</td>
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<td><strong>Women’s empowerment</strong></td>
<td><strong>Women earn income and are empowered</strong> to participate in household decision, including how to use family income</td>
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<td><strong>Data &amp; policy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Improved understanding of food consumption</strong> enables better policymaking, targeting, and nutrition education</td>
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- **Crop breeding and varietal release mechanisms do not prioritize nutrition**
- **Seasonal fluctuations** in availability of nutritious foods, given deficiencies in cold chains, transport, storage
- **Lack of robust effective coverage and quality assurance and control** for fortification
- **Safety systems weak or non-existent**. Poor disproportionately consume cheaper unsafe foods
- **Consumers lack knowledge of nutrition** and its importance, reducing demand for nutrient-rich foods
- Most nutritious foods often most expensive
- **Women lack the decision-making power and control of assets** to improve their and their children’s health and nutrition
- Data on food currently used in policymaking contains little info about consumption, across socio-economic groups
QUICK HIGHLIGHT OF SOME PAST AND ON GOING EFFORTS SUPPORTED BY THE FOUNDATION

**Improving Data, Evidence and Policy**
- Partnering with DFID to address some research questions
- Global on Agriculture & Food Systems for Nutrition
- Federal Ministry of Agriculture/GAIN

**Improving Women Empowerment in Agriculture**
- Se Lever project in Burkina Faso
- Dairy Development Programmes

**Increasing Supply of Nutrient Rich Foods**
- HarvestPlus/CIP
- GAIN
- Technoserve
QUICK HIGHLIGHT OF SOME PAST AND ON GOING EFFORTS

Increasing Demand
- Alive and Thrive: Social and Behavior Change Communication
- Drivers of Food Choice Programme with DFID

Improving Food Safety
- Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa
- Technoserve: Food safety scoping work for other food safety issues
- IITA
HOW DO WE MAKE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES NUTRITION-TRANSFORMATIVE?
Specific objectives of the AFSNS 2016 – 2025

- Improve food security at the national, community, and household levels
- Significantly reduce undernutrition, including micronutrient deficiency disorders, among vulnerable population
- Prevent and control chronic nutrition-related non-communicable disease
- Increase the knowledge of nutrition among the populace and integrate nutrition education into agricultural formal and informal trainings
- Strengthen systems for providing early warning information on the food and nutrition situation;
- Incorporate food and nutrition considerations into the Federal, State and Local Government agricultural sector development plans.
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OF THE AFSNS

1. Enhance Value Chains For Improved Nutrition

2. Diversify Household Food Production And Consumption Especially Targeting Women, And Increase Access To Micronutrient Rich Foods

3. Improve Food Safety Along Value Chain

4. Build Resilience And Social Protection Nets Through Food And Nutrition Systems For Vulnerable Groups

5. Promote Nutrition Research And Information Systems

6. Improve Capacity To Address Food Security And Nutrition Problems

7. Nutrition Education, Social Marketing, Behaviour Change Communication, And Advocacy

8. Nutrition Surveillance And M&E
The mainstreaming Journey in Perspective (1)

- Broad nutrition Objective in ATA
- Appointment of a Senior Advisor on Food Security and Nutrition
- The Nutrition/WIA Unit now Nutrition and Food Safety Division
- Development of a food security and Nutrition Strategy
- Build Nutrition into the New Draft Agricultural policy/APA
The mainstreaming Journey in Perspective (2)

- Driving shared understanding and advocacy
- Aligning budget to Strategy and making the IANWG operational
- Nutrition built into FMARD M&E as a major impact domain
- Developing strategic plans/Building Capacity
- Building partnerships and mobilizing resources
THANK YOU!