

Private Sector Mechanism Position Paper
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Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture

FAO defines nutrition-sensitive agriculture as a food-based approach to agricultural development that puts nutrient-dense foods, dietary diversity, and food fortification at the heart of overcoming malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. This approach stresses the multiple benefits derived from enjoying a variety of foods, recognizing the nutritional value of food for health. The overall objective of nutrition-sensitive agriculture is to **promote healthy diets by better equipping food systems to deliver safe, affordable and nutritious food.**

At every step, a wide range of participants in the agricultural and food value chain are working to improve nutrition and food security: from production of foods to improving storage and infrastructure, processing nutrient-dense food products and to clearly labelling nutrition facts. Improvements to the policy environment, market connectivity, land use, women's economic empowerment, and adequate rural infrastructure also impact nutrition and health.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and translating them into nutrition-related national objectives requires inter-related approaches to agriculture, nutrition and health policies. Sustainable, effective nutrition-sensitive agricultural initiatives also depend on enabling markets to support consumers, farmers, processors, and traders.

Finally, a more diverse and productive agricultural system that best nourishes citizens will in turn accelerate broad-based, sustainable economic growth. This growth strategy must be accompanied by investments in safety nets and education, nutrition, and health programs to ensure nutrition-sensitive agriculture benefits all people.

The PSM supports the following principles that enhance nutrition-sensitive agriculture:

- **Building policy environments that secure access to nutrient-dense food through sustainable production for achieving adequate, safe, nutritious, diverse, and affordable diets.** Make more food available and affordable, reduce malnutrition, and support income growth through:
 - a. Increasing and diversifying agricultural production;
 - b. Stimulating demand for nutrient rich agricultural products
 - c. Enabling the development, dissemination and adoption of technological advances;
 - d. Reducing food loss and waste (for example by improving storage, transport, processing and packaging to extend shelf life and reduce spoilage); and

- e. Promoting sustainable production practices (such as conservation agriculture, genetic selection and bio-innovation, crop diversification, water management and integrated pest and nutrient management, best animal husbandry, farm management and new farming systems, such as aquaponics, hydroponics and vertical farming systems).
- **Supporting farmers with agricultural extension, access to inputs, research, and other production-related productivity improvements.** Encourage practices that support crop diversification and efficient livestock production systems and associated investments that reduce unit-costs of production, increase farmers' incomes, and decrease food prices. All these efforts have positive nutrition and economic growth effects and result in lower production risks for farmers and better nutrition for both farming families and consumers.
- **Integrating smallholders in value chains.** Private sector actors are key partners in enabling smallholder farmers to achieve better market access by increasing the quantity and quality of their production and connecting them to local, regional and global value chains. Private operators can also support smallholders to become entrepreneurs by facilitating access to sustainable production techniques through extension, market information and financial services, and solutions to overcoming infrastructure gaps¹.
- **Empowering women.** Good nutrition from a woman's pregnancy and in the early years of her child's life sets the foundation for a lifetime². Changes in food production technology that reduce demands on women's time have been shown to improve nutrition by increasing time available for child care, food preparation, and accessing clean drinking water. They also improve the well-being of women. In turn, labor saving technological change in activities traditionally performed by women outside the food production system leaves more time available for food system activities. These include food production per se, but also better and more food processing as well as increased income generation through formal and informal food-system based employment.
- **Supporting strategies on diversification, fortification and supplementation.** The policy environment should recognize the nutrient-rich contributions of diverse foods, including from both plant and animal-sourced foods; as well as systems that improve or preserve the nutritional content of foods, either at the farm level (biofortification) or through marketing and processing (fortification and supplementation). Diversification of agriculture and food production is a key solution to increase availability and accessibility of a diverse and nutritious diet. When a diverse nutritious diet is not available or accessible, fortification and supplementation are key solutions to prevent nutrient deficiencies by enhancing nutrient content in foods. Nutrient deficiencies can be prevented by:

¹ [PSM Position Paper on Smallholders' Access to Markets](#)

² <http://thousanddays.org/>

- a. Local production of nutrient-rich crops and animal-based food,
 - b. Plant/animal breeding and crop diversification,
 - c. Improved agronomic practice,
 - d. Improved livestock management practices such as feeding to genetic potential
 - e. Optimal soil fertility management and agronomic biofortification,
 - f. Water conservation,
 - g. Post-harvest storage, management and processing and
 - h. Additional supplementation through food processing.
- **Educating and informing consumers.** It is essential to ensure that expanded and more diverse production and higher incomes translate into healthier diets and better nutrition, particularly for vulnerable populations. Ensuring access to nutrition information for mothers is essential in promoting good nutrition in families. Promoting marketing and advertising campaigns for food diversity can also increase demand for nutrition-sensitive food products.
 - **Reducing risk for agricultural investment and production.** Crop insurance and catalytic investments can improve the long-term well-being of farmers and provide a stable platform for further improvements in production agriculture.
 - **Linking agriculture, nutrition and health communities.** Effective nutrition-sensitive agriculture strategies will use a multi-sectorial approach that will build on the common expertise coming from agriculture, nutrition and health sectors.

Sources:

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