Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

RESEARCH PROGRAM ON Agriculture for Nutrition and Health
CGIAR
Led by IFPRI

Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in East Africa

LANEA Study Brief

LANEA Study Rationale

Research has shown that achieving goals in reducing malnutrition necessitates not only nutrition-specific interventions, but also multisectoral, nutrition-sensitive approaches. The food and agriculture sector has a key role to play in addressing nutrition, particularly in east Africa where a majority of the nutritionally vulnerable population depends on agricultural activities for their livelihoods. However, questions remain on how to create and sustain an enabling environment for nutrition within the food and agriculture sector and how to overcome the challenges and constraints that limit food and agriculture's contribution to nutrition.

Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in East Africa (LANEA) is an IFPRI/FAO initiative carried out in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda to investigate the enabling environment in these countries and the opportunities and challenges related to scaling up nutrition through agriculture. LANEA addresses the need for knowledge on nutrition-sensitive agriculture by documenting multisectoral efforts, describing gaps, and identifying opportunities to improve agriculture's contribution to nutrition. The study draws on three core domains that are key to generating change, identified in Gillespie et al.'s review of nutrition-relevant policy literature, and which help to shape views on the challenges that need to be addressed in order to leverage agriculture to improve nutrition: 1) politics and governance; 2) knowledge, perceptions and evidence; and 3) capacity and resources.

LANEA Study Methods

The LANEA study took place from October 2013 to July 2014. It included a structured review compiling of evidence relating to agriculture-nutrition pathways for each country (see Box 1), and key informant interviews with individuals working in nutrition and agriculture sectors. This was followed by stakeholder workshops in each of the three countries to disseminate the findings and gain further perspectives and input on agriculture and nutrition linkages that were then used to inform the country reports and recommendations.

Study participants came from government ministries, UN and donor agencies, NGOs, civil society, universities, research institutes and the private sector. In Ethiopia, 19 interviews were conducted and 27 stakeholders participated in the workshop; in Kenya, 15 were interviewed and 43 attended the workshop; and in Uganda 19 stakeholders were interviewed and 21 participated in the workshop. The interview guide was adapted from that used in the LANSA (Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in South Asia) consortium in order to permit cross-regional exchanges. Interview responses were analysed using a grid structured around the three core domains described above. Further details about study methods can be found in the country reports.

Country reports available on

Kenya: http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4556e.pdf
Uganda: http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4557e.pdf
Ethiopia: http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4554e.pdf
or: www.a4nh.cgiar.org

Box1: Agriculture-Nutrition Pathways

Pathways adapted from findings on the TANDI (Tackling the Agriculture-Nutrition Disconnect in India) initiative–[iii]

1. Agriculture as a source of food for own household consumption
2. Agriculture as a source of income for food and non-food expenditures
3. Impact of agricultural policies on food and non-food prices
4. Women in agriculture and intra-household decision-making and resource allocation
5. Maternal employment in agriculture and child care and feeding
6. Women in agriculture and maternal nutrition and health status

Key Findings on Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition

While each country case study and accompanying brief provides detailed country-specific information and recommendations, this summary highlights findings common to all three countries. A number of similar challenges and opportunities were identified by study participants in each country related to the enabling environment for agriculture to impact nutrition, and similar perspectives shared on how these environments can be shaped and sustained.

Politics and Governance, Knowledge and Evidence, Capacity and Financial Resources

In each country, there is a growing momentum to address nutrition, with policies and platforms that either have potential to or are currently addressing nutrition multisectorally; Box 2 lists some of these policies. All three countries have joined the Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) movement and are taking part in other initiatives such as CAADP (the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme), which have potential to support efforts on leveraging agriculture for improved nutrition.

Box2: Policies with potential to address nutrition multi-sectorally

Kenya	Food and Nutrition Security Policy (FNSP); National Nutrition Action Plan (NNAP); Agriculture Sector Development Strategy (ASDS)
Uganda	National Development Plan (NDP); Uganda Nutrition Action Plan (UNAP); Agriculture Sector Development Strategy and Investment Plan (DSIP)
Ethiopia	Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP); National Nutrition Strategy (NNS); Agriculture Sector Policy and Investment Framework (PIF)

Despite the growing momentum, stakeholders in all three countries shared perspectives that the enabling environment to address nutrition through agriculture remains weak. One of the reasons for this given by participants from all three countries was the lack of high-level coordination mechanisms and nutrition advocates to ensure multisectoral collaboration and implementation of nutrition-sensitive policies and programmes. Even where state institutions have been identified to coordinate nutrition policies, as with the Office of the Prime Minister in Uganda, financial and human resources are insufficient to achieve impact, and collaboration across sectors remains weak.

Furthermore, there are few incentives for policy-makers and others to undertake multisectoral work on nutrition, and study participants in both Ethiopia and Uganda described a lack of visibility for nutrition. Investments in nutrition may take time for results to become evident,

making it difficult to gain political traction. However, stakeholders from all three countries pointed to a number of factors that can influence policy-making, including donor priorities, lessons learned from programmes, global and national research and reports, clear and timely data, and the demonstration of economic impact.

Additionally, participants from all three countries described a great need for cross-sectoral consensus on indicators and metrics for nutrition-sensitive agriculture. Accountability and monitoring and evaluation can thus be strengthened and different sectors will better understand their roles in working towards common goals to impact nutrition.

Knowledge and Evidence

Knowledge of the linkages between agriculture and nutrition was perceived as being low in all three countries; however, when asked about their perspectives on how agriculture can be leveraged for nutrition, study participants shared a number of ideas indicating a growing awareness of the pathways from agriculture to nutrition. In all three countries, pathway 1: agriculture as a source of food for household consumption, was often mentioned by interviewees. Most of the studies identified in the evidence review mapped to this pathway. Stakeholders talked about the role of agriculture in providing food and income for diverse diets, and participants in Uganda and Ethiopia perceived potential negative consequences of agriculture when it is used solely for cash crops and market production at the expense of nutritious foods for local consumption.

Study participants in each country also highlighted the role of gender, with stakeholders in both Uganda and Ethiopia pointing to the importance of land tenure for women, and a Ugandan participant describing the need to have a gender-sensitive lens for integrating nutrition within agriculture. Participants often described how women who have control over resources are more likely to use the assets on food and care for their children, thus impacting nutrition. However, stakeholders felt there was insufficient evidence to understand how agriculture can impact nutrition, with further research on all pathways required , especially with regards to pathways 5 and 6, which relate to women's employment in agriculture and its impact on child care and women's own nutritional status.

While research and data are seen as key, stakeholders described these areas as weak. Research on agriculture-nutrition linkages remains low in all three countries, as seen in the evidence reviews, and interviews indicate that even when research knowledge exists, it is often not communicated effectively to policy and programme decision-makers. Stakeholders stressed the need for more funding for research that is practical and actionable and demonstrates "what works" for nutrition/agriculture integration. Capacity to collect timely and accurate data on nutrition and agriculture at national and regional levels also needs to be developed, as well as the capacity to analyse and communicate such data in a meaningful manner.

This theme of communication was evident in each country, not only in terms of communicating evidence to policy-makers, but also in terms of how to communicate nutrition messages to households. Participants from all three countries put a strong emphasis on the need to contextualize messages to social and cultural values that may differ by region and livelihood zone. In Uganda, participants suggested using social marketing for communication, and in Ethiopia participants stressed the need for different types of nutrition messaging depending on the audience. Stakeholders also state that research is needed to understand these regional and cultural differences on nutrition in order to better develop targeted programmes. They also suggest learning from other successful cross-sector initiatives such as those related to HIV/AIDS.

Capacity and Financial Resources

Study participants in each country highlighted the need for training and education at a number of levels, from educating policy-makers on nutrition-sensitive agriculture, to training agriculture extension workers on how to incorporate a nutrition lens in their work with households, to educating donors on the need for longer-term investments in order to impact nutrition through agriculture and food-based programmes. To build knowledge and capacity at all levels, strengthening nutrition education from primary to university level is needed, with emphasis on integrating nutrition into agricultural curricula and research.

Along with the need for training and capacity development of agriculture and nutrition professionals, participants also pointed to the need for simply increasing their numbers in order to have an impact. In Uganda, a participant pointed out that agriculture extension reaches less that 20 percent of farmers, and in Ethiopia even the largest-scale food and nutrition security projects (Productive Safety Net Program and Agriculture Growth Program) reach only 10-15 percent of the population. The number of nutritionists in each country is low, and their practical training is limited. Even more limited is any form of cross-sector training, although participants from both Uganda and Kenya described agriculture-nutrition training manuals developed for field workers and the need to increase the distribution of these and other tools.

Study participants in all three countries stressed the need for increased funding for nutrition. The gap between developing multisectoral policies and being able to implement them at scale depends on adequate funding as well as the capacity to coordinate and collaborate across sectors. Leveraging financial and other resources across sectors can include efforts at harmonizing messages as well as developing public-private partnerships, as suggested by Ugandan and Ethiopian participants. Developing stakeholders' capacity to move beyond competition and build up stronger collaboration both within and between government ministries and sectors as well as between national and regional levels is crucial.

Conclusion

The recommendations given in each country report suggest ways to proceed towards integrating nutrition and agriculture, creating and supporting an enabling environment for cross-sector dialogue and action. These can be summarized as they relate to the three core domains for generating change. In terms of policy and governance, the overall need for stronger coherence and cross-sector collaboration is evident in all three countries.High-level coordination, clear indicators and mechanisms that promote and foster dialogue at all levels are needed for agriculture to be accountable for nutrition. Equally important is the need to strengthen knowledge and evidence of the role of agriculture for nutrition. Without a clear understanding of how agriculture can impact nutrition, policy-makers and programme staff are uncertain of how to proceed. Research and programme impact evaluations are thus needed, together with robust efforts at communicating this evidence to those who need it. Capacity-building aimed at strengthening knowledge and skills is important not only at policy level, but also in terms of building human resources for integrating nutrition across sectors. Capacity development, knowledge-building, and coordination efforts all require funding, which has so far been inadequate. Financing for multisectoral approaches to nutrition may require longer-term commitments, as well as better ways to share resources and leverage the strengths that each sector brings in order to create a more dynamic and influential enabling environment for nutrition.

[i]2013 Lancet Series on Maternal and Child Nutrition, including M. Ruel&H. Alderman (2013). Nutrition-sensitive interventions and programmes: how can they help to accelerate progress in improving maternal and child nutrition? *The Lancet* 382, 536-551.

[ii]Gillespie, S., Haddad, L., Mannar, V., Nisbett, N. & Menon, P. (2013). The politics of reducing malnutrition: building commitment and accelerating progress. *The Lancet* 382, 552-569.

[iii]Gillespie, S., Harris, J. & Kadiyala, S. (2012) The Agriculture-Nutrition Disconnect in India: What Do We Know? *IFPRI Discussion Paper* 01187, IFPRI: Washington, DC.