

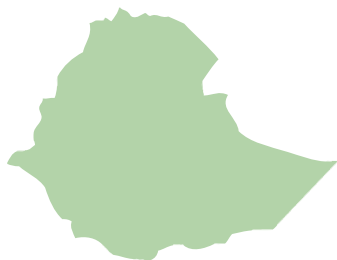


Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



RESEARCH
PROGRAM ON
Agriculture for
Nutrition
and Health

Led by IFPRI



Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in East Africa (LANEA)

ETHIOPIA - Summary report

LANEA (Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in East Africa) is an IFPRI/FAO research initiative carried out in Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya to investigate opportunities and challenges related to scaling up impact on nutrition through the food and agriculture sector. The study took place from October 2013 to July 2014 and included a structured evidence review, key informant interviews and a stakeholder workshop. Information gained from this study deepens the evidence base on how to create and sustain an enabling environment for nutrition within agricultural policy and programmes. The study initiative was organized around three core domains that are key to generating change: politics and governance, knowledge and evidence, and capacity and financial resources (Gillespie *et al.* 2013).

Ethiopia, which joined the SUN movement in 2010, is currently putting a strong emphasis on economic growth and meeting its development goals. Yet despite significant reductions in poverty, malnutrition remains a serious issue, with high rates of stunting, wasting, micronutrient deficiencies and maternal malnutrition, and disparities between rural and urban areas. Ethiopia's strong economic growth is fuelled in part by the food and agriculture sector, and with 80-85 percent of the population employed in small-scale agriculture, the agriculture sector has strong potential to address nutrition and food security across Ethiopia. The LANEA Ethiopia study highlights stakeholder perspectives regarding how agriculture can be leveraged to achieve improvements in nutrition.

Key Findings

Politics and Governance

Ethiopia's policy environment has strong potential to address nutrition multisectorally, with growing recognition of the role of agriculture in improving nutrition. The National Nutrition Strategy was developed in 2008, and the launching of the National Nutrition Plan (NNP) engages agriculture, while the Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP) is also planning to better address nutrition. Further momentum can be seen in the development of a food and nutrition case team within the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). However, stakeholders participating in the LANEA study report that "siloed" perspectives on nutrition remain; nutrition is seen as a health and emergency issue while agriculture focuses on market-driven production. Study participants stressed the need for stronger emphasis on nutrition within the Agricultural Sector Policy and Investment Framework (PIF), as well as defining a clear role for agriculture in the NNP.

They also highlight the need for stronger coordination for nutrition both horizontally and vertically - within ministries as well as between federal, state and kebele levels. Study participants also shared their perspectives on what factors are influential for policy-making on agriculture-nutrition integration. The current global focus on nutrition and donor interest is seen as important, along with Ethiopian networks such as the Nutrition Development Partners' Forum. Furthermore, stakeholders highlighted the role of data and evidence as particularly important for the Ethiopian cultural context, with stakeholders pointing to lessons learned from programmes and research and reports such as the Cost of Hunger in Ethiopia and the Lancet Series, as being influential.

Challenges to integrating nutrition and agriculture include the lack of an institution to oversee implementation of multisectoral nutrition policies and programmes. Another barrier is the lack of quick impact solutions for nutrition; participants said that investments in nutrition may not be visible in the immediate future, making political will challenging to obtain. To make nutrition visible, clear communication of evidence and linkages across sectors is necessary. Study participants stressed that information from national and international research and programme impact evaluations that support linkages between agriculture and nutrition need to be communicated to decision-makers.

Knowledge and Evidence

Study participants voiced their perception that there is a lack of knowledge and evidence on agriculture-nutrition pathways in Ethiopia, with particular emphasis on the lack of nutrition knowledge within the agricultural sector. However, their ideas on these pathways indicate a growing awareness of multisectoral approaches to nutrition. They referenced pathways such as women's empowerment and control of resources, increasing incomes and productivity of nutritious foods, and using behaviour change communication (BCC) to promote dietary diversity. They also shared a number of ideas on practical ways to make agriculture nutrition-sensitive, including investing in food preservation and storage, improving production of small livestock, and using information communication technology (ICT) to reach the public with nutrition-sensitive agriculture messages.

Confirming stakeholder perspectives on the need for more knowledge, the structured evidence review found a lack of strong research support for agriculture-nutrition pathways in Ethiopia. Most of the 14 studies identified were mapped to Pathway 1 (Agriculture as a direct source of household food consumption), with fewer studies for each of the other pathways. Findings from one study indicated that home production alone was not sufficient for households to achieve nutrition security. Another found that livestock ownership and milk consumption was associated with linear growth in children, but further evidence suggested that agriculture and nutrition training is needed to address factors such as cultural and religious taboos related to feeding animal source foods to children. In one study, the urban poor were found to be more vulnerable to food price increases than rural households. Adolescent girls were more food-insecure than boys in both rural and urban households. Another interesting finding was that land ownership had a protective effect against food insecurity, indicating that policies to strengthen women's land tenure rights could buffer women from the impacts of food price increases. This was also discussed in interviews, with participants citing women's lack of land as a constraint to addressing nutrition.

While these research findings indicate strong potential for various policies and programmes, further evidence for what works is needed, as well as an understanding of regional - both cultural and geographical - differences relating to agriculture-nutrition linkages. Study participants also stressed the need for more information on practical and cost-effective solutions for integration, and a particular need for knowledge and consensus on indicators for use in multisectoral nutrition programming.

Agricultural programming also needs to be aware of potential negative consequences on nutrition; for example, land allocation to cash and export crops may overlook the need for local consumption of nutrient-dense crops. Study participants pointed out that regions with the highest crop production also have the highest stunting rates. They suggested that this may be due to men, rather than women, controlling agricultural income in these regions, but further analysis is needed to understand the reasons for these high rates and the potential connections between agriculture and nutrition across regions.

Capacity and Financial Resources

The LANEA study looked at capacity at individual, community, organizational and structural levels, as well as the sufficiency of financial resources for agriculture-nutrition integration. Study participants described capacity development needs across each one of these levels, particularly emphasizing the gap between knowledge and implementation. They pointed to the need for nutritionists to understand the agricultural sector and for the agriculture sector to understand nutrition, stressing that the government, NGOs, donors and the private sector all have limited experience with nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

To strengthen the knowledge base, participants stated that capacity is needed within academic and research institutions to include nutrition in agricultural curricula and to conduct action-oriented research investigating agriculture's impact on nutrition outcomes. Programme staff also need capacity development; participants expressed that agriculture Development Agents (DAs) and Health Extension Workers (HEWs) need training on how to apply a nutrition lens to projects and implement nutrition-sensitive approaches. Also, diverse skill sets and approaches may be needed to address causes of malnutrition across the different livelihood zones; thus, capacity development needs to be shaped around these needs.

Capacity development is also needed at district and kebele levels. Stakeholders suggested that this could begin with better dissemination of the NNP and engagement in dialogues, as well as creating nutrition focal points within each of the 9 ministries. The coverage of current nutrition-sensitive programmes remains limited, with large-scale programmes like the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) and Agriculture Growth Program (AGP) only reaching up to 10-15 percent of the population. This is partly a question of funding - study participants reported that there is no funding for nutrition outside the Ministry of Health, and without a government mandate to integrate nutrition and agriculture, commitment to funding and investment in multisectoral approaches to nutrition will remain limited.

Study Recommendations

Based on the study interviews and stakeholder workshop discussions, as well as the gaps identified through the evidence review, a number of recommendations for how to move forward on integrating nutrition and agriculture in Ethiopia has been identified.

Politics and Governance

1. Make nutrition a priority within guiding policy documents such as the GTP2, NNP2 and PIF.
2. Strengthen existing coordination mechanisms, including identifying/establishing a high-level institution to oversee implementation of multisectoral nutrition policies, fora for knowledge sharing, and nutrition focal points and flagship programmes.
3. Support horizontal and vertical coordination between federal, zonal, district and kebele institutions, and within ministries; engage districts and kebeles and ensure messages reach lower levels.
4. Strengthen the capacity of the agricultural sector to integrate nutrition-sensitive interventions into agricultural programmes. This should include strengthening of nutrition case team at the MoA and the establishment of nutrition case teams at the regional level.
5. Identify and gain consensus on use of key indicators for integrated nutrition-sensitive programming; use indicators to increase accountability for nutrition.
6. Incentivize, recognize and value contributions to multisectoral work for nutrition.
7. Harmonize nutrition-related engagements/efforts on agricultural and health sectors including messages given to households.
8. Support efforts to improve land tenure rights, especially for women.

Knowledge and Evidence

9. Support agriculture and health research institutes and universities to conduct cross-sector research, including efforts to understand and respond to regional and cultural differences that impact nutrition.
10. Study agriculture-nutrition pathways related to women's empowerment, time and resource control.
11. Conduct impact evaluations to investigate what works in integrated agriculture-nutrition programmes.
12. Develop communication methods and tools/resources, to reach different audiences, from policy-makers to field staff to smallholder farming households.
13. Learn lessons/best practices from other successful initiatives (e.g. HIV/AIDS, malaria, polio).

Capacity and Financial Resources

14. Build government, NGO staff and donor knowledge of nutrition-sensitive agriculture and demonstrate the economic value of a multisectoral approach to nutrition to leverage funding.
15. Include nutrition in training curricula for agriculture professionals and field workers.
16. Support efforts to build capacity of women's and youth community organizations.
17. Consider geographic and cultural differences in design of programmes.
18. Leverage the private sector to address nutrition through the food and agriculture system.
19. Support capacity-building for data analysis and research dissemination.
20. Scale up funding for integrated, long-term approaches to agriculture-nutrition integration.

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