



SHiFT: Sustainable Healthy Diets through Food Systems Transformation

Initiative Lead and Co-Lead

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Primary CGIAR Action Area

Systems Transformation

Estimated 2022 - 2024 Budget

\$30 - \$45 M

Challenge

Food systems are not providing healthy, safe, affordable, and desirable foods for all: healthy diets are unaffordable for 3 billion people, disproportionately affecting women and children. Poor quality diets are a key driver of all forms of malnutrition (<https://bit.ly/3mJvMRU>) and cause 11 million premature adult deaths each year (<https://bit.ly/3wLNMJH>). Consumption of unsafe foods is responsible for 600 million foodborne illnesses and nearly 500,000 deaths yearly, mostly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) (<https://bit.ly/3a7LQrx>).

Food systems contribute significantly to environmental degradation, are responsible for more than 25 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, and operate beyond planetary boundaries (<https://bit.ly/3e2xI9o>). While food systems are an important source of employment in LMICs, many jobs are in the informal sector, often with low and uncertain income and poor labor conditions, especially for migrant workers, women and youth (<https://bit.ly/32cPX0Z>) (<https://bit.ly/3tfKkLy>).

Food demand and dietary patterns are rapidly evolving due to urbanization, changes in income, women's employment, and developments in technology, food marketing, and public policy (<https://bit.ly/3uRKmJl>) (<https://bit.ly/3uLGWIE>) (<https://bit.ly/3mM2XV4>). These changes encourage shifts in food environments that promote ready-to-eat, convenient, cheap, but often ultra-processed foods that are associated with poor health (<https://bit.ly/32cVrZM>).

There is global consensus on the urgency of transforming food systems and of the need to better understand and shape consumer demand towards sustainable healthy diets. We posit that the primary goals of transformation should be to improve diets to address the global burden of malnutrition while safeguarding planetary health and reducing poverty and inequity. Governance issues caused by the misalignment of government, private sector, and civil society goals often impede change, as does the absence of known transformative pathways and of evidence and tools to guide food system transformation to achieve sustainable healthy diets for all.

Objective

Starting from the diet, nutrition, and health challenges faced by the poor and vulnerable in LMICs, this initiative aims to identify effective policy options, strengthen capacity, and develop robust metrics and tools to guide decision-making towards transforming food systems through pull, push and policy mechanisms to promote and support consumption of sustainable healthy diets for all and improve livelihoods, gender equity, and social inclusiveness.

These goals could be in conflict, as actions that improve diets may not always be economically wise, socially inclusive, or environmentally friendly. This initiative will analyze such trade-offs to better understand how to optimize healthy and safe diets while also fostering positive impacts on poverty, gender and youth equity, and environmental sustainability. In our target countries, we will analyze the political economy of food system transformation, focusing on barriers preventing adoption of sustainable healthy diets.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Use rigorous and standardized methods to document the drivers of food choices and identify a set of policies and innovations to shape urban and rural food environments to assist consumers, especially the nutritionally and socially vulnerable, make healthier, safer, and environmentally sustainable food choices;

2. Develop, evaluate (through causal impact evaluations), and build a body of scalable evidence-based enabling and incentivizing policies and innovations with MSMEs and other formal and informal actors (including smallholder producers) to help deliver sustainable healthy diets, gender equity, and social inclusion (including youth);

3. Develop multidisciplinary, participatory methods to address trade-offs in interests, outcomes, or impacts occurring in food systems transformation and identify solutions to foster adoption of scalable, evidence-based innovation packages;

4. Generate evidence-based governance and policy solutions to help food system actors incentivize production, improve delivery, and enable consumption of sustainable healthy diets and address political and social barriers preventing their uptake and implementation.

Theory of Change

This initiative aims to identify transformative policies and innovations, strengthen capacity, and develop robust metrics and tools to guide decision-making towards food system transformations that support and enable consumption of sustainable healthy diets for all, while improving livelihoods, income, gender equity and social inclusiveness. The initiative will do so through pull, push and policy mechanisms by (1) fostering technological, policy, and societal innovations to stimulate the demand for and consumption of sustainable healthy diets; (2) helping micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and informal businesses employing women, youth, and marginalized groups to respond to rapidly changing demand and deliver healthy, safe, and affordable foods; (3) identifying novel governance and policy solutions that move food systems beyond the current status quo; (4) developing multidisciplinary approaches to work with stakeholders on navigating trade-offs; and (5) helping to identify and promote transformation pathways that support consumption of sustainable healthy diets. The initiative will focus on nutritious (nutrient-rich) foods, including fruits and vegetables, (biofortified) pulses, nuts, and select animal-sourced foods. We will work in a set of target countries together with key food system actors (e.g., MSMEs, smallholder producers, and poor consumers); national and subnational policy makers; innovation and scaling partners (e.g., civil society, UN, and private sector); and in consultation with regional partners. This collaborative program will generate scalable evidence-based policy innovations; identify policy lock-ins and barriers to food system transformation; establish road maps for overcoming these barriers; and assist national stakeholders in initiating their country's food system transformations. Ultimately, this initiative will allow ALL individuals-especially the most nutritionally and socially vulnerable-to consume sustainable healthy diets comprising nutritious, safe, affordable, and acceptable foods produced by sustainable and resilient food systems that promote fair and equitable livelihoods.

This initiative will work closely with the following One CGIAR initiatives: HER+: Harnessing equality for resilience in the agri-food system; National Policies and Strategies for Food, Land and Water Systems Transformation; Rethinking Food Markets and Value Chains for Inclusion and Sustainability; Resilient Cities through Sustainable Urban and Peri-urban Agri-Food Systems; Harnessing Digital Technologies for Timely Decision-Making across Food, Land, and Water Systems; Market-Driven, Resilient and Nutritious Agri-Food Systems in the Humid Zones of West and Central Africa (WCA); Resilient and Sustainable LAC Agri-Food Systems: Driving Global Food Security, Inclusive Growth, and Reduced Out-Migration; Transforming Agri-Food Systems in South Asia (TAFSSA).

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Highlights

Challenge: Food systems are failing to provide access to sustainable healthy diets for 3 billion people and to create inclusive opportunities for the poor, women, youth, and other vulnerable groups. Poor quality diets are a key driver of all forms of malnutrition and cause 22% of premature adult deaths annually.

What is different/unique about the initiative: This initiative uniquely starts from a consumer perspective and focuses on how food system transformation can ensure that all individuals consume a sustainable healthy diet (defined as nutritious, protective against non-communicable diseases, safe, sustainable, affordable, and culturally acceptable [FAO 2019, <https://bit.ly/3a4K7TV>]). Focus foods include fruits and vegetables, (biofortified) pulses, nuts, and select animal-sourced foods.

What we will do: We will study the choices that different food system actors make vis-à-vis the healthfulness, safety, sustainability, affordability, and desirability of foods; analyze the demographic, sociocultural, economic, and political drivers of these choices and the barriers to adoption of sustainable healthy diets; and co-design and test relevant innovations that help food systems promote and enable consumption of sustainable healthy diets.

How we will work: We will focus on nutritious foods in a set of target countries with special attention to the informal sector, a major source of food and income for the poor, and to urban and rural food systems, acknowledging the role of women, youth, and vulnerable groups. We will focus on access, control, and decision-making leading to the co-design and implementation of innovations and policies with key stakeholders.

What we will achieve: This initiative will generate a suite of robust tools, scalable evidence-based innovations and context-specific policy options while building the capacity needed amongst actors to transform food systems so that they support and enable consumption of sustainable diets for all while improving livelihoods, income, gender equity and social inclusiveness.

Work Packages

	Scope of Work	3-year Outcomes
Consumers and Their Food Environment (pull)	This work package addresses consumer demand and food environment innovations to stimulate demand for and consumption of sustainable healthy diets, with emphasis on informal markets and the rapidly changing food retail sector. We will develop analytical frameworks and tools and use causal impact assessment methods to evaluate implementation, impact, and cost of innovations.	In 8 target countries, food system stakeholders are made aware of, understand, and are interested in -and in 2 of these countries are implementing- scalable evidence-based interventions and policies to increase the demand for healthy sustainable diets.
MSMEs and the Informal Sector (push)	This work package will explore business and policy incentives to shape the ability of MSMEs and informal businesses (including food catering and street food vending) in LMICs to deliver and promote healthy, safe, and affordable foods; create inclusive income opportunities for women, youth, and vulnerable groups; and increase efficiencies and reduce waste.	In 8 target countries, policy makers are made aware of, understand, and are interested in -and in 2 of these countries are implementing- scalable evidence-based interventions and policies to improve the ability of MSMEs and informal businesses to deliver healthy, safe, and affordable foods and maintain or increase decent employment (ILO, https://bit.ly/2S6ONT6) and income opportunities.
Governance and Inclusive Food Systems (policy)	This work package will identify food system 'lock-ins' and barriers resulting from the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of incumbent actors and propose contextualized and evidence-informed governance and policy solutions for removing active resistance and transitioning food systems towards more equitable outcomes.	In 8 target countries, this work package leads to increased awareness, a better understanding, and the acknowledgement amongst the different stakeholders of the importance of addressing existing frictions and barriers that lock food systems into undesirable trajectories, leading to clear interests (for ~20 percent of these stakeholders) to address the barriers identified.
Trade-Off Scenario Analysis	This work package will focus on scenario analyses and will develop tools and approaches to work with stakeholders to identify desirable solutions and support decision-making around trade-offs related to multiple priorities and conflicting interests, values, and outcomes.	Decision support tool for trade-off scenario and analysis will have been developed, tested, and applied in at least four of the program's targeted countries, contributing to raised awareness and improved capacity of food system stakeholders to navigate potential trade-offs emerging from food system interventions and policies.
Catalyzing Food System Transformation	This cross-cutting work package will identify potential transformative technological, societal, and policy pathways that emerge from the other work packages and systematically explore how to help stakeholders concretize these pathways in their own context and ensure that countries can successfully transform their food systems towards sustainable healthy diets.	In at least two, and possibly four countries with the most tangible progress, the outcome of this WP will be the active involvement of key stakeholders in the identification, analysis and debate around a set of transformative pathways, to establish consultative processes exploring ways these transformative pathways can be implemented.

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Impact Area Contributions

Nutrition, health & food security	By focusing on marginalized consumers and their food environments, our initiative will help improve diet quality and safety, increase the number of people in 8 target countries who demand and can afford (by 50 million) and consume (by 3 million) a sustainable healthy diet, and thereby contribute to reducing the burden of undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, diet-related non-communicable diseases, and foodborne illnesses.
Poverty reduction, livelihoods & jobs	The initiative will provide evidence and identify co-created solutions on how food environment stakeholders can enhance employment and income for poor formal and informal actors, while mitigating trade-offs between delivering healthy and affordable foods and achieving jobs and income goals in diverse contexts.
Gender equality, youth & social inclusion	Malnutrition originates in intergenerational processes of social exclusion. We will therefore generate evidence to address unequal access to healthy diets, employment, and income and the inequitable processes and policies that create them, while focusing on poverty, gender, and youth, and on how aspects of marginalization interact in different contexts.
Climate adaptation & greenhouse gas reduction	As a secondary impact, the initiative will generate evidence to promote the uptake of practices and technologies to increase the efficient distribution of food and reduce food loss in the food environment, thereby contributing to overall climate adaptation goals.
Environmental health & biodiversity	Our work on sustainable healthy diets will stimulate consumer demand for a diverse set of sustainably produced foods. This, together with work with MSMEs and informal food environments, will generate a secondary impact area by contributing to demand-pull for nature-positive shifts in the production system with a focus on smallholder farmers.

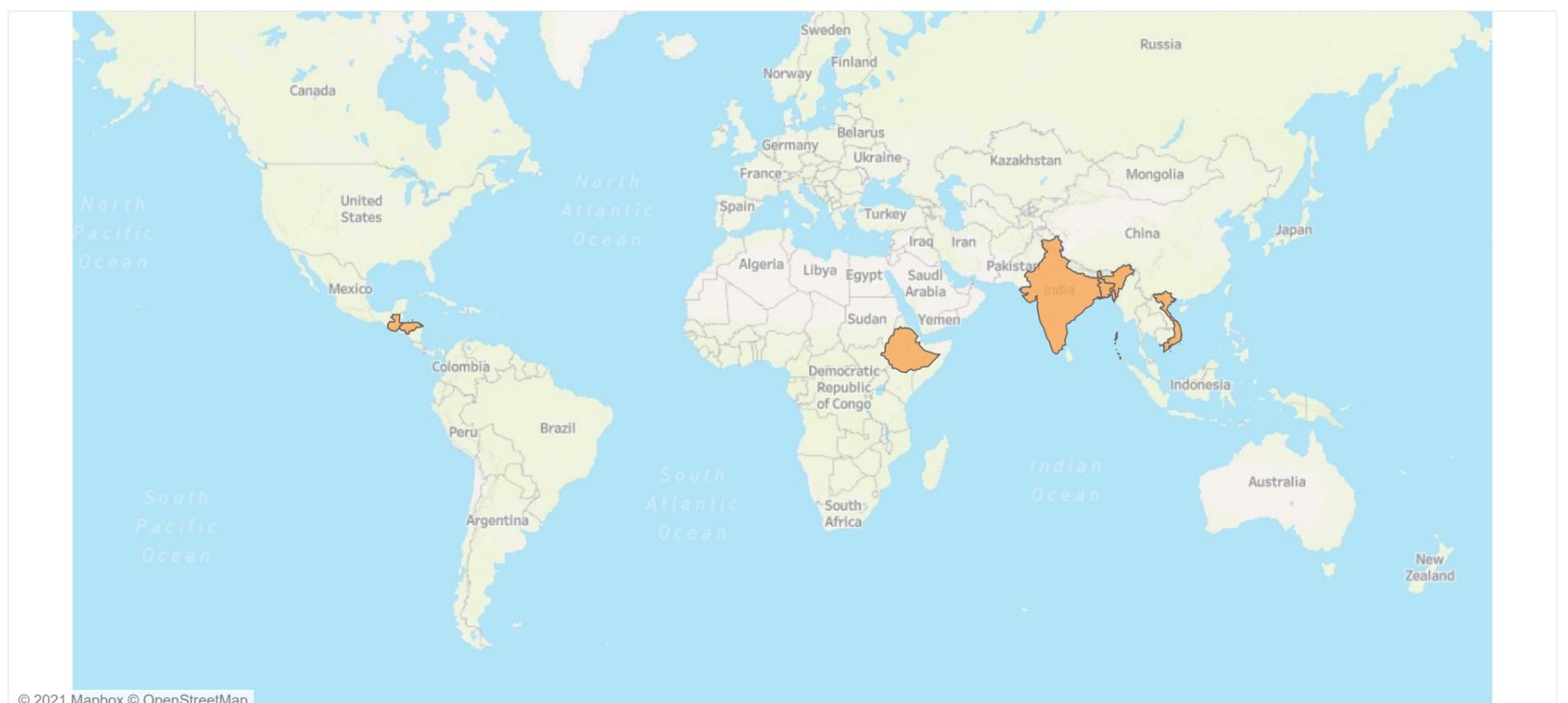
Impact on SDGs



Regions

Global East and Southern Africa (ESA), Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), South Asia (SA), South East Asia and the Pacific (SEA), West and Central Africa (WCA)

Countries



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Innovations

Food System Learning Center - This Center will host an open-access knowledge and information repository of frameworks, guidelines, metrics, and tools to assist global and national stakeholders in 'food systems for sustainable healthy diets' analysis. The Center will also include a Food System Idea Exchange (<https://bit.ly/3dijqx7>), a platform for learning, connecting, and communicating about food systems.

Decision Support Tool for Food System Trade-Off Analysis - This innovation package will be developed, tested, and used in the program's targeted countries to help food system stakeholders identify and navigate trade-offs resulting from food system transformation interventions and policies and to prioritize outcomes as needed.

Food Systems Country Profile Process Guide - This innovation will support subnational and national stakeholders in navigating and interpreting food systems data relevant for decision making, weighing potential trade-offs, and co-designing interventions to increase demand for, access to, and affordability and consumption of sustainable healthy diets in ways that enhance livelihoods.

Food System Transformation Strategy Development - This innovation package will support food systems stakeholders from target countries to co-design and implement a national roadmap pursuant to UNFSS dialogues and comprised of a coherent, multisectoral set of actions (interventions, investments, and policies) necessary to catalyze food system transformation efforts towards sustainable healthy diets.

Key Partners

Demand	Academic, Training and Research	IMMANA and ANH
	Government	Ethiopia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Nigeria (Ministries: Agriculture; Health; Education);
	Multilateral	African Union, ECOWAS, NEPAD, AGRA
	Other	Consumer groups, farmers' cooperatives
Innovation	Academic, Training and Research	City University UK, NIN Vietnam, INSP Mexico, INTA Chile, INFORMAS, local Universities, EPHI Ethiopia, ICDDR Bangladesh, local universities, INCAP Guatemala
	Other	Wageningen University and Research, French research institutes (CIRAD, INRAe and IRD), World Vegetable Center, GAIN
Scaling	Government	National, local, and city governments
	International NGO	HKI, Rikolto International
	Multilateral	UN agencies: WFP, FAO, UNEP
	Other	Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, World Sustainable Urban Food Centre of València, EAT Forum, Eat Right India, One Planet Sustainable Food Systems Program, ICLEI/RUAF; Consumer groups
	Private Sector	Food Action Alliance, World Economic Forum

SHiFT: Sustainable Healthy Diets through Food Systems Transformation: Theory of Change

Challenges

- **Food systems (FS) fail** to provide equitable access to healthy diets and decent jobs and to ensure environmental sustainability
- **Poor quality diets** are the key driver of excess mortality, malnutrition and foodborne illnesses
- **Food environments** offer cheap, convenient, unhealthy food options; healthy foods are unaffordable for many
- **Governance lock-ins** impede change, as actors have different goals and interests

Demand partners

- African Union, ECOWAS, etc.
- Ministries of agriculture, health, and education in 8 target countries
- Consumer organizations

Work Packages

- 1. Consumers and Food Environments:** increase consumption of sustainable healthy diets
- 2. MSMEs and Informal Sector:** creation of healthy, safe, affordable foods & inclusive job opportunities
- 3. Governance and Inclusive FS:** policy solutions that promote equitable outcomes
- 4. Trade-off Scenario Analysis:** support decision-making around trade-offs and identify win-win solutions
- 5. Catalyzing FS Transformation:** support transformation towards sustainable healthy diets

Innovation partners

- Universities and knowledge institutions (e.g. WUR, NIN, etc.)
- NGOs
- SMEs/private sector
- World Vegetable Center
- *One CGIAR initiatives**

Outputs

- **Rigorous methods and metrics** to analyze food environments in LMICs developed
- **Evidence on impact** of co-created innovations to increase consumption of healthy sustainable diets generated
- **Capacities of key actors** to incorporate evidence into policy strengthened
- **Frameworks, process guides, support tools, and protocols** to identify and quantify trade-offs and support decision-making developed

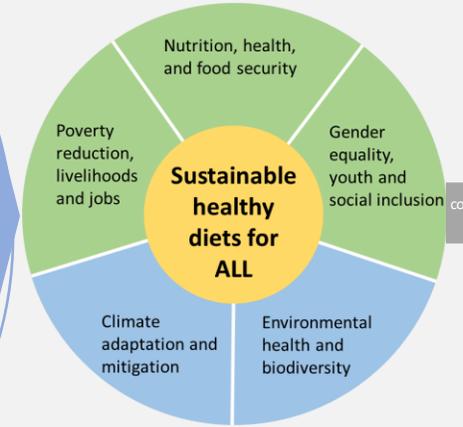
Scaling partners

- SME business
- Local and national Gov. NGOs
- UN agencies
- GAIN
- ANH
- WEF
- RIIs (SA, ESA)

Outcomes

- **Scalable evidence-based interventions & policies** to increase demand for healthy diets discussed (8 countries in 3 regions); implemented (2 countries)
- **Policy lock-ins and barriers to FS transformation** identified and **road maps to overcome those barriers** established (8 countries); process initiated (2 countries)
- **National & subnational stakeholders lead FS transformation** and have the means to address trade-offs in 8 countries

Impact



SDGs



2022

2024

2030

sphere of control

sphere of influence

sphere of interest

* OneCG initiatives partnerships

- RIIs (South Asia, E. Africa, LAC, etc.)
- HER+
- Resilient cities
- Rethinking food markets
- Harnessing digital technologies
- National policies and strategies

One CGIAR Impact Areas
■ = primary impact area
■ = secondary impact area