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Investing in rural people

## Mainstreaming Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture at IFAD

### Action Plan 2016-2018

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
COSOP	country strategic opportunities programme
REACH	Renewed Efforts against Child Hunger and Undernutrition
PMD	Programme Management Department
RIDE	Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness
RIMS	Results and Impact Management System
SKD	Strategy and Knowledge Department
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
UNSCN	United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition

# Mainstreaming nutrition-sensitive agriculture at IFAD

## Action Plan 2016-2018

### I. Introduction and context

1. With the growing importance of improving nutrition on the international development agenda, IFAD is now placing greater emphasis on integrating nutrition into its work. This plan of action serves to support and guide this commitment during the Tenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD10).
2. Worldwide, nearly 25 per cent of children under five years of age suffer from chronic undernutrition. At the same time, more than 2 billion people suffer from micronutrient deficiencies. These forms of malnutrition, along with obesity and overweight, lead to health problems and losses in economic productivity.
3. Poor nutrition is a significant determinant of poverty. Over their lifetimes, malnourished individuals can earn 10 per cent less than well-nourished ones. Undernutrition in Africa can lead to economic losses that vary from 1.9 to 16.5 per cent of GDP. Good nutrition is thus not just an outcome of economic growth and social development, but an essential input as well. Investing in nutrition through agriculture is not just a social good. It is sound development policy and good economics.
4. The increasing demand by country governments and development partners for nutrition-enhancing agricultural investments reflects recognition of the importance of agriculture and the food system to nutrition and the role that nutrition plays in economic and social development. For example, more than 50 countries have now committed to the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement. IFAD must be prepared to respond to these demands.

### II. IFAD, agriculture and nutrition

5. "Improving the nutritional level of the poorest populations in developing countries" is a principal objective of the Agreement Establishing IFAD. Improving nutrition through better food production systems is thus at the heart of IFAD's work.
6. Of course, other sectors have roles to play, but agriculture's essential and singular contribution to improving nutrition is to ensure that diverse, nutritious foods are available, affordable and adequate to meet the needs of people of all ages at all times. IFAD's attention to nutrition, then, is not an add-on but an essential part of what IFAD already does. Making projects nutrition sensitive will also improve the effectiveness of IFAD's investments in reducing poverty in the longer run.
7. A nutrition-sensitive project has explicit nutrition objectives, activities and indicators. It will have applied a nutrition lens to project design and will have a defined pathway through which it can maximize its contribution to improving nutrition.
8. Such a project will have identified strategic points of intervention in the production and food system. These interventions should be catalytic and go beyond simply increasing agricultural productivity and raising incomes or production. To ensure that changes in production result in changes in consumption, investments should also be made in activities that empower women and ensure that households' knowledge, attitudes and practices lead to healthy food choices and diets.

9. IFAD's actions must also reflect the fact that determinants of malnutrition are multisectoral, involving food, health and care. Nutrition-sensitive projects should connect and coordinate with interventions from other sectors so that the determinants are adequately addressed. Policy engagement and dialogue are essential.

### III. An action plan for IFAD

10. To achieve these ambitions, IFAD needs a clear plan to mainstream nutrition in its work.
11. The goal of IFAD's work in nutrition and agriculture is to address problems of malnutrition in all its forms (undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overnutrition) and to improve nutritional levels of poor rural people, especially smallholders, in developing countries.
12. The objective is to increase the nutritional impact of the Fund's investments and of its advocacy and policy engagement at global and national levels. IFAD works primarily through agriculture and food-based approaches to improve the diets of rural families in terms of both quality and quantity.
13. IFAD plays a unique role among development organizations dealing with agriculture and nutrition. It focuses specifically on the needs of smallholders and poor rural people, seeking to improve their nutrition by combining solid technical knowledge with the financing of investments in agriculture and food-based approaches.
14. Certain principles should guide the approaches and activities set out in this action plan. These principles include seeking to improve nutrition through agriculture and food-based approaches, and ensuring that investments are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable, are gender sensitive and do not take actions that negatively affect nutritional outcomes.
15. IFAD will work to achieve the following strategic outcomes:
  - (i) Nutrition-sensitive projects shape agriculture and food systems in ways that contribute to nutritious diets;
  - (ii) Projects promote behaviour-changing communications to improve food choices and related preparation and post-harvest practices;
  - (iii) Projects promote the equality and empowerment of women in ways that help them improve nutrition for themselves, their children and their families;
  - (iv) Activities in policy engagement, advocacy and partnerships, as well as research and knowledge management, contribute to better governance, a supportive enabling environment for projects and more effective projects.
16. Strategic outcomes will be achieved through actions in five mutually supportive areas. The first four are investment related. Area 5 relates to IFAD's internal capacity to deliver.
17. Action area 1: Operations. Design and implement nutrition-sensitive projects, country strategies and grants.
18. As indicators of success in this action area, by the end of IFAD10:
  - (a) All new country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) include a nutrition situation assessment, specifying how COSOP strategic objectives relate to improving nutrition;
  - (b) One third of new project design reports are nutrition sensitive.
19. Action area 2: Capacity strengthening. Develop and strengthen the technical, analytical and managerial capacities of implementing partners, including communities and government institutions.

20. Under this action area, IFAD will carry out a limited number of regional training and learning events in the regions and will also pilot fellowships to bring young nutrition professionals to IFAD headquarters for short periods for experience in integrating nutrition into agriculture. As a result, our implementing partners will enhance their capacity to support design and implementation of nutrition-sensitive projects and COSOPs.
21. Action area 3: Policy influence, engagement and partnerships. Work, engage and partner with governments, international organizations, private-sector firms, NGOs and other stakeholders at global and national levels to pursue effective governance of nutrition, an enabling environment for nutrition-sensitive investments, and effective projects and knowledge generation.
22. In this area, IFAD will build on its current participation in global and country governance structures for nutrition, including the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition, United Nations System Network for Scaling up Nutrition and Renewed Efforts against Child Hunger and Undernutrition (REACH). IFAD can also work with regional platforms such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.
23. Through policy engagement and dialogue, IFAD can seek complementary actions on nutrition from other sectors to achieve programmatic and policy synergies and create an enabling environment for its projects. At country, regional and global levels, it will advocate for the role of food and agriculture in addressing problems of malnutrition, and will pursue operational partnerships with other organizations.
24. Action area 4: Knowledge and evidence. Build and manage the evidence base to support project design and implementation, including research and other studies, monitoring and evaluation activities, and communications encouraging the uptake and use of findings.
25. IFAD will actively engage with global and national research and knowledge communities. Its Strategy and Knowledge Department (SKD) and Programme Management Department (PMD) will develop a clear, operationally relevant knowledge agenda, under which IFAD will function as a research user and an active research partner. It will develop an effective dissemination strategy to ensure that the information and findings generated are used to make IFAD's work more effective.
26. Guidelines, tools, how-to-do notes and other publications and activities will be developed. The approach will prioritize innovation and learning that can then be used as a basis for scaling up. IFAD will also seek to develop a strong system of monitoring for management and will strengthen the Results and Impact Management System (RIMS) and baseline and other project-level surveys with regard to nutrition (e.g. piloting a dietary diversity score). To improve investment effectiveness, IFAD should also carry out a programme of impact assessment of its nutrition-sensitive investments.
27. Action area 5: Organizational capacities at IFAD. Ensure IFAD's internal capacity to deliver the action plan effectively, including having sufficient financial resources and strengthening its technical team to provide adequate leadership and guidance.
28. Staff from across the divisions are already working together operationally on planning, delivery, communications and capacity-strengthening. In addition – and complementing their usual work in project design and supervision through capacity-strengthening events and working together in the field – technical specialists in nutrition are building a cadre of trusted consultants with expertise in nutrition-sensitive projects.

29. The success of the action plan depends on ensuring that IFAD itself has the capability to deliver. To gauge its progress, IFAD will design a procedure to categorize and track projects as being "nutrition sensitive". Progress will be reported through the Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness (RIDE).
30. Success also depends on garnering the support of those who will actually implement the plan: staff and partners across the organization. Consequently, IFAD will undertake a range of outreach and in-reach activities to raise awareness, deepen commitment and support the actions.

# Mainstreaming Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture at IFAD Action Plan 2016–2018

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## Introduction

The importance of improving nutrition has recently risen on the international development agenda and also at IFAD. In line with its Founding Agreement, IFAD has responded with greater emphasis on integrating nutrition into its work, public statements, and corporate documents.

To support and guide this renewed commitment in a more systematic way, this document presents a plan of action to mainstream nutrition into IFAD's investments, advocacy, and knowledge management activities during the IFAD10 replenishment period. It provides a brief overview of the motivations for IFAD's involvement in nutrition and the context in which this work will take place, in terms of an understanding of nutrition, the global development agenda, the contribution that IFAD's work in agriculture can make, and how this aligns with IFAD's own mission and commitments.

The document also sets out a framework to guide IFAD's actions in this area, including a statement about goal, objectives, role, outcomes, and areas of action. Four of these areas have to do with the kinds of actions IFAD needs to pursue to be effective in reducing malnutrition through its work in agriculture and food systems (operations; capacity strengthening among partners; policy influence, engagement, and partnerships; knowledge and evidence) and the fifth focuses on the organizational capacities IFAD needs to deliver on the action plan.

While this framework provides a comprehensive approach to mainstreaming, limited available resources make it imperative to identify priorities. The main focus of current funding available through grants from the Governments of Canada and Germany is to support mainstreaming of nutrition into project design. Thus, within the more general needed areas of action, the specific activities identified in this plan focus on the human and technical resources needed to achieve mainstreaming goals of reaching 100% of COSOPs and one-third of projects with a nutrition-sensitive design by the end of IFAD10. To ensure a sustainable outcome and consolidate IFAD's leadership in the area of investments in nutrition and agriculture, additional resources are likely to be needed, particularly for research and knowledge generation; policy engagement and capacity strengthening, especially at country level; and actual investment in projects, including monitoring and evaluation.

## The Context

### Why nutrition is important

Good nutrition is fundamental to well-being at all ages. Good nutrition for mothers and children encourages growth that permits children to reach their full physical and intellectual potential. The impact is multi-generational, as good nutrition makes a major contribution to taking people out of poverty. Well-nourished mothers give birth to healthier babies, and well-nourished adults have higher productivity and higher incomes. With good nutrition, people enjoy better lives. They can maximize their contributions to their families and to society and to overall economic growth and development.

Malnutrition has three major forms – undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and obesity and overweight<sup>1</sup> – and affects children and adults alike. Undernutrition remains the largest contributor to child deaths worldwide. Nearly 25 per cent of children under 5 years of age are chronically undernourished. In South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, home to three-quarters of these children, the figure is 40 per cent. Children who are chronically undernourished in the critical first thousand days beginning at conception can suffer irreversible damage to their physical and mental development.

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<sup>1</sup> Malnutrition is caused by inadequate, excessive or imbalanced intakes of carbohydrates, protein, or fats (macronutrients) and vitamins and minerals (micronutrients). Undernutrition is a result of inadequate nutrition, whereas overweight and obesity result from an excess of certain food components, such as fats and sugars, relative to levels of activity. Micronutrient malnutrition results from deficiencies or excesses of specific vitamins and minerals.



At the same time, more than 2 billion people suffer from micronutrient malnutrition. Although micronutrient deficiencies affect a child's growth, they significantly harm an adult's well-being and productivity as well. Iron deficiency causes fatigue and tiredness; vitamin A deficiency can lead to blindness, diminishes the ability to fight infections, and contributes to maternal mortality; deficiency in iodine can have severe negative impacts on intellectual development.

Poor nutrition is thus a significant determinant of poverty. Due to impacts on labor productivity, over their lifetimes, malnourished individuals can earn 10 per cent less than well-nourished ones. Undernutrition in Africa can lead to economic losses that vary by country from 1.9 to 16.5 per cent of GDP. In addition, governments end up spending billions of dollars on programs to deal with poor nutrition and its consequences.

Improvements in nutrition represent an important dimension of non-income poverty and a foundation for building human capacity for future development.

### Nutrition in a changing world

With overall economic and social development, urbanization, improved connections between rural and urban areas, and the rising importance of rural non-farm economies, rural lives are being transformed. Globalization, climate change, and technological advances are changing agriculture and food systems. Modern and traditional food supply chains co-exist, providing links to international as well as local food markets; consumers have higher incomes and better education than before, and at the same time, are being targeted with more information and more intensive marketing campaigns. As a result, what people consume and feed their families, including how they care and feed for the smallest children, is also changing.

For the smallholders that are IFAD's prime beneficiaries, these dietary and food system changes offer opportunities to improve livelihoods and at the same time improve their diets and their nutrition, whether producers are buying from the market or consuming out of their own production. To rise to this challenge, IFAD's investments must be appropriately targeted, designed, and implemented so that they take advantage of these opportunities. These investments can help improve diets and so nutrition for all members of the household throughout their lives.

Undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, for people of all ages, are by far the greatest nutritional concerns among IFAD's beneficiaries. However, IFAD must also be aware of how rural transformation will increasingly affect nutritional problems in the future. Food consumption patterns will potentially shift away from traditional foods (which often incorporate important considerations of biodiversity) to ones that have greater proportions of processed foods and are higher in fats and sugars. This will happen even as diets become more diverse, with more animal protein and micronutrient-rich fruits and vegetables. As a consequence, overweight and obesity will increase, as has already happened in Latin America and countries in the Near East and North Africa.

In order to ensure that project beneficiaries of all ages enjoy a sustainable, balanced, quality diet, IFAD's actions aim to address the challenges to good nutrition comprehensively. True to IFAD's mission, these actions should focus primarily on the contributions that agriculture and food can make to improving nutrition. The complex dynamics of a rapidly changing rural world present both opportunities and challenges to achieving this goal. With specific respect to nutrition and agriculture, we know that increasing agricultural productivity and raising incomes or production are on their own not enough. Changes in incomes and production must be proactively transformed into changes in consumption. Investments should be accompanied by activities that empower women and promote changes within a household in knowledge, attitudes, and practices about food choices and healthy diets.

IFAD's actions must also reflect the fact that the determinants of malnutrition are multisectoral. While for adults a healthier diet can make all the difference to their well-being, for children, simultaneously addressing the three main determinants of nutrition – namely, provision of adequate food, a healthy environment (including access to health services and water and sanitation), and appropriate care and feeding practices, particularly for women and children – is essential to making major gains in improving nutritional status.<sup>2</sup> This means that even as IFAD-funded projects focus on activities that ensure that agriculture and food-based interventions do their part, they must also connect and coordinate with interventions from other sectors and other partners so that the other determinants are addressed. So while IFAD works to enhance the contribution of agriculture and food systems to better nutrition, primarily through better diets and empowering women, it is also important for IFAD to pursue policy engagement and dialogue. Working together the different partners in different sectors can achieve the necessary programmatic convergence among interventions from multiple sectors that is critical for lasting improvements in nutrition.

## IFAD, Agriculture and Nutrition

### IFAD's Founding Agreement and the role of food and agriculture

Improving “the nutritional level of the poorest populations in developing countries” is one of the principal objectives of IFAD's Founding Agreement. Governments, civil society and development organizations have also come to recognize the central importance of nutrition to development, and improving nutrition is today a central focus of the development agenda.

Agriculture plays an essential and singular role in improving nutrition by ensuring that diverse, nutritious foods, adequate to meet the needs of people of all ages, are available and accessible at all times. These foods can come either from the market or from farmers' own production. IFAD can play a vital role in improving nutrition throughout the lifecycle by ensuring that agriculture does its part at every stage. Staying true to its mission, IFAD can support the design and implementation of investments that maximize the contribution that agriculture and rural development make to eliminating malnutrition. In many instances, this will come about through working with other sectors.

The connections between agriculture and nutrition are particularly strong for the rural smallholders at the core of IFAD's work. Smallholders often earn their livelihoods primarily from agriculture and related enterprises, and a large part of their diets frequently depends on what they produce. Agriculture thus holds special promise as an avenue for improving their nutrition. However, to make a difference, agricultural projects must be carefully designed and thought through.

Agricultural and rural development investments are usually implicitly assumed to have an impact on nutrition because they contribute to general agricultural growth and increases in rural incomes. After all, increases in production and productivity can raise incomes, which can be used to purchase food. But around the world examples abound of countries where high prevalence of malnutrition occurs in the same areas with the greatest agricultural production or potential. Higher incomes and increased or more diverse production are not enough. Rather, to ensure that agricultural potential and rural growth and transformation also improve diets and nutritional status, specific, targeted actions are needed to ensure that nutritious foods are available, accessible and consumed. Actions can occur all along the supply chain to make sure more nutritious foods are available and accessible; others, such as more accessible nutrition information and behavior change communications, can lead to improved food choices and diets.

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<sup>2</sup> As an observation, children's nutritional status is an anchor indicator of RIMS and a common indicator in project logframes, yet usually little analysis is done to identify a project's specific contributions to reducing malnutrition or take into account the multisectoral actions needed to address child malnutrition most effectively.

## IFAD's approach: integrating nutrition into actions

For IFAD, greater attention to nutrition will increase the impact of its investments. These efforts will also underscore IFAD's commitment to achieving its stated goals of improving nutrition and reducing poverty. These efforts will position IFAD as a leader in terms of understanding the nexus of food, agriculture, and nutrition and promoting the need for sectors outside health to contribute to improving nutrition.

Fundamentally, it simply makes sense for IFAD not to ignore the contributions that its investments can make to eliminating malnutrition, both by themselves and in collaboration with other sectors. IFAD's attention to nutrition is understood, then, not as an add-on but as an essential part of what IFAD already does and as a contributor to investment quality. IFAD's renewed emphasis on nutrition and nutrition-sensitive agriculture, however, will now reflect an understanding that has developed in recent years of the importance of nutrition to development and the role of food and agriculture in improving nutrition.<sup>3</sup>

### A comprehensive approach

To optimize agriculture's contribution to improving nutrition throughout the lifecycle, a comprehensive approach, beyond increasing production or incomes, is needed. IFAD's approach draws on the broad understanding of the ways in which agriculture can improve nutrition, beyond increased production and productivity. Such an approach seeks to identify specific constraints and leverage opportunities within agriculture and food systems (i.e., IFAD's investments in production and across the supply chain) to improve nutrition, while at the same time not detract from the investment's conventional goals of raising smallholder incomes and increasing productivity.

The specific adjustments to policies, investments, and programs needed to improve nutrition will depend on the dynamics and context of the situation and the nutrition problem at hand. The specific target group and specific ways to catalyze the contribution of the project to improving nutrition will vary. However, the main objective with respect to nutrition always remains the same: to create more nutrition-sensitive (and so nutritious) agriculture and food systems that promote the production and consumption of more diverse, safe, and nutritious foods in order to improve the diets and nutritional status of IFAD's beneficiaries throughout their lives.

### Objectives, activities, indicators along a nutrition impact pathway

A project, to be nutrition sensitive, needs to be clear on how it can optimize its activities to improve nutrition. This requires applying a nutrition lens to each component and at every stage of a project from the outset, so that the project is designed, implemented, managed, monitored and measured to optimize its impact on nutrition. A nutrition-sensitive project will have explicit nutrition objectives, activities, and indicators (See Box 1). These will reflect a clearly defined pathway through which the project has an impact on nutrition. This approach means that a nutrition-sensitive project will have not just an implicit intention but an explicit set of actions built on a clear understanding of how the project can make a measurable contribution to improving nutrition. Clearly delineating the project's effects on nutrition through a defined impact pathway also ensures that the project will not have unintended negative effects on nutrition (for example, an agricultural intervention that increases the burden on a woman's time).

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<sup>3</sup> Bhutta et al. (2013) estimate that effective implementation of some 10 direct, health-sector-based nutrition interventions (for example, micronutrient supplementation or improving child feeding practices) will on their own avert only one-fifth of the existing burden of undernutrition. This speaks of the need for interventions from other sectors as well.

**Box 1: How can an agricultural project be made more nutrition sensitive?**

Step 1. Explicitly incorporate improved nutrition into the objectives and indicators of the project. Identify specific actions that ensure the project contributes to nutrition. For example, in a project to increase crop production, promote a nutrient-dense biofortified crop such as orange sweet potato (OSP).

Step 2. To ensure the project has an impact on nutrition, trace the “impact pathway” – the steps from production to consumption needed for the intervention to improve nutrition. Design and implement project actions that will affect that pathway in a systematic way. For example, determine if a change in dietary habits is needed to encourage the consumption of OSP and, if so, implement actions to promote change.

Step 3. Through policy engagement and partnerships, address opportunities and constraints that affect the pathway and the effectiveness of the project, such as the institutional environment, gender or environmental sustainability. For example, determine how promotion of OSP affects women in terms of their time or income; how production affects the environment or how climate change affects the crops, and what other actors need to be involved. Design activities to address these factors, including coordination with other key actors, to help the project in its efforts to improve nutrition.

**IFAD’s leadership and comparative advantage in nutrition and agriculture**

Although perspectives vary,<sup>4</sup> in general governments and development partners recognize that food and agriculture make important contributions to improving nutrition. Agriculture and food systems serve as significant sources of employment and, through the diversity, affordability, and accessibility of food they offer, can have an important impact on food choices and so dietary quality and nutrition. Working through food and agriculture is also clearly a more sustainable way to achieve good nutrition than, say, the use of food supplements. The multiple benefits of agriculture to livelihoods, as well as to diets and nutrition, also suggest that promoting agriculture is a cost-effective means of achieving multiple development outcomes. This understanding has encouraged increasing global recognition of the need for a food systems approach in improving nutrition through agriculture and a demand for knowledgeable, effective investment in nutrition and agriculture.

This demand comes from the countries themselves as well as international development agencies. Over 50 countries have now joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, pledging themselves to the eradication of undernutrition. More countries, along with IFAD, endorsed the 2014 Rome Declaration on Nutrition at the Second International Conference on Nutrition. Sustainable Development Goal 2, which will guide actions of many country governments and development partners in the post-2015 era, focuses on the nexus between sustainable agriculture, hunger, food security, and nutrition. The World Bank and FAO also promote investments and actions to make agriculture more nutrition sensitive. The Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition, a panel of eminent experts established as an outcome of the Nutrition for Growth summit

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<sup>4</sup> Discussion around nutrition and agriculture can sometimes diverge into two perspectives. One perspective understands nutrition and food production as much as the same thing, so that promoting agriculture inescapably results in good nutrition, and so the issue of “nutrition” quite clearly belongs to the agricultural sector. Another perspective sees nutrition as a health issue, relying essentially on health services and nutrient supplements to achieve good nutrition. Here, the role of food and agriculture is minimal. Focused on the impact of program interventions, this perspective argues there is little evidence that food and agricultural programs have any impact on improving nutrition. IFAD’s approach does not fall into either of these perspectives, but rather understands that agriculture has clear, unique contributions to make to improving nutrition at all ages, through different pathways that affect income, prices, gender, markets, systems of production, transformation, marketing, and consumer choices and behaviours. At the same time, agriculture must work with other sectors, especially health and water and sanitation, to have the greatest synergistic effect on nutrition.

in June 2013, seeks to promote an appreciation of the role of agriculture and food systems in improving nutrition as well as to strengthen the evidence base.

IFAD must be prepared to respond to this increasing country and global demand for investment in nutrition and agriculture and help to translate the knowledge and commitments of national governments and the international community into action.<sup>5</sup> As an international financial institution focused on the needs of rural smallholders, as well as specific groups such as women, youth, and indigenous peoples, IFAD's role is particularly important and different from that of other international organizations. IFAD must ensure that the role of food and agriculture is understood; that the voices of the rural poor are heard and heeded; and that adequate investments in addressing their nutrition concerns through agriculture are made. In particular, differently from FAO or WFP, IFAD provides the financing governments need to make lasting, effective investments in nutrition-sensitive food and agriculture through its lending program. UNICEF and WHO take a largely health-based approach to improving nutrition. This is a needed complement but no substitute for IFAD's focus on improving nutrition through food-based approaches. In addition, UNICEF focuses on children, whereas IFAD's priority is the nutrition of all members of the household.

By drawing on its specific comparative advantage and providing financing and know-how for the design and implementation of effective, nutrition-sensitive projects, IFAD can generate benefits for nutrition in addition to raising incomes and productivity for smallholders through its investments. By using investments in nutrition-sensitive agriculture to help shape food systems as a whole, these efforts can benefit the entire population – both rural and urban alike.

### The Need for an Action Plan<sup>6</sup>

To achieve these goals, IFAD needs a clear plan to mainstream nutrition into its work, including COSOPs, projects, and non-lending support such as grants and knowledge management. The plan should allow IFAD to achieve its commitments under IFAD10 that 100 per cent of COSOPs will incorporate a nutrition assessment and that one-third of projects will be "nutrition sensitive" by the end of the IFAD10 period.

In the past two years, since beginning to receive funds from Canada to support mainstreaming, much has been done. The plan sets out a roadmap for how to support, systematize, and solidify that work. This plan recognizes that IFAD has a particular mission and focus, with comparative advantages in particular areas of action. IFAD is not structured to invest in all sectors but has a definite focus on agriculture and rural people. The way IFAD seeks to contribute improving nutrition therefore reflects this, and so focuses on agriculture and food-based approaches to improving nutrition.

Working to integrate nutrition into IFAD investments will require sustained institutional change. The period of IFAD10 will be used to promote this change and develop, test, and institute an effective model of how to integrate nutrition into projects and COSOPs. Change will require technical knowledge about what to do as well as sufficient, dedicated, and qualified human resources to integrate that knowledge into project design and operations. It will require IFAD to develop the tools, guidance, and evidence needed to support those who design and implement projects. It will also require integration of this commitment into corporate documents, in order to underpin internal and external accountability. The action plan addresses each of these areas and builds on what has been done so far and the experiences and lessons learned about mainstreaming from gender and climate change.

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<sup>5</sup> FAO has produced a series of Food Security Commitment and Capacity Profiles (FSCCP) that provide an understanding of countries' commitments and institutional capacities. This information may assist with prioritization of countries and investments, particularly with regard to institutional capacity strengthening.

<sup>6</sup> The action plan has been developed by the IFAD nutrition team with the support of a consultant, including staff from PTA, OPV, and ESA. Consultations with more than 40 people within the organization about their perceptions of nutrition at IFAD and mainstreaming provided additional important insights.

The action plan described in this document outlines activities to take place during IFAD10 (2016-2018). Although the plan generally defines a number of different areas where actions are needed to undertake mainstreaming, the specific activities described represent those priority actions that presumably can be financed through available funding. As noted, additional funds may be needed to strengthen IFAD's activities in each action area, most particularly investments (e.g., loans), research, capacity strengthening, policy engagement, and communications. The call for complementary contributions for nutrition may prove to be one source of additional funding for project investments, while supplementary funding, through donors' grants, may support other needed actions such as capacity building and implementation.

Some may ask why IFAD needs an action plan for nutrition, and how what the plan proposes differs from what IFAD does already. While certainly IFAD's concern with nutrition is longstanding, the action plan deepens IFAD's ability to fulfil its own organizational commitment. The plan reflects a more-current understanding of nutrition that goes beyond food security and production to highlight a number of key issues, including the importance of nutrition to development and poverty reduction, the multisectoral determinants of nutrition, and the role of food and agriculture. The focus on operationalizing specific impact pathways also more convincingly ensures that project actions will have an impact on nutrition outcomes. And in response to the increasing priority of nutrition on the development agenda, IFAD is pursuing stronger engagement with the international community and country governments on governance in nutrition. IFAD's efforts will systematically bring agriculture to the nutrition table at global and country level, providing an evidence- and experience-based voice for smallholders. Otherwise, the contributions of agriculture and smallholders to improving nutrition, and their nutritional needs, are at risk of being overlooked, even as international and country level efforts to improve nutrition gear up.

#### Considerations on mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is taken to mean bringing nutrition into the core work of IFAD in a systematic way so that it becomes routine to take nutrition dimensions into account. Mainstreaming nutrition will move nutrition from an ad hoc consideration to a core dimension of project design and operations as well as advocacy, research and knowledge, and capacity strengthening activities. Successful mainstreaming would mean that country governments and IFAD staff and consultants understand that taking nutrition into account adds value to investments so that they actively seek to incorporate nutrition into investments.

Experiences with organizational change and mainstreaming suggest a few key elements of success, reflecting a theory of change. Most importantly, a mainstreaming process has to create and support a climate for action and change. That means:

- building the case for change among key actors;
- getting understanding and ownership across the organization; and
- supporting and sustaining action.

Successful organizational change needs to act in all these areas. A successful effort should ensure that sufficient numbers of the right people are involved, and it should ensure that appropriate organizational culture and processes are in place. The action plan takes each of these considerations into account and highlights the need for leadership and human resources as well as the need to create shared ownership and understanding.

An action plan should clearly state what it hopes to achieve and set out a vision and role for the organization, as well as concrete priorities and activities. The plan should fit with current commitments, strategic framework, and related policies of the organization, in order to ensure a supportive institutional environment. Strong commitment and accountability need to be in place at the highest levels, while additional strong leadership

and sufficient resources throughout the organization are needed to provide staff and consultants with appropriate technical advice and knowledge to support project design, implementation, management and operation.

The plan should be communicated both internally and externally, so that both IFAD staff and project teams in the country see how the plan and IFAD's commitment to nutrition fits with IFAD's mission and helps them to do their job. This is needed so that, critically for success, staff support the mainstreaming effort.

## An Action Plan for IFAD

### Goal

The goal of IFAD's work in nutrition and agriculture is to address the problems of malnutrition in all its forms and improve the nutritional levels of the rural poor, especially smallholders, in developing countries<sup>7</sup>.

### Objective

The objective of IFAD's work is to increase the nutritional impact of IFAD's investments and its advocacy and policy engagement at global and national levels, working primarily through agriculture and food-based approaches to improve dietary adequacy, in terms of both quality and quantity, of rural families (see footnote 8).

### IFAD's Role

As an international financial institution focused on the needs of smallholders and the rural poor, IFAD will contribute to improving nutrition through investments in agriculture and food-based approaches, including the strengthening and shaping of food systems. IFAD's role is to provide financing combined with technical knowledge that supports good design for productive investments that improve livelihoods and lead to better nutrition.

IFAD will use an evidence-based approach to project design and implementation that prioritizes innovation and learning which can then be used as a basis for scaling up. It will collaborate with other organizations that can assist with implementation and operations as well as provide technical assistance and produce knowledge, particularly at country level. This includes organizations focused on nutrition in the UN, as well as governments, private sector, civil society, research and knowledge organizations, and communities themselves. Building on its potential as a voice for the rural poor on issues of nutrition and agriculture, IFAD will, through policy engagement and dialogue and use of its convening power, also seek complementary actions on nutrition from other sectors to achieve programmatic and policy synergies and create a positive enabling environment for its projects.

### Guiding Principles

Certain principles of engagement and operation should guide the approaches and activities set out in this action plan. These are consistent with principles that IFAD has previously set out in other corporate documents and seek to maximize the impact of actions in a sustainable, empowering, and respectful way. These principles include:

- Seek to improve nutrition through agriculture and food-based approaches at national and global levels.
- Apply a nutrition lens to the design and implementation of projects and grants, thereby improving nutrition through integrating actions into its investments in agriculture and food systems, rather than through stand-alone nutrition investments or nutrition-specific actions implemented through other sectors, such as health.

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<sup>7</sup> Although the Goal is to improve nutrition among all ages, chronic undernutrition, or stunting (low height-for-age), is a reasonable and feasible indicator at the Goal level for IFAD's work in nutrition. IFAD is already collecting this indicator as part of RIMS, and most of IFAD's work is among the most vulnerable populations, where chronic undernutrition continues to be a problem (even in middle-income countries). In addition, for long-term poverty reduction improving nutrition among this group is critical. For the sake of simplicity, other indicators that would cover the range of potential nutrition outcomes are not included here. In addition, it should be noted that an indicator at Goal level represents that to which activities contribute, but not for which they are directly responsible. In this case, IFAD's contribution to improving nutrition is food-based and largely through improvement in diets. However, a good diet is only one of many factors, including health and water and sanitation, that contribute to reducing undernutrition. Since IFAD's investments are contributing to, but not directly responsible for, improving stunting, it is an appropriate indicator for IFAD's work in nutrition at the Goal level. Other indicators are proposed below at the level of Objective, which reflects more the direct effects of IFAD's work, and more specific, appropriate indicators should be decided at COSOP and project level depending on country and project context.



- Ensure investments are economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable, are gender sensitive, and do not take actions that negatively affect nutritional outcomes.
- Support the empowerment of poor rural people and strengthen their capacities to take action independently and engage with the institutions that affect their lives, with particular attention to the rights and participation of indigenous peoples and women.
- Promote a learning attitude around project design and operations and around development of effective country strategies.
- Strengthen the evidence base on effective ways to improve nutrition through agriculture and food-based approaches and encourage uptake and use of findings.
- Support multisectoral strategies to improve nutrition and work in partnership with others as needed to encourage appropriate convergence of interventions and obtain the policy and program support needed for an enabling environment and for sustainable operation and scaling up.
- Seek strategic alliances with external partners, particularly UN agencies, to encourage concerted, effective global and regional action on nutrition, and nutrition and agriculture.
- Collaborate with other cross-cutting initiatives at IFAD, such as gender and climate change, to achieve synergies for improved investment effectiveness.
- Ensure interventions have a neutral or positive effect on nutrition, so that they “do no harm” to nutrition outcomes.

## Strategic Outcomes

IFAD works through a program of loans and grants that have effects at country level. IFAD also undertakes other activities in the areas of governance, advocacy, policy engagement, capacity strengthening, and research and knowledge that inform its country-level work and support its position as a leader in nutrition and agriculture.

To reach the overall objective, IFAD will work to achieve the following strategic outcomes at country and global level:

1. Nutrition-sensitive projects shape agriculture and food systems in ways that contribute to nutritious diets;
2. Projects promote behavior change communications (and related effective nutrition education and information) to improve food choices and related preparation and post-harvest practices (storage and processing), and so contribute to healthy, nutritious diets for persons of all ages;
3. Projects promote the equality and empowerment of women in ways that improve nutrition for themselves, their children, and their families across generations;
4. Activities in policy engagement, advocacy, and partnerships, as well as research and knowledge management, contribute to better governance, a supportive enabling environment for projects, and consequently more effective projects at global and country level.

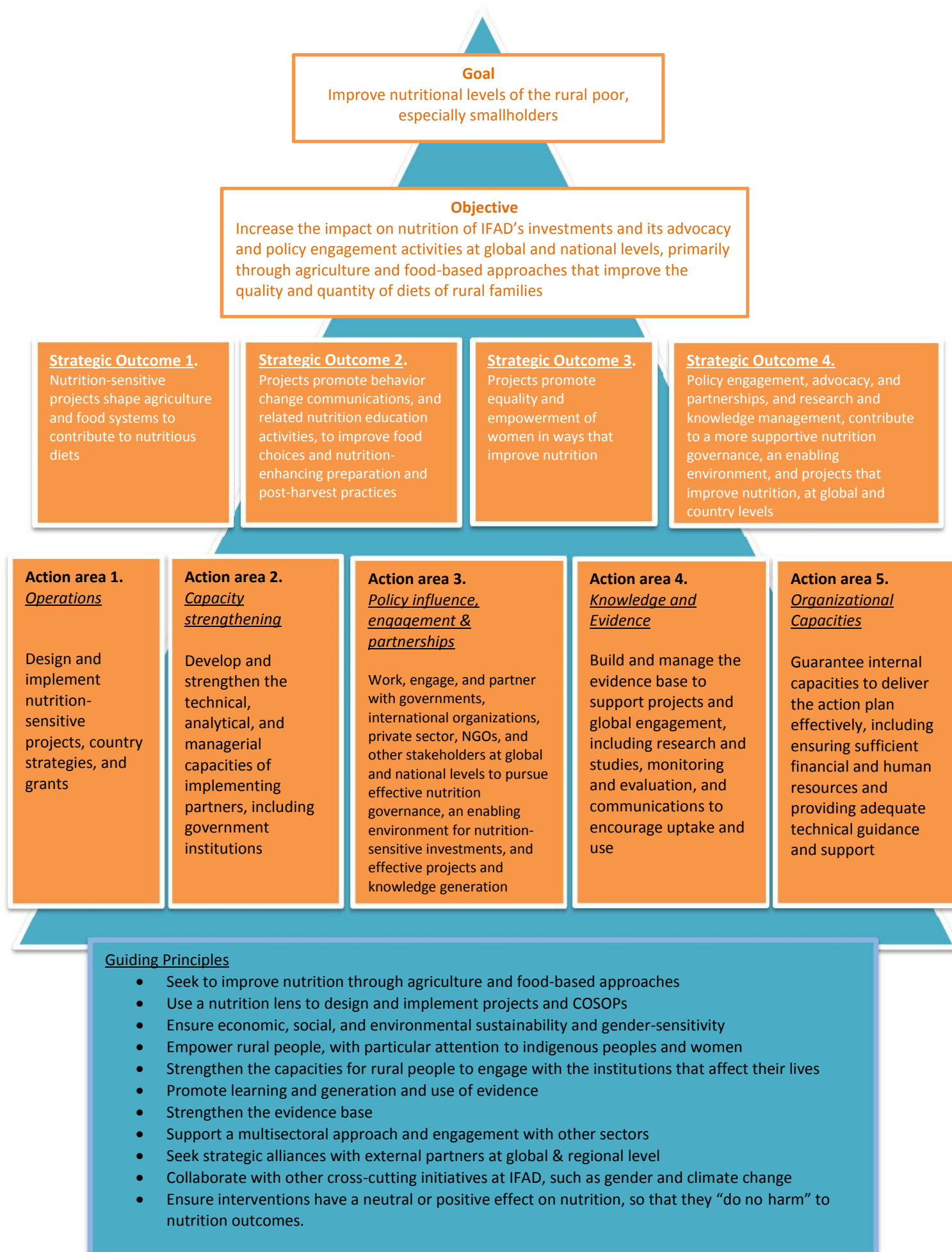
## Action Areas

The strategic outcomes will be achieved through actions in five mutually supportive areas:

1. Operations. Design and implement nutrition-sensitive projects, country strategies, and grants.
2. Capacity Strengthening. Develop and strengthen the technical, analytical, and managerial capacities of implementing partners, including government institutions.
3. Policy Influence, Engagement and Partnerships. Work, engage, and partner with governments, international organizations, private sector firms, NGOs, and other stakeholders at global, regional and national levels to improve nutrition governance and create an enabling environment so that IFAD's investments and activities are more effective.
4. Knowledge and Evidence. Build and manage the evidence base to support project design and implementation, through research, studies, and monitoring and evaluation, and communications to encourage uptake and use.
5. Organizational Capacities. Guarantee IFAD's internal capacities to deliver the action plan effectively, including ensuring sufficient financial and human resources and providing adequate technical guidance and support.

The first four of these relate to the areas of actions needed to achieve outcomes and impacts for IFAD's beneficiaries. Action Area 5 relates to IFAD's internal capacities to deliver on projects and grants, and conduct advocacy, policy engagement, and partnerships that accomplish the strategic outcomes.

Figure 1: Elements of the Action Plan for Nutrition at IFAD



## Action Area 1: Operations

Design and implement nutrition-sensitive projects, COSOPs, and grants.

Output: Projects, COSOPs and grants systematically take into account how they can improve nutritional outcomes of beneficiary populations.

### Indicators:

By the end of IFAD10,

1. All new COSOPs include a nutrition situation assessment, including noting how the COSOP's strategic objectives relate to nutrition.
2. One-third of new project design reports are nutrition sensitive, with explicit nutrition objectives, actions and indicators.<sup>8</sup>

To tackle malnutrition effectively in the short and medium run, agricultural projects need to explicitly take into account the many ways that food and agricultural systems can affect nutrition more directly, beyond general increases in income or food production and productivity. As explained above under "IFAD's Approach" above, IFAD will do this by applying a nutrition lens to project objectives and proposed activities. By working in this way, IFAD's investments in nutrition-sensitive agriculture will contribute to better nutrition, improve livelihoods, help overcome poverty, and at the same time support the realization of IFAD's founding objectives.

But what are the opportunities and entry points to make a project more nutrition sensitive? Importantly for IFAD, the actions needed to make agricultural investments more likely to improve nutrition do not imply a deviation from usual goals of increasing incomes, production, or productivity but rather a leveraging of opportunities to improve nutrition that are inherent in agriculture and food systems.

Entry points for action to improve nutrition exist throughout the food system, from production and post-harvest practices in storage, and processing (including preservation) to transport and marketing to consumption (including food preparation). In terms of production, one important mechanism is to increase the nutritional value of the foods themselves. At farm level, biofortification<sup>9</sup> and improvements in soil health can raise the nutrient value of crops, as can better storage, preservation and processing. Innovative agricultural technologies and production systems can increase the diversity and nutritional value of production. A broader range of research extended to incorporate

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<sup>8</sup> These objectives, activities, and indicators will, of course, depend on the specifics of the context and the project itself. Currently, IFAD uses chronic malnutrition, or stunting, as an anchor indicator in RIMS. The Practical Guidance for RIMS suggests that stunting should be understood not only as an indicator of malnutrition but also as an indicator of well-being, or poverty, in a community. The multisectoral nature of the causes of stunting means that increases in income or even in household food availability must work in tandem with improvements in care and feeding practices (for small children) or food choices and diets (for older individuals), in use of health services, and in water and sanitation. With greater attention to the contribution of food and agriculture to improved nutrition, as presented in this Action Plan, IFAD also needs to consider adopting an indicator that more directly reflects the contribution that its usual investments, in food and agriculture, make. Although as noted throughout this Action Plan IFAD will be open to collaboration and alignment with other sectors in order to improve nutrition, the primary effect of its investments in food and agriculture will be on diets and income. Consequently, during IFAD10, IFAD will be piloting a measure of dietary quality, such as dietary diversity, as an additional indicator for RIMS and projects. Methods for assessing individual dietary diversity indicators are still being refined, although research indicates a consistent relationship between increases in individual dietary diversity scores and improvements in micronutrient adequacy. Such methods also need to vary by age. Household dietary diversity indicators have not yet been validated as predictive of micronutrient adequacy, although work to do so is underway. In order to identify an indicator for projects and RIMS that is grounded in evidence and yet more directly relevant to the kind of work that IFAD does, IFAD will be reviewing and piloting indicators of dietary quality during IFAD10. Dietary diversity is a strong possibility as it is closely related to micronutrient adequacy, an important element of dietary quality.

<sup>9</sup> Biofortification, the process of enhancing the micronutrient content of crops, most often through breeding, is a promising new intervention to improve nutrition through agriculture. In a number of countries, farmer and consumer demand for several biofortified crops, such as orange sweet potato and high-iron beans, is growing.

significant attention to neglected and underutilized crops and animal products can help reap the agronomic, dietary, and cultural benefits of biodiversity, including preservation of traditional crops, animals, agricultural practices, and gastronomy. Improved production and processing can also enhance nutrient values and, along with reduction of waste and increases in marketing efficiency, reduce the relative prices of certain foods, making them more attractive for purchase and thus improving the diet. Introduction of labor-saving technologies can have similar effects. Such technologies can significantly reduce the time it takes to prepare certain foods, which can alleviate the burden on women's time and encourage preservation of traditional foods and diversification of the diet.

At the macroeconomic level, policies and public investments guided by nutrition-sensitive agricultural and rural development strategies, including those related to trade, can affect prices of more nutritious foods and shape food systems to be more nutritious. Education, information and behavior change communications are essential to ensuring that expanded and more diverse production translates into healthier diets and better nutrition. Without social and behavioral changes, food storage and preparation and diets may stay the same, even if incomes, production, productivity, and diversity increase.

Given that the causes of malnutrition cut across sectors, multisectoral action is essential, especially to improve child malnutrition. This requires agriculture to partner with other sectors, particularly health, water and sanitation, and education. But there also needs to be convergence – that is, actions in various sectors have to take place in a coordinated way so they reach the same individual and place at the same time. All sectors need to know how to partner with others in order to address the multisectoral causes of malnutrition more effectively and completely.

#### The importance of the private sector

IFAD places special emphasis on engagement and partnership with the private sector, a key player in creating efficient food systems. A main aspect of investing in rural people means promoting activities that link producers to efficient and enabling input markets and to fair and well-functioning output markets. In recent years IFAD's portfolio has reflected increasing interaction with markets and the private sector. Currently, over 70% of IFAD's projects include a value chain component. Making at least one-third of IFAD's projects more nutrition sensitive inevitably means that IFAD will be increasing its partnerships with the private sector with the aim of improving nutrition.

IFAD's Private Sector Development and Partnership Strategy notes that the rural private sector includes a continuum of economic agents, ranging from subsistence or smallholder farmers to medium-sized private businesses to big market players. In order to facilitate the actions described above to make food systems more nutrition-sensitive, IFAD projects need to engage these different actors along the supply chain.

Food systems are not inherently pro-poor or nutrition sensitive, but actions in terms of value-chain development (including commercialization, transformation, and improved access to markets) can be taken to help them to be so. Importantly for IFAD, which has smallholders as its prime beneficiaries, this includes promoting private-sector investment to address market weaknesses that otherwise exclude smallholders from participating in the market.

A central focus of IFAD's private-sector engagement strategy is thus to build mutually beneficial partnerships between the public sector, the private sector and small rural producers – public-private-producer partnerships (4Ps). IFAD's actions in this area support the development of value chains that enable smallholders to expand their interactions with the market. This can result in more sales, sales to higher-value markets, or expansion of actions to include activities in the supply chain beyond production that result in more value-added accruing to the producers themselves. Similarly, projects can incentivize actions and strengthen the capacities of private-sector actors to integrate nutrition-sensitive considerations into their operations.<sup>10</sup>

#### The role of women in reducing malnutrition

Women make up a large percentage of the workforce in agriculture and food systems in developing countries. Making sure agricultural investments are designed to empower women and achieve gender equality can help reduce malnutrition for women and their families. Women's education, social status, health and nutritional status, and control over resources are key factors that influence nutrition outcomes as women carry out their productive and reproductive roles.

Gender-sensitive agricultural projects, for instance, ensure that women retain greater control over resources and that they have a say in choice of crops and agricultural practices that can affect their own nutrition and that of their families. Preparing and cooking meals, carrying water, and working in the fields or for the family business, as well as multiple other activities, create significant demands on a woman's time and energy and affect her ability to care for herself and her family. Projects should take this into account, helping women to improve their nutritional knowledge and dietary and hygiene behaviors as well as taking into account the time they need to take care of their children and other family members. This also means that men have to be involved in order to create a conducive environment for change.

#### Indigenous People and Nutrition

Indigenous peoples make valuable contributions to the world's heritage thanks to their traditional knowledge, their understanding of ecosystem management, and the active part they play in preserving, protecting, and promoting important biodiversity for agriculture. Indigenous peoples safeguard a variety of traditional food plants and animals as well as traditional methods of production, storage, preservation, and preparation, passing their knowledge on to future generations. They also can give evidence on how nutrition can contribute to health and well-being.

This contributes to richness in nutritional quality as well as a variety in production and diet that is simply not available, and indeed is put at long-term risk, if the rights of indigenous peoples are not respected. Yet indigenous peoples are also among the world's most vulnerable, marginalized and disadvantaged groups. They also suffer from nutritional problems as other groups, including the challenges of facing simultaneous challenges of undernutrition and overweight / obesity developed in the course of the nutrition transition. "Successful" market integration can sometimes lead to negative consequences, as for example with high international demand for quinoa which means less is accessible to those in the altiplanos of South America which are the traditional areas of production and consumption. IFAD is determined to learn from indigenous peoples how best to support their traditional food systems to improve their nutrition as well as the nutrition of others.

#### Climate change and good nutrition

The challenges of climate change also interact with efforts improve nutrition. Changes in temperature and rainfall patterns affect production and productivity, as well as storage,

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<sup>10</sup> A German-funded project to develop a methodology to design nutrition-sensitive value chain projects is currently underway. This methodology will support IFAD's initiatives on partnering with the private sector. The project is described in more detail under Action Area 4, Knowledge and Evidence.

packing and transport. This in turn affects the kinds and nutritional content of crops that can be grown or animals that can be raised. Since many smallholders eat what they produce, this directly affects diets and nutrition and disease patterns. Promoting diversified food systems that are more resilient and provide more stable incomes and improve dietary quality is a way to integrate nutrition into investments that also addresses climate change.

#### Making COSOPs nutrition sensitive

The development of the COSOP should take these possibilities into account. It is especially important for a COSOP to respond to country priorities in those countries that have made reducing malnutrition a priority. This includes the more than 50 countries that have made national high-level commitments to reduce malnutrition as part of the SUN movement, those that endorsed 2014 Rome Declaration on Nutrition, and those that will refer to the Sustainable Development Goals of the post-2015 agenda to guide national priorities. Specifically, SDG2 affirms the nexus between agriculture and nutrition, as countries pledge to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. Thus, it is likely that nutrition is already a country priority in many places where IFAD works and thus attention should be paid to how investments in agriculture and food systems, key determinants of better nutrition, can support country demands and needs.

As is often done with the other cross-cutting issues of gender and climate change, COSOPs should include a simple, straightforward, and brief analysis of the nutrition situation and how the strategic thrusts of the COSOP respond to country priorities and needs.

Using available secondary data,<sup>11</sup> this analysis should first describe the nutrition situation in country or, preferably, the project area; note the priority given to dealing with nutrition problems in the country, particularly through agriculture and food-based approaches, as expressed through country documents; review what strategies, programs or other actions are being taken to address problem of nutrition by government, at different levels, and development partners, like the UN agencies or the World Bank; and set out how the actions proposed under the COSOP might support these efforts.

This analysis will, of course, differ by country and should reflect country priorities. For example, in Venezuela, the focus may be on improving overall dietary quality, not just undernutrition. Even then, undernutrition may continue to be a problem among the vulnerable populations that IFAD investments usually serve.

#### Designing nutrition-sensitive projects

In developing nutrition-sensitive projects, IFAD will integrate nutrition into project activities, rather than design a stand-alone intervention. Of course, not every project, and not every component of every project, is amenable to such an approach. A project to strengthen management of apex credit organizations, for instance, does not present a clear point of entry to incorporate specific actions to improve nutrition.

Effective projects must also be clear on what aspects of nutrition they are aiming to improve and how they will do so. They should have clearly identifiable effects and impacts. Certain projects, for example, are more likely to improve the overall quality of household diets and thereby women's micronutrient status, rather than affect the care and feeding of infants and young children and chronic undernutrition. A project with either activity could be termed "nutrition sensitive," but the nature of project activities and the project's identifiable impacts on nutrition are different.

The elements and activities of a nutrition-sensitive project are not standardized, therefore, and will depend on context. A careful assessment of needs, opportunities and

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<sup>11</sup> Such sources include WHO global databases on nutrition indicators, easily accessible through the internet; studies from universities, research organizations, development partners, and government in the country itself; as well as baseline and completion surveys, or other working papers, from previous IFAD projects.

resources is required. In every case, however, the main steps are to apply a nutrition lens to the project activities, trace out the impact pathway, and consider how to link with other sectors. The particular indicators that are appropriate for a project will also vary by context. For example, a project that promotes multisectorality could include a process indicator that nutrition interventions and connections with other sectors must be incorporated into village development plans. A project that focuses on behavior change communications could include process indicators on numbers trained as well as direct-effect indicators that track how diets have improved. This sort of analysis will inform the logframe as well as the project baseline, mid-term, and final evaluations.

In project design, it is important to recognize the distinction among the kinds of impacts nutrition-sensitive projects have, which will then be reflected in terms of activities, direct effects on nutrition-related outcomes and target groups (particularly variation by age and sex). For example, the links between the food and agriculture system and nutrition are clearly stronger for older children and adults than for the youngest ones. In particular, the youngest children need particular types of food. Maternal and child nutrition services as well as good water and sanitation are also important.

IFAD projects cannot be expected to address all the causes of malnutrition, especially those beyond food-based approaches, but projects can be designed to optimize the contribution of agriculture and food systems to reducing malnutrition, by themselves and in combination with the efforts of others. Projects must then carefully consider how to engage with others to scale up their efforts in order to ensure project effectiveness, sustainability, and impact.<sup>12</sup> Action Area 3, which highlights operational partnerships, discusses this idea in more detail.

## Action Area 2: Capacity Strengthening

Develop and strengthen the technical, analytical, and managerial capacities of implementing partners, including communities and government institutions

Output: Implementing partners, particularly government agencies and communities, understand how to improve nutrition through agriculture and can capably support design and implementation of nutrition-sensitive projects and COSOPs.

Indicators:

1. Implementing partners participate in training and learning events to promote the incorporation of nutrition-sensitive approaches in projects, including promotion of multisectoral action.

Country partners responsible for project implementation (say, an implementation unit within the government or the communities themselves) may be limited in their capacity to implement a successful nutrition-sensitive project. Experience at country level so far suggests that despite their interest, implementing partners have limited knowledge about the justification and specifics of nutrition-sensitive agriculture, what that entails in terms of project activities, and the need for a multisectoral approach.

In response, and to ensure the success of its operations, IFAD will incorporate actions to strengthen country-level capacities into the design of nutrition-sensitive projects, as it does normally for overall project management. The breadth of implementing partners for IFAD projects is wide, including project management units in government agencies, civil society, farmer organizations or women's groups, community organizations, and independent consultants. The project should pursue the strengthening of key organizations and individuals at various levels (i.e., national, provincial, local, community) as well as of the overall systems (e.g., cross-agency planning forums) needed for success, addressing weaknesses in strategic, technical, analytical, and implementation capacities (including those for monitoring and evaluation).

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<sup>12</sup> See IFAD's Scaling Up Note. Nutrition-sensitive agriculture and rural development (2015).



Projects themselves should take on prime responsibility for building capacity, with technical assistance from headquarters (see Action Areas 4 and 5 for the sorts of knowledge products that will be developed to assist with this). In addition, IFAD will also carry out a limited number of training and learning events in the regions, primarily helping to bring together country implementing partners globally or from across a region, in order to promote south-south exchange as well as systematic learning from IFAD's own projects. For example, a regional workshop on the interconnections between nutrition and gender, targeted at implementation and gathering staff from various countries and projects, is to be piloted in Asia. Another example could be a learning route which will take participants to various sites to experience and analyze how IFAD and others are implementing approaches to nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

In a complementary innovation, IFAD will pilot "Nutrition in Agriculture Fellowships," starting with candidates from Africa. Consultations for the Action Plan indicated interest in a program to provide more hands-on professional development for young national nutrition experts. This pilot program will bring young nutrition/agriculture professionals to Rome for a short period to give them international exposure and experience on integrating nutrition into IFAD's investments by working with the nutrition teams and possibly accompanying them on design missions. A concept note has been prepared and a pilot with 1-2 young "fellows" will be undertaken. If successful, the model can be scaled up.

### Action Area 3: Policy Influence, Engagement & Partnerships

Work, engage, and partner with governments, international organizations, private sector firms, NGOs, and other stakeholders at global and national levels to enhance IFAD's capabilities to pursue effective nutrition governance, create an enabling environment for nutrition-sensitive investments (particularly through closer engagement with governments to strengthen their commitment and support) and make projects and knowledge generation activities more effective.

Output: IFAD is a leader at country, regional, and global levels in advocating for the role of food and agriculture in addressing problems of malnutrition, particularly for smallholders and the rural poor, and engages in productive operational partnerships with other organizations.

#### Indicators:

1. Continued involvement in efforts improve governance for nutrition at the global level, and increased policy engagement and influence on nutrition at regional and country level. Priority is given to SUN countries and to policy and program coordination and harmonization with UN partners.
2. Partnerships with country stakeholders are strengthened to increase project impact and support scaling up, with special attention to private sector in the development of nutrition-sensitive value chains.

#### Governance, policy influence and engagement

IFAD is already a part of various mechanisms and forums that influence nutrition governance at global and country levels. IFAD should build on its participation in these structures to bring about more effective and efficient governance structures; to create greater harmony of policies and programs at global, regional and country level; to highlight the role of agriculture and food-based approaches to reducing malnutrition and creating more nutritious food systems; and to ensure adequate levels of funding for nutrition and agriculture.

For instance, the global governance structure for nutrition is led primarily by the five UN agencies with key mandates in nutrition (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO). The principal mechanism for coordination on nutrition among UN agencies is the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN), of which IFAD is an Executive Committee member. Jointly with these other UN agencies, IFAD has contributed to the

development of the United Nations Global Nutrition Agenda (UNGNA). The UNGA is a broad framework for aligning the work of the UN agencies on nutrition at global, regional and country levels so that they “speak with one voice”.

IFAD also sits on the steering committee of REACH (Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition). REACH is an interagency initiative among these same UN agencies that operationalizes the UN Network for SUN at country level. In countries where the SUN network is not yet established, other coordination mechanisms have been or can be set up.

IFAD should continue to develop its engagement around nutrition and agriculture in the UN system by consistently and meaningfully participating in coordination and policy platforms. As the only IFI in this UN-agency group and the only one with a focus on smallholder agriculture, IFAD plays an important role. To consolidate its position as a credible voice on nutrition and agriculture, IFAD should engage in an informed way with other participating organizations, which may have different sectoral views. IFAD provides critical financing for operationalizing programs and policies and in making sure that the needs of smallholders are met.

Helping to shape effective public policies is also important to IFAD’s effectiveness at country and regional levels. Good policies can create an environment that enables rural people to improve their nutrition and move out of poverty at a scale that no single project can provide. At regional level, IFAD can work with regional platforms and initiatives that also focus on agriculture and nutrition. For example, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), which has sponsored the development of national agricultural investment plans throughout the continent, provides IFAD with an excellent point of entry for nutrition through its action pillar that addresses nutrition challenges through agriculture.

At country level, IFAD should engage proactively with various stakeholders to create and shape supportive policies for design and implementation of nutrition-sensitive projects, not only in government but also among the private sector, communities, and civil society. The engagement should provide the basis for the institutional relationships, frameworks, and policies necessary for successful scaling up. Engagement and dialogue can strengthen understanding and promote collaboration and convergence, including operational links for nutrition-sensitive agriculture. Activities under Action Areas 2 and 4 can support actions here by sharing knowledge and cultivating and strengthening leadership and capacities.

At country level, REACH or other UN or development partner forums already exist to support IFAD in these efforts. In Laos, IFAD worked with other UN agencies and the development partner working group on nutrition to assist in development of the national multisectoral nutrition plan and provide technical assistance to the National Nutrition Secretariat.

IFAD can also expand its efforts to advocate for nutrition among opinion leaders in donor and partner countries. High-level political champions and leadership on nutrition and frameworks for accountability are needed to create space for action and to ensure that commitments are fulfilled. IFAD can play a role in helping to do that. For example, in various forums, IFAD’s President has highlighted the links between nutrition, agriculture, and IFAD’s mission, helping to keep global attention focused on nutrition, and IFAD has made specific commitments to member states on mainstreaming nutrition into its work. IFAD also participates actively in sessions of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), and will engage with CFS on this issue as it seeks to incorporate more nutrition issues into its discussions.

IFAD is also monitored each year by the Global Nutrition Report, which tracks global commitments in nutrition, and so far been found to be “on track”. IFAD participated in the ground-breaking Nutrition for Growth Summit in 2013 and recently collaborated with the Rome-based UN agencies to develop technical recommendations on targets and

indicators around food, nutrition and sustainability for SDG2. Through its efforts across these areas, IFAD connects global advocacy, strategic alignment and partnerships to country action and takes an active role in the discussions around nutrition-sensitive agriculture at global and local levels.

### Partnerships

Partnerships are an essential part of IFAD's scaling-up strategy. Partnership arrangements can vary depending on need and context but should be adapted to benefit both partners. By working with partners, IFAD leverages the impact of its investments and enhances their sustainability. IFAD can also join forces with other likeminded development partners to foment debate and decision making on key issues at the nexus food, agriculture, and nutrition, such as the role of the private sector in value chain development or promotion of biodiversity and nutrition-sensitive production diversification and consumption.

At country level, as appropriate, IFAD will explore operational partnerships with government agencies, including ministries of agriculture and health; other development partners, including other IFIs, UN agencies, NGOs, and community-based organizations (CBOs); and the private sector. As noted, already 70 per cent of IFAD's projects have a value-chain component. These projects, often employing the 4Ps approach, inherently promote the engagement and partnering of producers with private-sector enterprises. In addition, these and other projects support the establishment and strengthening of producer associations. Partnership with and development of the private sector are thus integral elements of IFAD's current investment portfolio and an intrinsic part of IFAD's approach to improving nutrition by working with producers and private-sector firms to integrate nutrition-sensitive actions into agriculture, value chains, and the food system more broadly.

At country level, collaboration on implementation arrangements can be incorporated into project design. In India, for example, discussions were held with UNICEF and with the Ministry of Health to profit from their technical expertise, community presence, and program delivery infrastructure. IFAD can also partner with like-minded organizations to promote policy dialogues and knowledge dissemination. IFAD will work with civil society to mobilize better governance and contribute to awareness raising and communication on nutrition issues, in particular benefiting from their role in representing the voices of the most vulnerable and mobilizing nutrition champions.

At the international and national levels, IFAD will partner closely with other members of the SUN Movement, with a focus on improving country-level actions. It will also collaborate and partner with the other RBAs, the CFS and the CGIAR. IFAD and FAO have already collaborated in a number of areas, including a training workshop on designing nutrition-sensitive projects, a compendium of indicators for nutrition-sensitive agriculture, and identification of capacity building needs. IFAD and the CGIAR's program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health currently have a partnership whereby a senior researcher from IFPRI is based at IFAD to assist with mainstreaming activities, including support for operations, research, and strategy. Similar partnerships can be pursued with other organizations to bring in expertise for particular areas of interest or action.

## Action Area 4: Knowledge and Evidence

Build and manage the evidence base to support project design and implementation, including research and other studies, monitoring and evaluation, and communications to encourage uptake and use.

Output: Improved generation and use of evidence around nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems to improve nutrition outcomes of projects, country strategies, and policy influence and engagement.

### Indicators:

1. IFAD-specific research agenda identified around issues of nutrition-sensitive agriculture relevant to operations and support of the action plan.
2. Knowledge products to support nutrition-sensitive project design, implementation, and policy engagement generated, primarily toolkits and how-to-do notes (e.g., gender, integrated home production, nutrition-sensitive value chains).
3. Dissemination strategy is developed to promote effective uptake of research and other knowledge products.
4. RIMS and project surveys are revised to better take nutrition actions and effects into account, including pilot testing of dietary diversity indicator and use of mid-term reviews.

To ensure its actions are effective and evidence-based, IFAD will engage actively with the research and knowledge communities. IFAD will function as a primary user of research and evidence around agriculture and nutrition and also as an active research partner. This will ensure that IFAD remains close to the work, guiding it so that it is useful for IFAD operations and also ensuring understanding of leading-edge methods and issues. SKD has recently been reorganized, acquired new staff, and is defining its role in research, including impact assessment, in ways that are relevant for global engagement and operations.

The knowledge base on which IFAD's actions can build is growing, although there are also some clear knowledge gaps. Clear conceptual frameworks trace out impact pathways. Certain activities connected with agriculture, food systems, and rural life are known to improve nutrition, such as empowering women, specific biofortified crops, and home gardens combined with behavior change communications. But a number of considerations about nutrition-sensitive agricultural interventions, including how to promote system change, are not yet clearly known. The costs and benefits of some specific nutrition-sensitive agricultural interventions, for example, are also difficult to calculate, especially when the intervention has multiple benefits. Yet this information on the profitability of interventions and returns on investment (in terms of nutrition) would be very useful for IFAD, as an IFI, to have.

To fill the knowledge gap and stay at the leading edge of project design in nutrition and agriculture, IFAD will continue to update its understanding by following, commissioning, and working with organizations like the CGIAR, IDS, the Leverhulme Center for Integrative Research on Agriculture and Health (LCIRAH), and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. These organizations are already looking at how specific agricultural activities and the enabling environment improve nutrition, including biofortification, nutrition-sensitive value chains, crop diversification, food safety, policy processes, and behavior change communications. The World Bank is also using household-level data to undertake research on the linkages between agriculture, the broader rural economy, and nutrition. The World Bank, FAO, REACH, and USAID are also commissioning relevant research as well as producing publications and hosting platforms for knowledge sharing, such as SecureNutrition and SPRING, which IFAD can take advantage of. And the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition is providing expert review of emerging evidence on agriculture and food systems.

IFAD also has a wealth of its own experiences from which to learn. Using a more systematic rigorous approach, IFAD can improve the way it assesses its own project experiences, synthesizing lessons learned and developing good practices to share across projects and incorporate into design and implementation. IFAD already has some structures and requirements in place on which to build, such as the requirement that all projects undertake a RIMS, which itself incorporates a nutrition-relevant indicator.

Each project should also have a strong system of monitoring for management, based on impact pathways, reflected in the project logframe. To generate reliable knowledge, however, IFAD needs to ensure RIMS and complementary baseline or other surveys are designed to produce the information that is needed, with rigorous valid design and implementation and more systematic analysis of data. There is also scope for some shared efficiencies if these activities can be better aligned, and perhaps combined, so that information is gathered and utilized more efficiently.

Experience to date further suggests that clearer guidance and stronger capacity around monitoring and evaluation needs to be in place. This is especially important given the increased emphasis on nutrition, which is relatively unfamiliar to CPMs. This includes capacity development around survey design and sampling; training of fieldworkers; and data collection, management and analysis. PMD Front Office will work with the Policy and Technical Advisory Division (PTA) and SKD as part of the ongoing revision of RIMS (and potentially other surveys, such as project baselines and final evaluations) to improve how IFAD can benefit from these structures, including in terms of “monitoring for management,” making sure that RIMS and other surveys are undertaken on a consistent basis and produce reliable information.<sup>13</sup>

IFAD also needs to generate the evidence that its nutrition-relevant investments actually work. While not every project needs to conduct a rigorous impact evaluation, IFAD does need to ensure that it can generate a core of knowledge (probably drawing on a selected set of relevant projects) about how to improve investment impact and interventions, in a rigorous way. Additional funds would need to be sought for a rigorous program of impact assessment.

To ensure that operations take full advantage of its own experiences and other knowledge now being generated, SKD and PMD, particularly PTA, should develop a clear and operationally relevant research and knowledge agenda for IFAD that will support the effectiveness of nutrition mainstreaming, including monitoring and impact evaluations. While the research and knowledge products will be defined and managed by staff in SKD and PTA, they should be largely carried out by external research organizations, such as those in the CGIAR. Research products should be co-authored and feature in IFAD's forthcoming Research Paper Series.

Guidelines, tools, how-to-do notes, and other publications and activities should be developed to provide sufficient guidance and technical support for design, implementation, supervision, and monitoring and evaluation. Experience-based knowledge will continue to be collected and examined in terms of how IFAD projects can integrate or affect nutrition. As part of this action plan, PTA's Toolkit series and How-To-Do notes will include publications on integrated household production, nutrition and gender, and nutrition-sensitive value chains. This last product is part of an initiative being funded by the German government that will develop a methodology for the design of nutrition-sensitive value chain projects. The operational guidance developed will be based on the application of the approach (which has been developed based on current state-of-the-art literature) in two pilot countries, Indonesia and Nigeria.

Other potential areas of study that have been identified include piloting of a dietary diversity indicator; learning lessons from IFAD projects on how to enhance impact on

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<sup>13</sup> As part of its commitments under IFAD10, IFAD agreed to incorporate mid-term project reviews and to pilot a dietary diversity indicator as part of RIMS.

nutrition (with SKD) and how to work multisectorally; and developing guidelines on how to incorporate nutrition into project economic and financial analyses.

Generation of knowledge, however, is useless unless it is used. COM, SKD, and PMD will work together to develop an effective dissemination strategy that will translate research findings and knowledge into easily available, understandable, useful, and useable products. This strategy should pay careful attention to the needs of its various audiences, internal and external, including communities and implementing partners at country level, and address challenges of communications for development (such as format and delivery channels) in innovative ways. This will also enhance the link with our global engagement efforts and build bridges between operations and international policy dialogue.

### Action Area 5: Organizational Capacities at IFAD

Guarantee internal capacities to deliver the action plan effectively, including ensuring sufficient financial and human resources and providing adequate technical guidance and support.

Output: IFAD successfully implements the action plan.

#### Indicators:

1. Sufficient technical expertise, in terms of numbers and required specialization, is available to support implementation of the action plan. The nutrition team in PTA will be staffed-up with a P5 position
2. Adequate funding for the action plan during the period 2016-2018 including a no-cost extension of the current Canada nutrition support program
3. A sustainable model for mainstreaming nutrition into IFAD's investments has been developed and implemented, including seeking financial sustainability beyond 2018

The success of the plan depends on ensuring that IFAD itself has the capability to deliver. Staff and consultants must be equipped to integrate nutrition into COSOPS and projects and support them during start up, implementation, and operation, and there must be sufficient numbers of them to meet needs. Sustainable mainstreaming also depends on the creation of a supportive environment, including demand from governments themselves and IFAD staff, particularly CPMs but also PTA advisors. Thus, the importance of nutrition and IFAD's approach to mainstreaming will need to have buy-in from staff and partners. All this will require in-reach and outreach for awareness-raising, technical guidance, capacity strengthening and other technical assistance, all in support of Action Areas 1-4. These actions should not only persuade them of the relevance and importance of nutrition to IFAD's work but also make it easier for staff, especially CPMs and design teams, to incorporate nutrition into what they do.

#### Providing Expertise

To identify which COSOPs and projects to support and have the potential to be made "nutrition sensitive," IFAD takes advantage of the COSOP and project development process. The nutrition team within PTA has already established a process to identify potential projects and COSOPs early on. Once a lead advisor is named, the nutrition team requests that project concept note be shared with them for review. Based on an initial review, the team determines whether it is feasible for the project to be made "nutrition sensitive". The nutrition team attempts to at least comment on every concept note as well as on each relevant PDR. After the initial review, if there is scope, the team then offers an adviser or a consultant to accompany the design process, including serving on the CPMT or going on design missions.

The Canadian funds play a critical role here as they allow the incorporation of a nutrition expert on a mission at no cost to the overall design budget. These funds have been instrumental in assisting IFAD to overcome issues that might otherwise pose barriers to integrating nutrition into design, such as limited budgets for design or lack of time and technical expertise.

Thus far, almost all CPMs of eligible projects have accepted the offer of an expert to join the mission and have expressed appreciation for the nutrition team's contributions. Having an expert join the mission at no-cost provides a low-risk introduction to nutrition for the CPM and the design mission and hopefully will generate goodwill and understanding of the role of nutrition in IFAD's projects. Over time, this should boost uptake of nutrition in IFAD investments and consolidate demand for assistance. During IFAD10, IFAD will need to work to generate the evidence to demonstrate this added value and pave the way for mainstreaming the design and supervision of nutrition activities in operations.

### Strengthening Capacities

IFAD will also undertake the initiative to train trainers and build the cadre of nutrition-agriculture specialists at regional and national levels that it can draw on for support of design and implementation of IFAD-funded projects. Currently, the pool of specialists with the appropriate expertise in both nutrition programming and agriculture is limited, but given the significance of consultants in IFAD's business model, they are important to the success of the action plan.

To ensure that these consultants are well-qualified in nutrition and agriculture and familiar with IFAD's approach, a second workshop on project design for nutrition-sensitive agricultural projects will be held. PTA staff also develop consultants' skills by accompanying them on initial missions, in order to ensure they understand the organization and its approach to nutrition mainstreaming. These consultants can then go independently on additional missions, thus expanding the technical expertise that IFAD has available.

The specialists will be drawn from national partner institutions, including ministries, project management units, producer organizations, civil society as well as the pool of independent consultants. IFAD will also reach out to the African Nutrition Leadership Program (ANLP) to help with the development of this roster of consultants. As a member of the UN Network for SUN / REACH, IFAD will also build on ongoing capacity development initiatives being carried out by UN partners, including workshops or the development of tools and guidance.

### Categorizing Projects as Nutrition Sensitive

The action plan recognizes that not all projects are amenable to being designed to improve nutrition in such an integrated, systematic way. However, IFAD will provide incentives and support for projects to integrate nutrition whenever possible.

To encourage attainment of IFAD10 targets, instead of using a "marker system" to rate projects, IFAD will provide financial and technical incentives to promote integration. IFAD will also encourage sustained efforts to make its work nutrition sensitive by generating clear evidence that incorporating nutrition into projects can be done and will enhance the impact of its investments. A key message should be that embedding nutrition is not yet another issue that adds another layer of requirements to the tasks of the CPM. Rather, inclusion of nutrition should be seen to facilitate achievement of IFAD's current and usual goals.

To track and learn from its projects, IFAD will put into place an assessment procedure to categorize projects as being "nutrition sensitive" or not. This categorization will be based on a clear definition and qualifying criteria for a "nutrition-sensitive project". This information will be used to inform a portfolio review of IFAD's projects that will assess how IFAD has addressed nutrition in its projects over the past years and will provide a

needed baseline (and some history and context) for reporting on the numbers of nutrition-sensitive projects.

This process is meant to be seen as an information, reporting, and learning mechanism, not a ratings system. For instance, with this information, an ex post categorization of how projects incorporated nutrition could be made. The assessment would first note those that did not become nutrition sensitive (according to the designated criteria) as compared to those that did, and it could also then analyze the comprehensiveness and depth of the project's activities in nutrition. For example, was nutrition addressed in only one component in a minor way, or did the project take a more holistic, integrative approach and incorporate nutrition considerations throughout the investment, including engaging with other sectors?

Such an assessment can also guide staff to know how to include nutrition in their projects and can provide information about standards, experiences and approaches to PTA advisers and consultants involved in design, to those involved in the QE and QA processes, and to the IOE as a framework for future evaluations.

It should be understood that IFAD believes that at least one-third of its projects can be made nutrition sensitive. This figure thus represents a floor and not a ceiling. Through the period of IFAD10, IFAD will seek to create an environment whereby the consideration and incorporation of nutrition into projects becomes standard practice. As a result, as IFAD learns how to mainstream nutrition into projects, more than one-third are likely to be nutrition sensitive.

#### Developing Guidance and Tools, Raising Awareness

Workshops and seminars will raise awareness among CPMs and other staff about IFAD's commitments on nutrition, IFAD's approach to mainstreaming, and what resources are available to support the mainstreaming initiative (e.g., the Canadian funds). Guidance will be developed so that staff and consultants know how to prepare the nutrition assessment for the COSOP and what they need to do so that a project qualifies as nutrition sensitive.

Technical notes and guides (e.g., how to do notes, operational guidance), seminars (e.g., breakfast or lunch seminar, webinars), and other communications materials (e.g., videos) will also be developed so that staff and consultants know what actions to take or interventions to design to make a project nutrition sensitive. To raise visibility and build awareness, a "Facts and Myths" approach about mainstreaming nutrition could also be prepared, and innovative mechanisms such as IFAD's Ag Talks could be instituted. The PTA nutrition team will also coordinate with COM to ensure an up-to-date webpage.

Despite the usefulness of such information, care should be taken not to overwhelm users with too many toolkits, notes, and other documentation. The communications approach will seek to address this problem and also integrate nutrition in existing toolkits and other publications whenever possible.

IFAD will also carry out training workshops to build capacities for project design and supervision among consultants and staff, as it did in 2014, in collaboration with FAO, REACH, and the World Bank. This will help to address the current constraint in terms of the limited number of qualified consultants who are available to go on design and supervision missions.

IFAD will also build strategic alliances inside the organization with the regional divisions and other initiatives that are particularly relevant for nutrition, such as gender and climate change.

Gender and nutrition have already collaborated on some activities, such as participation in gender learning routes and gender breakfasts. Similarly, PTA has collaborated with ECD to bring a nutrition perspective to climate-change panels and workshops. Future efforts can build on these activities.



Other areas, such as policy engagement, indigenous peoples, agricultural production, and natural resources, also provide entry points. Technical specialists in these areas have expressed interest in collaborating on nutrition. The collaborative, unified processes that exist within PTA to support design also ensure that nutrition activities complement rather than compete with existing initiatives.

In all cases, these activities can benefit from joint action and synergies in project actions and effects as well as operationally in terms of planning, delivery, communications, and capacity strengthening. The East and Southern Africa (ESA) Division, for example, has applied for a research grant to learn from and support nutrition-sensitive agriculture investments in ESA and is also planning to develop a strategic approach for the region. Within the framework of the corporate action plan, this should help to support and contextualize actions.

As noted, IFAD has committed to member states that it will make COSOPs and projects nutrition sensitive. Progress on this should be reported through the RIDE. A new Strategic Framework is also being developed and will highlight IFAD's efforts at mainstreaming nutrition. Those involved in the QE and QA processes will also be aware of this commitment, and will have templates and guidance by which to assess the integration of nutrition into projects and COSOPs, when applicable.

#### Challenges in Human and Financial Resources

IFAD faces some human resources limitations in supporting this model. Currently IFAD avails itself of one core technical staff, one technical expert co-terminus with Canadian funds (April 2016), and one technical adviser on secondment as part of a partnership between the CGIAR's Agriculture for Nutrition and Health program, led by IFPRI (until April 2016). The staff above plus a program assistant (also on Canadian funds) are located in PTA. Another special advisor is funded separately to provide assistance to the East and Southern Africa division (ESA). Finally, a special advisor to the President of IFAD has nutrition as part of his mandate.

To be able to carry out this Action Plan a revised staffing strategy needs to be put in place which will entail: i) extension of the Canada Program for another three years. This is made possible by the significant undisbursed balance under the Program and will allow for the extension of the existing staff; ii) recruitment of a P5 lead nutrition expert to provide leadership and technical expertise to the nutrition team in IFAD. This position would be co-terminus with the Canada Program; iii) pursue discussions with IFPRI to explore future partnership arrangements; iv) create a cadre of trusted consultants to help with design, start up and supervision but also other parts of this plan, such as in communications, research and knowledge management, and capacity strengthening.

A broader nutrition agenda must be taken up by staff and divisions and departments across IFAD. The actions needed cannot be implemented by the core technical nutrition team alone. Indeed the plan itself is a corporate plan in which all of IFAD is involved, not only PTA but the rest of PMD, especially the regional divisions, along with SKD and COM. Strategic alliances across IFAD are central to achieving IFAD's nutrition outcomes.

Most importantly, by the end of IFAD10, IFAD must demonstrate that it has changed the way it does business in nutrition and that it has adopted this "new model" to effectively and sustainably mainstream nutrition into its work.

If mainstreaming efforts are to be a success they will need to be sustained beyond IFAD 10. Potentially they will have simply become "second nature" and they will be integrated fully into the normal IFAD process of loans and grants, design and supervision, monitoring and evaluation and research. The action plan seeks to utilize the current supplementary funds (Canada and Germany) to accompany these efforts during IFAD 10 and pave the way for their integration into IFAD operations and research agenda. Complementary contributions may provide an additional funding source for project investments and for blending with IFAD projects or in the form of co-financing as a way to leverage the IFAD portfolio.

## Annex 1. Results Framework for 2016-2018

### Goal

Address the problems of malnutrition in all its forms and contribute to improving the nutritional levels of the rural poor, especially smallholders, in developing countries.

### Objective

Increase the nutritional impact of IFAD's investments and its advocacy and policy engagement at global and national levels, primarily through agriculture and food-based approaches that improve dietary adequacy, in terms of both quality and quantity, of rural families.

### IFAD's Role

As an international financial institution focused on the needs of smallholders and the rural poor, IFAD will contribute to improving nutrition through investments in agriculture and food-based approaches, including the strengthening and shaping of food systems.

IFAD's will provide financing combined with technical knowledge that supports good design for a productive investment that will improve livelihoods and lead to better nutrition.

### Strategic Outcomes

1. Nutrition-sensitive projects shape agriculture and food systems in ways that contribute to nutritious diets.
2. Projects promote behavior change communications (and related effective nutrition education and information) to improve food choices as well as preparation and post-harvest practices (storage and processing), and so contribute to healthy, nutritious diets for persons of all ages.
3. Projects promote the equality and empowerment of women in ways that improve nutrition for themselves, their children, and their families across generations.
4. Activities in policy engagement, advocacy, and partnerships, as well as research and knowledge

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management, contribute to better governance, a supportive enabling environment for projects, and more effective projects at global and country level.

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Action areas	Outputs	Indicators
<p>Action Area 1: Operations</p> <p>Design and implement nutrition-sensitive projects, country strategies, and grants.</p>	<p>Projects, COSOPs and grants systematically take into account how they can improve nutritional outcomes of beneficiary populations.</p>	<p>By the end of IFAD10,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All new COSOPs include a nutrition situation assessment, specifying how the COSOP's strategic objectives relate to improving nutrition</li> <li>2. One-third of new project design reports are nutrition sensitive, with explicit nutrition objectives, actions and indicators</li> </ol>
<p>Action Area 2: Capacity Strengthening</p> <p>Develop and strengthen the technical, analytical, and managerial capacities of implementing partners, including communities and government institutions</p>	<p>Implementing partners, particularly government agencies and communities, understand how to improve nutrition through agriculture and can capably support design and implementation of nutrition-sensitive projects and COSOPs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implementing partners participate in training and learning events to promote the incorporation of nutrition-sensitive approaches in projects, including promotion of multisectoral action.</li> </ol>
<p>Action Area 3: Policy Influence, Engagement &amp; Partnerships</p> <p>Work, engage, and partner with governments, international organizations, private sector firms, NGOs, and other stakeholders at</p>	<p>IFAD will stay engaged at country, regional, and global levels in advocating for the role of food and agriculture in addressing problems of malnutrition, particularly for smallholders and the rural poor</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continued involvement in efforts improve governance for nutrition at the global level, and increased policy engagement and influence on nutrition at regional and country level. Priority is given to SUN countries and to policy and program coordination and harmonization with UN partners.</li> <li>2. Partnerships with country stakeholders are strengthened to increase project impact and</li> </ol>

global and national levels to pursue effective nutrition governance, an enabling environment for nutrition-sensitive investments, and effective projects and knowledge generation

and will pursue productive operational partnerships with other organizations

support scaling up, with special attention to private sector in the development of nutrition-sensitive value chains.

#### Action Area 4: Knowledge and Evidence

Build and manage the evidence base to support project design and implementation, including research and other studies, monitoring and evaluation, and communications to encourage uptake and use

Improved generation and use of evidence around nutrition-sensitive agriculture to improve nutrition outcomes of projects, country strategies, and policy influence and engagement

1. IFAD-specific research agenda identified around issues of nutrition-sensitive agriculture relevant to operations and support of the action plan
2. Knowledge products to support nutrition-sensitive project design, implementation and policy engagement generated, primarily toolkits and how-to-do notes (e.g., gender, integrated home production, nutrition-sensitive value chains )
3. Dissemination strategy is developed to promote effective uptake of research and other knowledge products.
4. RIMS and project surveys are revised to better take nutrition actions and effects into account, including pilot testing of dietary diversity indicator and use of mid-term reviews.

#### Action Area 5: Organizational Capacities at IFAD

Ensure IFAD's internal capacities to deliver the action plan effectively, including ensuring sufficient financial and human resources and providing adequate technical

IFAD successfully implements the action plan.

1. Sufficient technical expertise, in terms of numbers and required specialization, is available to support implementation of the action plan. The nutrition team in PTA will be staffed-up with a P5 position
2. Adequate funding for the action plan during the period 2016-2018 including a no-cost extension of the current Canada

guidance and support

nutrition support program

3. A sustainable model for mainstreaming nutrition into IFAD's investments has been developed and implemented, including seeking financial sustainability beyond 2018.

## Guiding Principles

- Seek to improve nutrition through agriculture and food-based approaches at national and global levels.
- Apply a nutrition lens to the design and implementation of projects and grants, thereby improving nutrition through integrating actions into its investments in agriculture and food systems, rather than through stand-alone nutrition investments or nutrition-specific actions implemented through other sectors, such as health.
- Ensure investments are economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable, are gender sensitive, and do not take actions that negatively affect nutritional outcomes.
- Support the empowerment of poor rural people and strengthen their capacities to take action independently and engage with the institutions that affect their lives, with particular attention to the rights and participation of indigenous peoples and women.
- Promote a learning attitude around project design and operations and around development of effective country strategies.
- Strengthen the evidence base on effective ways to improve nutrition through agriculture and food-based approaches and encourage uptake and use of findings.
- Support multisectoral strategies to improve nutrition and work in partnership with others as needed to encourage appropriate convergence of interventions and obtain the policy and program support needed for an enabling environment and for sustainable operation and scaling up.
- Seek strategic alliances with external partners, particularly UN agencies, to encourage concerted, effective global and regional action on nutrition , and nutrition and agriculture.
- Collaborate with other cross-cutting initiatives at IFAD, such as gender and climate change, to achieve synergies for improved investment effectiveness.
- Ensure interventions have a neutral or positive effect on nutrition, so that they “do no harm” to nutrition outcomes.





## Annex 2. Glossary of terms

The nutritional status of a person can be measured by different methods, such as anthropometry biochemical methods, clinical assessment, and measurement of dietary intake. Anthropometry is the method most commonly used. Anthropometry is the measurement of the physical dimensions and gross composition of the human body. The nutritional status of a person alone does not indicate the causes of this status (CFS 2012).<sup>14</sup>

Malnutrition is caused by inadequate, excessive or imbalanced intakes of carbohydrates, protein, or fats (macronutrients) and vitamins and minerals (micronutrients). It manifests in three main forms: undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and obesity and overweight.

Undernutrition is a result of inadequate macro- and / or micronutrient intake as compared to biological needs.

Micronutrient malnutrition results from deficiencies or excesses of specific vitamins and minerals.

Overweight and obesity result from an excess of certain food components, such as fats and sugars, relative to levels of activity.

Acute malnutrition, or wasting, is characterized by a rapid loss of fat and muscle weight loss. Wasting is classified as either moderate or severe based on body measurements.<sup>15</sup> It is defined by a weight-for-height z-score  $< -2$  standard deviations from the WHO Child Growth Standards.

Chronic malnutrition, or stunting, is a form of child growth failure. Chronic malnutrition occurs over time, unlike acute malnutrition. A child who is stunted or chronically malnourished often appears to be normally proportioned but is actually shorter than normal for his or her age. Stunting starts before birth and is caused by poor maternal nutrition, poor feeding practices, poor food quality as well as frequent infections which can slow down growth (UNICEF). It is defined by a height-for-age z-score of  $< -2$  standard deviations from the WHO Child Growth Standards.

Dietary diversity contributes to a healthy or balanced diet. A balanced diet is a diet that provides energy and all essential nutrients for growth and a healthy and active life. Since few foods contain all the nutrients required to permit the normal growth, maintenance and functioning of the human body, a variety of food is needed to cover a person's macro and micronutrient needs. Any combination of foods that provides the correct amount of dietary energy and all essential nutrients in optimal amounts and proportions is a balanced diet (CFS 2012).

Nutrition security is a fundamental conceptual component of food and nutrition security. The term "nutrition security" emerged in the mid-1990s. In contrast to the "food" focus of the term "food security" (which often leads to a focus on energy intake), nutrition security focuses on the "nutrition" aspects. It combines the concept of having access to adequate food with a focus on ensuring that that food is adequate in both quantity and quality and that the non-food factors essential for good nutrition are also accounted for. Nutrition security has been defined by a number of organizations, but keep these concepts in mind. Thus, IFPRI has proposed nutrition security means "adequate nutritional status in terms of protein, energy, vitamins, and minerals for all household members at all times." FAO has suggested a definition of nutrition security as "when all people at all times consume food of sufficient quantity and quality in terms of variety, diversity, nutrient content and safety to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life, coupled with a sanitary environment, adequate health, education and care".

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<sup>14</sup> Committee on World Food Security. 2012. Coming to Terms with Terminology. Rome: Committee on World Food Security.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/nutrition/training/2.3/20.html>

The nutrition transition tend to accompany economic development as with higher incomes dietary patterns and lifestyles change. Complex carbohydrates, fibers and coarse grains are replaced by higher amounts of saturated fats, salt, simple sugars, and processed foods. The diet also tends to have greater variety, with more fruits and vegetables and more animal source food (meat, dairy, fish). However, in the initial stages of the transition, physical activity levels go down, as economic development leads to more sedentary lifestyles, particularly in terms of labor. As a consequence, even as undernutrition declines and overweight and obesity rise, as do non-transmissible chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease.

## Annex 3. Examples of nutrition-sensitive IFAD investments

In Bangladesh, IFAD provided a grant to the World Fish Centre to explore the potential of farming nutrient-rich small fish to increase household incomes and improve nutrition. This meant overcoming beliefs that production would suffer by raising large and small fish in the same ponds.

The World Fish studies found that technologies to raise small and large fish together actually increase total fish production. Promotion of these technologies in wetlands and ponds, when combined with education, can increase consumption of fish and micronutrients, especially in women and children. Raising the nutrient-rich small fish, mola, in the 4 million small, seasonal ponds in Bangladesh has the potential to meet the annual recommended vitamin A intake for over 6 million children. This approach is now being considered for expansion into other countries in the region.

In Guatemala, through an IFAD-supported project more than 13,000 coffee-growing families benefited from introduction of low-cost irrigation technology. In addition, the project provided water purifiers to 5,000 families, which helped reduce the prevalence of diarrhoeal disease, a major contributor to malnutrition in young children. The project also promoted nutrition education and vegetable gardens at the household level and through schools. The combination of nutrition education and gardens encouraged households to start consuming new local varieties of vegetables, channelling increases in incomes to improvements in diets.

In India, IFAD is mainstreaming nutrition into a new project to improve living conditions of tribal communities in Odisha. Nutrition experts on the design team have carried out field visits to understand community needs and possibilities, and discussed with the state government how to link project activities with ongoing programs in health, thus ensuring programmatic convergence.

Under the project, improved land and water management can extend the growing season and allow additional, more nutritious crops, such as fruits and vegetables and iron-rich millet, to be grown. Links can be established with national agricultural research centers to determine optimal, potentially biofortified, varieties for production.

Development of the value chain for these crops will increase producer incomes. The integration of home extension activities will ensure that increased production diversity also increases dietary diversity and attention to preservation and storage increases the foods that families have available throughout the year.

In Sudan, the IFAD-supported Gash Sustainable Livelihoods Project focused on irrigation and infrastructure rehabilitation and governance of land and water resources. Increasing project effectiveness also meant providing training in life and vocational skills and raising awareness among women and men about the importance of including women in social and economic life.

In sessions on nutrition and food processing, women learned about the nutritional benefits of foods not commonly consumed, like vegetables, eggs and milk. They learned how to prepare a variety of dishes with high nutritional value and about the importance of good hygiene.

Diets became more diverse, and the training sessions allowed women to socialize among themselves more frequently, when earlier they had met only for special occasions such as weddings and funerals. Seeing the positive results of the training on their families, men also became less resistant to allowing their wives to participate.

This grant is now being scaled out into other countries.

## Annex 4. List of staff interviewed in preparation of the Action Plan

### 1. CPMs, Country Directors, and Others working on nutrition.

Key questions included experience so far, what worked and what could be done differently.

Gernot Laganda, ECD  
 Rym Ben Zyd, CPM Burundi  
 Nigel Brett, CPM India  
 Stefania Dina, CPM Laos  
 Vincenzo Galastro, CPM Niger  
 Maria Fernanda Arraes de Souza, nutrition focal point, Mozambique  
 Nadine Gbossa, CPM Kenya  
 Ronald Hartman, CPM Indonesia  
 Frits Jepsen, CPM Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan  
 Chase Palmeri CPM Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Pacific Islands, Tonga  
 Jesus Quintana, CPM Ecuador and Venezuela  
 Thomas Rath, CPM Swaziland, Lesotho, Malawi  
 Luyaku Nsimyasi, CPM Equatorial Guinea, Cape Verde and Senegal

### 2. PTA

Key questions included which entry points and suggestions can they offer to mainstream nutrition at IFAD.

Richard Abila, Fisheries and Aquaculture  
 Tom Anyonge, Institutions  
 Adolfo Brizzi, Director  
 Clare Bishop-Sambrook, Gender  
 Marco Camagni, Value Chains  
 Antonella Cordone, Indigenous Peoples  
 Robert Delve, Agronomy  
 Wafaa El Khoury, Agronomy  
 Mylene Kherallah, Value Chains  
 Audrey Nepveu De Villemarceau, Water  
 Mara Elena Mangiafico, Knowledge Management  
 Antonio Rota, Livestock  
 Silvia Sperandini, Gender and Knowledge Management

### 3. Regional Directors

Key questions included which entry points and suggestions can they offer to mainstream nutrition at IFAD.

Khalida Bouzar, NEN, ECA  
 Hoonae Kim, APR  
 Sana Jatta, ESA  
 Joaquin Lozano, LAC  
 Ides de Willebois, WCA

### 4. Others

Key questions included which entry points and suggestions can they offer to mainstream nutrition at IFAD.

Josefina Stubbs, Associate Vice President, SKD  
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