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Executive summary

A. Introduction

1. **Rationale.** This thematic evaluation of IFAD's support to nutrition is the first corporate-level evaluation of the organization's global nutrition portfolio. It covers the period from 2016 – when IFAD's first nutrition action plan was adopted – through to 2024 and includes the second nutrition action plan. The evaluation was approved at the 137th session of the Executive Board in December 2022. It was commissioned in response to a number of priorities. The pressing need for effective interventions to tackle hunger and malnutrition (including undernutrition as well as overweight and obesity) made it timely to assess IFAD's nutrition entry points. In addition, during the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD11), IFAD did not achieve its corporate impact target – set in the Results Management Framework – of improving nutrition for 12 million people. The evaluation was therefore designed to improve understanding of IFAD's proof of concept and to identify barriers to progress, including financial and organizational constraints that must be addressed to ensure a robust nutrition-sensitive approach across IFAD's portfolio and among its partners going forward. The conclusions and recommendations from this evaluation are intended to inform both IFAD's new strategic framework and the third nutrition action plan, which will come into effect in 2026.

2. **Methodological overview.** The evaluation was conducted by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) with support from a team of external thematic experts. It was carried out in line with the Revised IFAD Evaluation Policy (2021) and the IFAD Revised Evaluation Manual (2022). The thematic evaluation addressed four key questions, which assessed aspects of relevance, coherence and development effectiveness (including processes, approaches and results) of IFAD's support to nutrition. A theory-based design – informed by the reconstructed theory of change and associated assumptions – provided the basis for developing the evaluation framework. An evaluation matrix, setting out the questions, subquestions, lines of enquiry and data sources, guided the detailed methodological design.

3. The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. It drew on a review of secondary data, preliminary interviews and a self-assessment workshop during the inception phase. Ten country case studies were conducted as part of evaluation data collection. Six were mission-based (Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Indonesia and Mozambique), two were remote (Bangladesh and Zimbabwe), and two were conducted within country strategy and programme evaluations led by IOE (Egypt and Lao People's Democratic Republic). To broaden coverage and address specific topics, two additional "light touch" remote country studies were added (Djibouti and Nicaragua).

4. A survey of IFAD staff and partners, along with individual interviews with IFAD staff and external stakeholders, supported the triangulation and validation of findings. Regional focus group discussions with IFAD staff were held at the end of the data-collection phase to further validate and triangulate evidence and gather input on the conclusions and recommendations. A hybrid event was organized to present the findings, conclusions and recommendations to the core learning partnership group and the Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division (including the nutrition team), and to reflect on their implications for IFAD's work moving forward. A specific study on grants and supplementary funds complemented the data collection, with particular attention given to the thematic supplementary funds provided by Canada, Germany and Norway, and grants that had a global and capacity development focus or that complemented investments in countries selected as case studies for this thematic evaluation.

B. Key findings

5. **Overarching question 1:** To what extent are IFAD's current nutrition priorities and approaches relevant and sufficiently tailored to national priorities and IFAD's target group needs, the global context and IFAD's corporate commitments and priorities?

6. **IFAD's strategic commitment to nutrition is well aligned with global commitments, global initiatives and existing evidence on nutrition.** IFAD's nutrition action plan (2019–2025) reflects the prioritization of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, acknowledges global malnutrition challenges and aligns with the global agenda on nutrition, to which IFAD has actively contributed. This includes its support for the global consensus on the importance of school feeding. Strong commitments, including corporate replenishment targets, have raised the bar for the organization and helped advance the nutrition agenda. This has strengthened IFAD's image as an organization with strong ambitions in nutrition, making it an attractive partner for collaboration. The adoption of the Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W) as a corporate indicator for nutrition has helped clarify IFAD's role in promoting sustainable healthy diets as a means to improve nutrition. IFAD's work on nutrition is supported by the inclusion of nutrition in most of its policies and plans, with few exceptions, including the private sector policy.

7. **The nutrition priorities in the IFAD Strategic Framework (2016–2025) and the nutrition action plan (2019–2025) do not adequately reflect the food systems agenda or align with evolving thinking in this area.** IFAD has not fully recognized the significant role it can play in promoting sustainable healthy diets and sustainable food systems, which links directly to its mandate. There is still a lack of clarity among staff on how, and in what ways, IFAD contributes to improving nutrition. The Strategic Framework prioritizes production-driven interventions in support of nutrition goals. Similarly, the nutrition action plan 2019–2025 provides limited guidance for organizational understanding and prioritization of how IFAD can make food systems more nutrition-sensitive. This is largely because the food systems discourse has gained greater prominence since the strategy was launched. Updating the approach in line with evolving developments would require adopting a "farm-to-fork" approach that explores entry points for promoting sustainable healthy diets across food supply chains, food environments and consumer behaviour, in order to achieve environmental, social and economic outcomes.

8. **IFAD-supported nutrition interventions are not always sufficiently tailored to existing nutrition needs and to context specificities.** There is a positive trend in country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) and projects formulated since IFAD10 towards greater integration of nutrition priorities. Strong efforts in recent years have led to increased attention to nutrition during the context analysis and planning stages. However, IFAD rigidly uses the term "nutrition" to frame its nutrition-sensitive work, limiting the possibility of garnering support at the design stage for nutrition as a critical element in achieving sustainable, healthy diets through food systems transformation. Issues such as obesity and overweight are also not yet addressed in IFAD's nutrition investments. Furthermore, the extent to which nutrition is considered in project design, included in workplans and has a resource allocation varies and often depends on the availability of grants or cofinancing opportunities. Gaps remain in tailoring priorities to contexts and nutrition needs, which affects project focus, scope and buy-in. In many cases, nutrition has been incorporated late in the process, and sometimes only as a component, subcomponent or through ad hoc activities, often focused on social and behaviour change communication.

9. **IFAD's interventions focus on regions and countries where undernutrition is prevalent and on target populations most in need. Progress on work**

with Indigenous Peoples has been positive, but youth continues to receive insufficient attention. Vulnerability to malnutrition informs both geographic and individual targeting, or alternatively, poverty is used as an appropriate proxy to identify nutritionally vulnerable areas. A key challenge with targeting lies in IFAD's shifting focus towards active or productive poor populations, which may reduce the extent to which nutrition-sensitive projects reach the poorest – and thus those most at risk of malnutrition. Linkages with Indigenous Peoples have been strengthened, particularly through the IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples: 2022 update, which added food security, food sovereignty and nutrition as core principles. However, the needs of Indigenous Peoples are still not systematically addressed in IFAD's investments. Evidence of efforts to include youth in nutrition interventions remains limited. While some projects consider youth at the design stage, implementation often fails to fully engage them or to address their specific needs.

10. **Overarching question 2:** To what extent are IFAD's nutrition efforts maximizing its unique comparative advantage and how have partnerships, policy engagement and knowledge management been instrumental in achieving nutrition results?

11. **IFAD is recognized by other international actors as a key player in nutrition. At country level, however, there are opportunities to significantly enhance IFAD's contribution to sustainable healthy diets.** Partners at the global level value IFAD's consistent engagement with smallholder farmers and farmers' organizations, its ability to mobilize long-term resources to support the agricultural sector in improving diets, and its capacity to combine funding with technical support. Its close relationship with national governmental institutions – particularly those in the agricultural sector – is also seen as a key strength, offering privileged positioning and potential entry points. Nonetheless, a number of internal challenges prevent the translation of the recognized comparative advantages into design and implementation to give sufficient emphasis to nutrition. These include IFAD's operating model, the small scale of its grant portfolio, limited involvement of partners in programme design, and IFAD's limited presence and staff capacity in many contexts. These constraints hinder IFAD's policy engagement on nutrition at country level and reduce its ability to convince some governments of the value of incorporating actions to promote sustainable healthy diets and food systems into investments.

12. **There are significant opportunities to build stronger partnerships with governments and other actors in support of IFAD's nutrition agenda.** At global level, efforts have been made to enhance collaboration with partners and entities to maximize synergies in mainstreaming nutrition. At country level, the extent to which IFAD has developed strategic and operational partnerships for nutrition varies and has had mixed results. Despite the prioritization of multisectoral approaches and broader engagement in the nutrition action plan, national partners outside the agricultural sector have been insufficiently involved in both the design and the implementation phases. Engagement with other United Nations agencies in nutrition-sensitive projects has also been sub-optimal. Opportunities also exist for stronger collaboration with the private sector and academia. Stronger partnerships with diverse actors require a proactive approach to encourage governments, as key decision makers in the design of IFAD's investments, to strengthen such linkages.

13. **IFAD has made progress in terms of knowledge generation in nutrition but remains weak on knowledge sharing and aggregation, particularly from projects. The guidance and tools available to support nutrition-sensitive design across the project cycle are of good quality, though some key topics remain uncovered.** Knowledge management efforts have included various initiatives to gather experience from country level. However, there is limited aggregation of lessons learned and knowledge generated by IFAD and other

organizations, and this is not sufficiently used to inform design and implementation. Greater use could be made of knowledge produced through IFAD's initiatives to generate evidence on nutrition-sensitive agriculture and healthy diets, in support of stronger programme designs. IFAD missed the opportunity to produce a robust document that highlights how nutrition-sensitive agriculture can contribute to sustainable healthy diets, which could have strengthened the evidence base and enhanced IFAD's credibility in this area. IFAD has developed guidance on nutrition-sensitive value chains that is well regarded by external partners. Explicit guidance has not yet been produced on how agricultural investments can address overweight and obesity through sustainable healthy diets, although a specific study on this topic was conducted, and there is also no guidance on designing investments through a food systems lens.

14. **Grants have been instrumental in gathering experience, generating evidence, strengthening partnerships, contributing to policy dialogue and complementing loan investments.** Grants – whether funded by IFAD or through supplementary funds – have been instrumental in gathering experience and generating evidence to support the mainstreaming of nutrition, and have been highly relevant to IFAD's commitments. They have been pivotal in strengthening strategic partnerships for mainstreaming nutrition in agriculture investments, reinforcing links with other mainstreaming themes, and contributing to both global and national dialogues on food systems. Grants have also helped to make IFAD's loan investments more nutrition-sensitive, creating momentum, which enhanced understanding and resulted in good opportunities for scaling up. However, there is limited evidence that grants have led to long-term financial commitments from governments to nutrition-sensitive agriculture. Challenges have also been faced in ensuring close and systematic linkages between grant-funded country-level research or capacity support and loan investments. In addition, grant-funded research has not always been well coordinated with other development partners, limiting uptake and representing a missed opportunity to build stronger partnerships.

15. **Overarching question 3:** Are IFAD's nutrition-sensitive interventions (operations and COSOPs), and in particular nutrition pathways and approaches, effective for delivering against nutrition objectives and what progress has been made in achieving and contributing to nutrition results?

16. **The number of beneficiaries targeted with nutrition interventions in nutrition-sensitive projects has increased, but remains a small proportion of total IFAD beneficiaries.** Nutrition activities targeted only 12 per cent and 17 per cent of total beneficiaries in IFAD11 and IFAD12 projects respectively. Since IFAD11, IFAD has supported 5.4 million people to improve their nutrition. The highest number of beneficiaries reached with targeted nutrition support were in the Asia and the Pacific region and the East and Southern Africa region.

17. **IFAD's nutrition efforts have converged around critical pathways, but IFAD has not consistently applied a nutrition lens to its investments, and evidence of a direct link to improved diets remains modest.** Most beneficiaries have been reached with pathways to increase and diversify food production and promote behaviour change, which feature in nearly all nutrition-sensitive projects. Pathways linked to women's empowerment, improved availability of food in markets and climate resilience were included in around half of the investments reviewed. Less emphasis has been placed on youth empowerment, Indigenous Peoples, environmental health and institutional support. Nutrition has largely been addressed through stand-alone activities, with insufficient attention to the broader food systems and without systematically applying a nutrition lens. Evidence of impact on sustainable healthy diets is also lacking due to insufficient data.

18. **Access to markets and income growth and diversification have been supported through various approaches, but their impact on nutrition outcomes cannot be clearly demonstrated.** Although IFAD's guidance on nutrition-sensitive value chains is well regarded, value chain interventions do not fully consider how specific crops or livestock can contribute to nutrition, nor are the potential entry points along the value chain sufficiently explored. IFAD has not supported governments in working towards more cohesive nutrition strategies that engage all actors within supported value chains to maximize nutritional benefits. A potential trade-off also exists between the "income" and "nutrition" objectives. The evidence showed that investments in access to markets have not been sufficiently coupled with nutrition aspects, in particular with efforts focused on encouraging families to consume nutritionally rich foods. This suggests that these pathways should be integrated into broader nutrition strategies, with attention to environmental aspects, in particular access to water, and women's empowerment as key determinants for nutrition, among others. The country case studies revealed only marginal evidence of efforts to address food processing, conservation and safety within nutrition interventions. Likewise, only limited efforts have been made to respond to growing interest from consumers and value chain stakeholders in organic value chains.

19. **Women's empowerment has been central to IFAD's nutrition interventions.** Overall, nutrition-sensitive projects have prioritized women, identifying them as key beneficiaries and promoting approaches that reduce their workload and support income generation. There has been solid progress in addressing women's empowerment, with selected gains in terms of women's capacity to influence food production and consumption choices, and women's control over productive resources.

20. **Insufficient attention has been paid to water access, despite its importance for nutrition, and in articulating the nexus between nutrition and climate change.** Although IFAD prioritizes access to water for climate resilience and environmental health, its importance for nutrition has not been adequately reflected in investments. Water infrastructure for human consumption has generally not been included in nutrition-sensitive projects as a contribution to nutrition, despite being clearly one of the interventions that contributes significantly to reducing malnutrition in rural communities. The interconnections between nutrition and climate change have also received insufficient attention in project design and implementation, limiting IFAD's ability to mobilize funding at the intersection of these priorities.

21. **School-based interventions have gained importance but remain small in scale and mainly focused on supporting school gardens.** School-based interventions have been increasingly encouraged in IFAD's investments for nutrition, and IFAD has also engaged in regional and global discussions and advocacy around school feeding. However, relatively few school-based initiatives have been implemented, and most have centred on school gardens. While these projects are effective in raising awareness among children and can have positive spillover effects on families, they have been challenging to sustain and have not taken advantage of IFAD's experience in value chain development and linking producers to markets. Moreover, IFAD has not comprehensively monitored its school-based interventions, making it difficult to ensure learning.

22. **Overarching question 4:** To what extent has IFAD put in place an appropriate and effective enabling environment for the delivery of nutrition objectives?

23. **IFAD's internal enabling environment for delivering on nutrition has evolved positively, but it has not kept pace with the demands of its ambitious nutrition agenda. Weaknesses in nutrition programming and implementation reflect gaps in staff understanding and capacity, as well as**

resource constraints. Over the evaluation period, some progress was made in staffing for nutrition – supported by supplementary funding – but both staffing levels and capacity remain well below what is needed to match IFAD's ambitions. Growth of the nutrition team at headquarters and regional level is positive, but remains insufficient. While nutrition capacity development efforts have been modest, regional events have been much appreciated and are perceived as having added value. A lack of nutrition expertise and limited budgets – both at the design stage and during supervision – jeopardize the quality of nutrition-sensitive project design and support. Country directors and project team leads play a critical role in raising the profile of nutrition in investments and securing commitment, but they have not been adequately equipped or supported to advocate effectively for nutrition, which limits the integration of nutrition priorities in investments. IFAD country offices lack sufficient staff, nutrition expertise and understanding of the nutrition action plan. This, combined with gaps in nutrition skills within project management units and supervision missions, has resulted in limited capacity to mainstream and monitor nutrition across investments.

24. **IFAD's resource allocation to nutrition remains insufficient. Supplementary funds have been critical to progress but have been limited in scale. A solid and sustainable resource mobilization strategy for nutrition has yet to be established.** IFAD's regular programme allocation for nutrition is low, and funding for nutrition-related activities within investments represents only a small share of total costs, constraining projects' ability to deliver results. Supplementary funds from Canada, Germany and Norway have played a crucial role, providing essential support for the design and implementation of nutrition-sensitive activities. These funds have helped strengthen IFAD's capacity, supported partnership-building, and strengthened guidance and the documentation of results. Although the supplementary funds made a big difference, the amounts allocated were lower than in other thematic areas, in particular climate change adaptation. Other funding sources are not being proactively pursued. Limited funds for nutrition pose risks for the sustainability of efforts in project design, implementation support, knowledge management and capacity development.

25. **Significant weaknesses in monitoring systems, data collection, analysis and reporting limit IFAD's ability to demonstrate its contribution to nutrition.** IFAD's impact on diets remains unclear, with the IFAD11 impact assessment showing results far below targets, partly due to the low representation of nutrition-sensitive projects in the sample, and insufficient time for mainstreaming efforts to yield measurable outcomes. Contributions to dietary improvements are not being adequately tracked, reflecting broader issues in results measurement. There are persistent challenges in aligning nutrition objectives with indicators. Projects primarily focus on Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W) and knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) to assess changes. However, those changes require time and more immediate and short-term indicators to monitor progress are often not tracked. Capacity gaps in data collection and analysis persist, as service providers and monitoring and evaluation teams often lack the expertise to measure MDD-W and KAP indicators accurately, resulting in errors and misinterpretations. Methodological inconsistencies further compromise data accuracy, hindering longitudinal analysis and reducing data reliability. As a result, IFAD is unable to clearly demonstrate its impact on diets.

C. Conclusions

26. IFAD's corporate commitments to nutrition have kept pace with major global commitments and policy developments. At global level, IFAD has played a recognized and relevant role in nutrition dialogue and coordination. It has also made considerable progress in incorporating nutrition priorities and corporate targets into COSOPs and project designs, and in ensuring greater attention to nutrition. However, nutrition activities have not been consistently well integrated

into overall investment design. Significant opportunities exist to strengthen IFAD's contribution to nutrition through a broader focus on food systems and sustainable healthy diets, in line with the evolving global dialogue.

27. The evaluation highlights that IFAD's work and results in nutrition have converged around a number of critical pathways but have reached only a small proportion of IFAD's beneficiaries. Women's empowerment has been central to IFAD's nutrition interventions and attention to Indigenous Peoples has increased. However, greater focus is needed on youth and the interconnections between nutrition and climate change.

28. IFAD's internal enabling environment for delivering on nutrition has evolved positively, with supplementary funds and grants playing a key role in these achievements. However, funding remains limited in scale, and a stronger resource mobilization strategy is needed. Moving forward, IFAD's ambitious nutrition agenda will require addressing weaknesses in its enabling environment, particularly with regard to attention to nutrition during the design phase and support for implementation, funding staff and partner capacity, knowledge management and monitoring systems to effectively capture outcomes and impact. There is also scope to better leverage IFAD's unique position as a long-term funder, its close relationship with ministries of agriculture, and its role as a specialized agency to strengthen its contribution to sustainable healthy diets and raise its profile in this area.

D. Recommendations

29. **Recommendation 1. In the next nutrition action plan, IFAD should frame its nutrition work within the sustainable food systems approach, with the ultimate goal of achieving sustainable healthy diets, and define a more flexible approach to reflect context specificities.**

    (a) The new nutrition action plan should clearly communicate IFAD's role in nutrition, including its contribution to addressing the growing problem of overweight and obesity, through a robust theory of change and narrative. It should explain how a nutrition lens can be applied to investments to support sustainable healthy diets, and clarify the causal linkages between different nutrition pathways and their integration into sustainable food systems. This approach should actively engage women, youth and other target groups as key actors. School-based interventions should also be refined, with a stronger focus on linking smallholder farmers to institutional markets through school feeding programmes. Nutrition, as part of sustainable food systems for delivering healthy diets, should be well embedded in the new IFAD strategic framework. Furthermore, IFAD's guidance tools for investment design and implementation should be updated in line with the new nutrition action plan.

    (b) Regional divisions and country teams should be fully involved in the development of the nutrition action plan, to ensure that nutrition approaches and targets reflect regional and context specificities. The new nutrition action plan should also provide greater detail on essential partnerships, coordination mechanisms and advocacy efforts to promote sustainable healthy diets, including with the private sector, informed by a clear analysis of where such relationships can add value to IFAD and country nutrition priorities. In designing COSOPs and project investments, IFAD should prioritize the nutrition agenda in the dialogue with governments, especially in countries facing severe nutrition challenges.

30. **Recommendation 2. IFAD should prioritize and scale up its efforts to ensure that human resources and capacities at different levels (global, regional and country) are commensurate with its nutrition ambitions and commitments.**

(a) IFAD should significantly reinforce and scale up its capacity and expertise at global and regional levels to support its nutrition portfolio from design through to implementation, in line with IFAD's corporate ambitions and the priorities that will be set in the new nutrition action plan. Staff in key positions of influence with the government and country teams should be provided with adequate technical capacity and support to be able to advocate for increased buy-in and engagement by governments in nutrition. Project management units of nutrition-sensitive investments should be required to include nutrition expertise from the outset and adequate resources should be allocated for technical support throughout the investment cycle.

(b) IFAD should step up efforts to strengthen the technical and functional capacity of national counterparts, particularly within the ministries of agriculture, and encourage governments and the ministries to engage in policy dialogue and mainstream nutrition in agriculture sector development plans and investments.

(c) Partnerships for nutrition – including with United Nations agencies, research institution, academia and the private sector – should be explicitly and systematically identified during COSOP and project design. These partnerships should prioritize capacity development and policy dialogue on food systems and sustainable healthy diets. IFAD should track their progress during implementation, for example by including specific indicators.

31. **Recommendations 3. IFAD should strengthen its nutrition-related knowledge management and its monitoring system for nutrition-sensitive interventions, and use this knowledge to improve accountability and delivery against its nutrition agenda.**

(a) To support the implementation of the next nutrition action plan, MDD-W and KAP corporate indicators should be complemented by additional project-level indicators that capture both immediate and medium-term progress towards nutrition objectives and longer-term investment goals and contributions to sustainable food systems transformation. Guidance, technical oversight and capacity development should be provided to IFAD and project staff as well as service providers of nutrition-sensitive investments to ensure consistent and robust methodologies across surveys. Data verification mechanisms should be established to improve overall data reliability. The use of data should be promoted for adaptive management during implementation and to ensure that lessons learned inform the development of future nutrition-sensitive investments.

(b) IFAD should prioritize the establishment of a structured follow-up mechanism and periodic assessments to ensure that nutrition remains a core part of its agenda, with clear accountability for progress.

(c) IFAD should adopt a more deliberate and robust approach to its nutrition-related knowledge management. IFAD’s knowledge resources should be made more visible and accessible, both internally and externally, with greater emphasis on documenting, systematizing and scaling up innovations. These efforts should be supported by a dedicated corporate budget. Knowledge management should involve cooperation with partners, especially academia and research institutions, and focus on demonstrating results and using evidence to attract investment and inform programming. Guidance

should also be developed for IFAD staff on key messages and evidence to advocate for increased nutrition resources in project budgets.

32. **Recommendation 4. To advance its nutrition agenda effectively, IFAD should adopt a more strategic and sustainable approach to resource mobilization by leveraging both internal and complementary external resources.**

(a) IFAD should allocate a proportionate budget to nutrition, in line with its ambitions and commitments, including IFAD-financed grants. Nutrition-sensitive projects should be adequately resourced, taking into account different contexts and priorities (particularly in areas with high rates of malnutrition), and IFAD's financial system should enable the tracking of resource allocation to nutrition.

(b) IFAD should advocate with national governments to ensure that nutrition is integrated into investments and adequately resourced, and explore ways to facilitate this, such as through matching grants and results-based lending.

(c) A strategy to mobilize donor funding for nutrition, including nutrition-sensitive agriculture and nutrition-sensitive food systems, should be developed, adopting a more proactive stance to advocate for additional resources by showcasing IFAD's experience and results in promoting sustainable healthy diets. The strategy should consider leveraging climate funds by highlighting the linkages between nutrition and climate change. IFAD should strengthen existing strategic partnerships with other international financial institutions, particularly the World Bank, to complement resources and expand investments in nutrition for mutual benefit. Given the critical role grants have played, thematic supplementary funds should be mobilized, and grants should be used strategically to leverage loan investments in support of nutrition-sensitive agriculture and sustainable healthy diets.

(d) IFAD Management should establish core additional contributions for nutrition, similar to the additional contributions that have been set up for climate finance.

Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
AFD	French Development Agency
AFN II	Agriculture For Nutrition - Phase 2
AGRA	Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa
APR	Asia and Pacific Division, IFAD
ASAP	Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme
BAPPEDA	Regional Development Planning Agency
CCS	Country Case Studies
CFS	Committee On World Food Security
CIAT	Centro Internacional De Agricultura Tropical
CO	Country Office
COI	Core Outcome Indicators
COP	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
COSOP	Country Strategic Opportunities Programme
CSPE	Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ECG	Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division, IFAD
ESA	East And Southern Africa Division, IFAD
EU	European Union
EQ	Evaluation Question
FAO	Food And Agriculture Organization
FIC	Italian Climate Fund
GAFSP	Global Agriculture & Food Security Program
GAIN	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GIZ	German International Cooperation Society
GNR	Global Nutrition Report
HEEP	Horticulture Enterprise Enhancement Project
HLPE	High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Human Resource Division
IACG	Inter-Agency Coordination Group
ICO	IFAD Country Office
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IOE	Independent Office of Evaluation, IFAD
IP	Indigenous People
IPAF	Indigenous Peoples' Assistance Facility
IPDMIP	Integrated Participatory Development and Management of The Irrigation Sector Project
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes, And Practices
KII	Key Informant Interviews
KM	Knowledge Management
LAC	Latin America and The Caribbean Division, IFAD
LMICs	Low- And Middle-Income Countries
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAM	Moderate Acute Malnutrition
MDD-W	Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women
MDG	Millennium Development Goal

MTR	Mid-Term Review
N4G	Nutrition for Growth
NAP	Nutrition Action Plan
NBS	Nature Based Solutions
NEN	Near East, North Africa and Europe Division, IFAD
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NS	Nutrition Sensitive
NSA	Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture
NSVC	Nutrition Sensitive Value Chains
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation For Economic Co-Operation and Development
OPR	Operational Policy and Results Division, IFAD
ORMS	Operational Results Management System, IFAD
PAA	Food Acquisition Programme
PADAAM	Agricultural Development and Market Access Support Project
PADES	Economic Development Project for the Southern Regions
PADMAR	Market Gardening Development Support Project
PAPFA	Agricultural Value Chains Support Project in The Southwest, Hauts-Bassins, Cascades and Boucle Du Mouhoun Regions
PCD	People and Culture Division (PCD)
PDR	Project Design Report
PICSA	Partnerships For Irrigation and Commercialisation of Smallholder Agriculture Project
PIPARV-B	Agricultural Production Intensification and Vulnerability Reduction Project
PMU	Project Management Unit
PNAE	National School Feeding Programme
PRIDE	Programme for Rural Irrigation Development
PROCAVA	Inclusive Agrifood Value Chain Development Programme
PRODAPE	Small-Scale Aquaculture Development Project
PRODEFI II	Value Chain Development Programme Phase II
PROFITS	Siliana Territorial Development Value Chain Promotion Project
PRUNSAR	Putting Research into Use for Nutrition, Sustainable Agriculture and Resilience'
RAINS	Diversified Resilient Agriculture for Improved Food and Nutrition Security
RBAs	Rome-Based Agencies
REACH	Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition
READSI	Rural Empowerment and Agriculture Development Scaling-Up Initiative
RIME	Report On IFAD's Mainstreaming Effectiveness
RIMS	Results Management and Information System
RMF	Results Measurement Framework
RMTP	Rural Microenterprise Transformation Project
SACP	Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project - Zimbabwe
SACP	Smallholder Agricultural Competitiveness Project – Bangladesh
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SBCC	Social And Behaviour Change Communication
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SECAP	Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures, IFAD
SF	Supplementary Funds
SIRP	Smallholder Irrigation Revitalization Programme
SMC	School Meals Coalition
SME	Small And Medium-Sized Enterprises
SMS	Short Message Sending
SOFI	State Of Food Security and Nutrition in The World
SSTC	South-South and Triangular Cooperation

SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
ToC	Theory of Change
TE	Thematic Evaluation
UN	United Nations
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNN	UN-Nutrition
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WCA	West And Central Africa Division, IFAD
WFP	World Food Programme
WHA	World Health Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization

Thematic Evaluation of IFAD's support to Nutrition

I. Evaluation background, context, objectives and methodology

A. Background

1. This thematic evaluation (TE) of IFAD's support to nutrition is the first corporate level evaluation of the organization's global nutrition portfolio and covers the period from 2016, when IFAD's first Nutrition Action Plan (NAP) was adopted, to 2024. The evaluation was approved at the 137th session of the Executive Board, held in December 2022, and was conducted by the IFAD's Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE). The TE assessed aspects of relevance, coherence and development effectiveness (including processes, approaches and results) of IFAD's support to nutrition. The findings, conclusions and recommendations will inform IFAD's third NAP, starting in 2026.

2. The rationale for this evaluation was multiple, as summarized below:

- **Needs and relevance.** Despite progress made, hunger and undernutrition remain alarmingly high, while overweight and obesity is on rise, jeopardizing the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 target which seeks to eradicate hunger and malnutrition. The pressing need for effective interventions to address these challenges constituted a strong argument for an evaluation of IFAD's work.
- **Nutrition impact targets.** In the 11th replenishment cycle, IFAD did not achieve the corporate impact target set in its Results Management Framework (RMF) of reaching 12 million people with improved nutrition.[1,2,3] The evaluation was considered a timely and useful avenue for exploring which types of interventions have the potential to deliver the needed changes.
- **IFAD's enabling environment.** The share of IFAD investments allocated to nutrition activities remains limited and gaps persist in terms of organizational support for nutrition.[4] The evaluation provided an opportunity to examine what financial and organizational dimensions need to be addressed to ensure a robust nutrition-sensitive approach across IFAD's portfolio and among partner institutions.
- **Proof of concept and approaches.** IFAD's approach has been on mainstreaming nutrition in its agricultural investments to improve dietary quality and help to address all forms of malnutrition. This evaluation focussed on assessing IFAD's nutrition entry points, to identify where IFAD could add more value.
- **Future strategic direction.** Finally, IFAD conducted an internal nutrition stocktaking exercise in 2022,[5] which provided an important update on progress made by the organization in mainstreaming nutrition. Management requested an independent organization-wide assessment of IFAD's supports to nutrition to support decision-making moving forward.

B. Objectives and Scope

3. Considering the previous rationale points, this TE is critical in terms of learning and accountability dimensions, reflected in the following objectives:

[1] IFAD, 2022a.
[2] The RMF uses dietary diversity as indicator for nutrition.
[3] Among the reasons indicated is that nutrition was not systematically mainstreamed in investments before IFAD11 and the impact assessment included projects that were designed before (IFAD, 2022a).
[4] IFAD, 2022b.
[5] IFAD, 2022b.

(i) Assess the relevance, coherence and institutional capacity of IFAD to work on nutrition in collaboration with governments and relevant development partners;

(ii) Assess the effectiveness of IFAD's practices and specific approaches to improve nutrition and the results thus far. Attention has also been given to elements of efficiency, though this is limited to processes, and does not evaluate cost efficiency or cost effectiveness;

(iii) Provide lessons and recommendations that capitalise on learning around IFAD's comparative advantage in contributing to better diets and preparing the new NAP and IFAD Strategic Framework.

4. The **scope** of the Thematic Evaluation is the period 2016 – 2024. The starting year coincides with the launch of the first NAP,[6] and the overall timeframe aligns with IFAD's current Strategic Framework (2016-2025).[7]

5. The evaluation design and its conduct have been guided by four key evaluation questions (EQs), covering the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) criteria[8] of relevance, coherence and effectiveness, and validated through internal and external consultation at design stage, as follows:

- **EQ 1 – Relevance.** To what extent are IFAD's current nutrition priorities and approaches relevant and sufficiently tailored to national priorities related to nutrition and the needs of IFAD's target populations, the global context and IFAD's corporate commitments and priorities?
- **EQ 2 – Coherence.** To what extent are IFAD's nutrition efforts maximizing its unique comparative advantage and how have partnerships, policy engagement and knowledge management been instrumental in achieving nutrition results?
- **EQ 3 – Effectiveness.** Are IFAD's nutrition-sensitive interventions and, in particular, nutrition pathways and approaches effective for delivering against nutrition objectives and what progress has been made in achieving and contributing to nutrition results?
- **EQ 4 – Organisational set-up.** To what extent has IFAD put in place an appropriate and effective enabling environment for the delivery of nutrition objectives?

6. Aspects covered by the evaluation include: IFAD's corporate policies, and IFAD's corporate commitments related to nutrition integration; IFAD's comparative advantage in nutrition; IFAD's partnerships on nutrition; design and implementation support provided to Country Strategic Opportunities Programmes (COSOP) and nutrition-sensitive investments; results achieved on the ground and adequacy of the reporting system; contribution of supplementary funds and grants to nutrition approaches and results; the interconnection of nutrition with other IFAD's cross-cutting thematic areas; knowledge management; and extent to which IFAD is equipped to deliver on its nutrition targets.

7. This report is divided into six chapters. The remaining sections of the first chapter discuss the global context and evolving nutrition approaches, the evolution of nutrition in IFAD, as well as the conceptual approach to the evaluation and its methodology, data collection process, and limitations. Chapter 2 discusses the

[6] IFAD, 2015b.
[7] IFAD, 2016a.
[8] The OECD has defined six evaluation criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability – and two principles for their use. These criteria provide a normative framework used to determine the merit or worth of a development intervention (policy, strategy, programme, project or activity). They serve as the basis upon which evaluative judgements are made (OECD website January 2025).

evaluation findings on relevance, Chapter 3 presents the findings on coherence, while Chapter 4 examines effectiveness and contribution to nutrition results, and Chapter 5 examines the internal enabling environment. The report ends with Chapter 6 which covers conclusions and recommendations.

C. Global context and evolving approaches

8. **Hunger and malnutrition remain alarmingly high.** It is estimated that between 713 and 757 million people suffered from hunger in 2023 (8.9 and 9.4 percent of the global population, respectively), approximately 152 million more people may have faced hunger in 2023 compared to 2019 before the global COVID-19 pandemic.[9] Globally in 2024 of the 345 million people who were severely hungry in the world, nearly 60 per cent are women and girls.[10] In 2019, nearly one in three women aged 15 to 49 years (571 million) were affected by anaemia, with no progress since 2012.[11] At the same time, the prevalence of adult obesity has steadily increased over the last decade, from 12.1 percent (591 million people) in 2012 to 15.8 percent (881 million people) in 2022.[12] This rapid increase is largely caused by dietary patterns and sedentary lifestyles.

9. Worldwide in 2022, an estimated 148.1 million children under five years of age (22.3 percent) were stunted and 45 million (6.8 percent) were wasted.[13] Some progress has been noted in the reduction of stunting and wasting, but the world is not yet on track to achieve the SDG targets.[14] Approximately 56 percent of children aged 6-59 months are vitamin A, iron and/or zinc deficient translating into a burden of 372 million affected children.[15] The prevalence of overweight and obesity among children and adolescents aged 5-19 years is estimated to have risen from just over four percent in 1975 to almost 20 percent in 2022.[16]

10. **The social and economic cost of malnutrition in its different forms is extremely high.** Malnutrition is one of the leading causes of poor health in the world. Malnutrition, in all its forms, is caused by different factors. Direct factors include dietary intake and a person's health status. Dietary intake includes types and quantities of food one eats, determined by the ability to access and consume diverse foods year-round. An un-healthy environment, lack of access to clean water, in-adequate sanitary and hygiene practices and maternal and child's caring practices are among the underlying causes.[17] Malnourished infants and young children are significantly less likely to reach their full physical and intellectual potential and are more prone to diseases. Research shows that adults who suffered from stunting as children are less productive than non-stunted workers and are less able to contribute to the economy. Undernutrition therefore compromises people's ability to overcome poverty.[18] More than 2.83 billion people in the world – or 35.4 percent – were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2022. Inadequate diets are a key driver for malnutrition since undernutrition often results from inadequate intake or absorption of essential nutrients, while overweight and obesity and non-communicable diseases frequently stem from diets dominated by ultra-processed, cheap, and non-nutritious foods that displace vital nutrients. Poor diets is among the top risk factors for deaths in the world.[19] Promoting and enabling equitable

[9] FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2024.
[10] https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/op-ed/2024/03/op-ed-how-conflict-drives-hunger-for-women-and-girls?utm_source=chatgpt.com (consulted on March 10, 2025).
[11] FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2022.
[12] FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2024.
[13] FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2023.
[14] FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2023.
[15] Palmer AC, Bedsaul-Fryer JR, Stephensen CB. 2024.
[16] The Lancet, NCD Risk Factor Collaboration. 2024.
[17] The World Bank & UNICEF, 2003; USAID Advancing Nutrition, 2022.
[18] IFAD, 2019c.
[19] GBD 2017 Diet Collaborators (2019). Health effects of dietary risks in 195 countries, 1990-2017: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017. Lancet (London, England), 393(10184), 1958–1972. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(19)30041-8

access to affordable, healthy, sustainable diets that meet local nutritional and cultural requirements favours environmental and economic outcomes while preventing many of the deaths attributable to suboptimal diets.[20]

11. **Nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA) is key to improving the diets of rural families in terms of both quality and quantity.** The concept of nutrition-sensitive agriculture began gaining attention in the development discourse earlier this century, as researchers and policymakers increasingly recognized the need to leverage agricultural interventions to improve dietary intake and address malnutrition more effectively. To prevent malnutrition, there has been reinforced attention to food-based approaches for healthy diets in the last decade. The Second International Conference on Nutrition, held in 2014 in Rome, was an important milestone in this regard.

Box 1
Concepts and Definitions

Hunger is an uncomfortable or painful physical sensation caused by insufficient consumption of dietary energy. It becomes chronic when the person does not consume a sufficient amount of calories (dietary energy) on a regular basis to lead a normal, active and healthy life. The Prevalence of Undernourishment indicator is often used to estimate the extent of hunger in the world, thus "hunger" may also be referred to as undernourishment.[21]

Malnutrition refers to deficiencies or excesses in nutrient intake, imbalance of essential nutrients or impaired nutrient utilization mainly due to infectious diseases. Malnutrition is currently characterized as a triple burden, with three forms that can coexist within the same country, household or individual. These three forms of malnutrition are: (i) ***undernutrition***, inadequate levels of food intake and repeated infectious diseases; (ii) ***micronutrient deficiencies***, especially those of public health importance such as iron, iodine, zinc and vitamin A; and (iii) ***overweight and obesity***, resulting from an excess of certain food components such as fats and sugars relative to levels of activity.[22]

Healthy diets are those diets that are of adequate quantity and quality to achieve optimal growth and development of all individuals and support functioning and physical, mental and social wellbeing at all life stages and physiological needs. Healthy diets are safe, diverse, balanced, and based on nutritious foods. They help to protect against malnutrition in all its forms, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity and lower the risk of diet-related non-communicable diseases. The exact make-up of healthy diets varies depending on an individual's characteristics (e.g. age, gender, lifestyle and degree of physical activity), geographical, demographical, cultural patterns and contexts, food preferences, availability of foods from local, regional and international sources, and dietary customs.[23]

Sustainable healthy diets are dietary patterns that promote all dimensions of a healthy diet and, in addition, minimise the negative impact on the environment and support the preservation of biodiversity and planetary health. Sustainable healthy diets must ensure a healthy diet while combining all dimensions of sustainability to avoid unintended consequences. [24]

Nutrition-specific interventions are interventions with the primary objective of addressing nutrition and that target the immediate causes of undernutrition such as targeted supplementary feeding, vitamin A supplementation for children of 6 to 59

[20] Romanello, M., Napoli, C. D., Green, C., Kennard, H., Lampard, P., Scamman, D., Walawender, M., Ali, Z., Ameli, N., Ayeb-Karlsson, S., Beggs, P. J., Belesova, K., Berrang Ford, L., Bowen, K., Cai, W., Callaghan, M., Campbell-Lendrum, D., Chambers, J., Cross, T. J., van Daalen, K. R., Costello, A. (2023). 7
[21] https://www.fao.org/hunger/en
[22] IFAD, 2019a.
[23] Committee on World Food Security. (2021). *Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
[24] FAO and WHO 2019.

months of age or iron and folic acid supplementation for pregnant women.[25]They are also referred to as **direct nutrition interventions**.

Nutrition-sensitive interventions are those in which the primary objective is not nutrition, but that have the potential to improve the food and nutrition security of beneficiaries through agriculture and food security, healthcare, education, water and sanitation, etc.[26]They target underlying causes of malnutrition and are therefore also called **indirect nutrition interventions**.

Nutrition-sensitive agriculture is a food-based approach that aims to improve diets. The NSA approach "seeks to ensure the production, marketing and consumption of a variety of affordable, nutritious, culturally appropriate and safe foods in adequate quantity and quality to meet the dietary requirements of populations in a sustainable manner."[27] NSA interventions work through different pathways, which include improved agricultural income, women's empowerment and increased and diversified production. [28,29] Strong evidence supports NSA's long-term impacts including increased dietary diversity for children, women, and households. [30,31]

12. **Nutrition-sensitive actions are important for progressing in the reduction of undernutrition.** The World Bank Investment Framework for Nutrition (2017) estimates that eleven cost-effective and direct nutrition interventions, predominantly delivered through the health sector's services, can only avert approximately 20 percent of the global burden of undernutrition.[32] Therefore, it is assumed that the remaining burden must be tackled through nutrition-sensitive actions by other sectors such as agriculture, social protection, education and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). The report indicates that the level of undernutrition can be further reduced by addressing other challenges and names as additional contributors quality, diversity, and affordability of foods, control of income by women, reduced exposure to faecal pathogens by improved water, sanitation, and hygiene practices. The new World Bank 2024 Investment framework further elaborates details and costs of important nutrition sensitive actions, including agriculture sector's nutrition actions.[33]

13. **Today there is a strong recognition of the need for a holistic approach to tackle the multiple burdens of malnutrition, improve diets and contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda through the Sustainable Food Systems approach**.[34] Current food systems are being increasingly challenged to provide adequate, safe, diversified and nutrient rich food for all. Promoting healthy diets requires improving the availability, affordability, safety and accessibility of diverse, nutrient-rich foods and transforming the food system from production to consumption. There is wide recognition of the bi-directional impact of food systems on climate change and biodiversity and the need to align nutrition approaches with climate adaptation and biodiversity-related approaches. Promoting traditional diets (e.g. diets of Indigenous Peoples) is seen as increasingly important for promoting diverse and resilient crops. The importance of the approach has gained momentum with the release of the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) Report on Nutrition and Food Systems in 2017. The United Nations Food Systems Summit held in 2021, helped to re-enforce the approach. Since then,

[25] HLPE, 2017.
[26] HLPE, 2017.
[27] FAO, 2017.
[28] Herforth, Anna, and Jody Harris. 2014.
[29] Kadiyala, S., Harris, J., Headey, D., Yself, S. and Gillespie, S. (2014). P. 43–56
[30] Margolies A, Kemp CG, Choo EM, et al. 2022.
Sibhatu, K.T., Arslan, A. & Zucchini, E. 2022.
[31] Ruel, M.T., Quisumbing, A.R. & Balagamwala, M. 2018.
[32] World Bank. 2017.
[33] World Bank. 2024.
[34] As evidenced by the vast technical and scientific literature systematized and quoted in reports of the High-Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which is, at the global level, the foremost inclusive and evidence-based international and intergovernmental platform for food security and nutrition (FSN).

numerous countries have developed action plans to Sustainable Food Systems.[35] A global Food Systems Dashboard has as well been launched in 2020 to track countries' progress at the global level.[36]

D. Evolution of nutrition in IFAD

14. **Addressing malnutrition has been part of IFAD's mandate since it was established in 1977.** The 1977 Founding Agreement states that in allocating its resources the Fund shall be guided by the following priorities: i) *the need to increase food production and to improve the nutritional level of the poorest populations in the poorest food deficit countries; ii) the potential for increasing food production in other developing countries. Likewise, emphasis shall be placed on* improving *the nutritional level of the poorest populations in these countries and the conditions of their lives*[37]*.* Documentary review shows that a strategic paper was presented to the Board in 1994 'Towards a Strategy for Improving Nutrition Through Rural Investment Projects' which was formulated as a follow up on the International Nutrition Conference I (ICN I, held in 1992 in Rome). The paper presented a framework for promoting nutritional objectives through IFAD's investments.[38]

15. **In the last decade, IFAD's corporate focus on nutrition has increased.** Commitments were made starting from IFAD 10th replenishment cycle onwards to accelerate mainstreaming of nutrition across IFAD's portfolio (see section II.B). In 2016, IFAD developed the first action plan on Mainstreaming Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture[39] (2016–2018), which guided IFAD's commitments during IFAD10. A second action plan followed – the Mainstreaming Nutrition in IFAD Action Plan (2019–2025) – guiding the implementation of IFAD 11th and 12th replenishment cycles (see Annex III.B for a presentation of key elements of the two action plans).[40] RMF impact targets were also defined, with the goal of improving nutrition for 12 million people under IFAD11 which was reduced to 11 million people for IFAD12 and adjusted downwards to 5 million people in IFAD13.

[35] Home | UN Food Systems Coordination Hub
[36] Food Systems Dashboard . It is led by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, the Columbia Climate School, and FAO. The Food Systems Dashboard brings together annual data for 300 indicators from more than 40 sources aiming to provide a complete view of food systems, categorized into drivers, food supply chains, food environment, individual factors, cross-cutting issues, and outcomes. In the section on country profiles, each country's performance is assessed using 39 diagnostic indicators based on annual data. The dashboard also includes a section which catalogues 87 policies and actions aimed at improving diets, nutrition, and environmental sustainability (information derived from: Food Systems Dashboard | Knowledge for policy).
[37] Adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Establishment of an International Fund for Agricultural Development on 13 June 1976, in Rome. Available at https://www.ifad.org/documents/48415603/49486707/agree_e.pdf/3f2a68f9-d839-7072-e5e2-20c72202b095?t=1726605787253
[38] The 1994 strategy reflects current thinking in many ways: it calls nutrition a socio-economic and human development goal; puts improved nutrition as central to alleviating poverty; it includes 'food systems perspectives'; it differentiates between "household food security" and "nutrition security"; includes a focus on diets; recognises the importance of building on the experience of the international community; it also talks about the importance of building technical capacity around nutrition and the importance of partnerships with United Nations agencies and donors such as NORAD to achieve nutrition goals. It also lists some examples of projects that have nutrition strongly embedded (e.g. India and Sri Lanka).
[39] IFAD, 2015b.
[40] IFAD, 2019c.

Box 2
IFAD's role on nutrition

To address malnutrition, IFAD works primarily through NSA and food systems to improve the quality of the diet of its beneficiary rural populations. Although IFAD has traditionally focused on undernutrition, improving dietary quality allows IFAD to address all forms of malnutrition (including micronutrient deficiencies and overweight/obesity). While IFAD is primarily concerned with the food determinants of malnutrition, within its scope and mandate IFAD's investments can also contribute to improve the health of beneficiary populations, for example by providing safe drinking water, and strengthening rural people's capacities on making informed choices in terms of food production, purchases and consumption.[41]

IFAD has adopted two indicators for assessing nutrition-outcomes:

- **Women reporting minimum dietary diversity (MDD-W)**: The MDD-W is a simple dichotomous indicator of whether or not women of reproductive age (aged 15 to 49 years) have consumed at least five out of ten defined food groups in the previous 24 hours. The higher the proportion of women in the sample reaching this threshold, the higher the chance that women in the population are consuming micronutrient adequate diets.[42]
- **Households with improved nutrition Knowledge Attitudes and Practices (KAP):** The KAP is a measurement of change in targeted behaviours that have negative impacts on nutrition as determined by a nutrition situation analysis. The module for assessing it focuses on six components corresponding to the prevalent behaviours affecting nutrition outcomes: water and hygiene; sanitation and hygiene; food safety, hygiene and preparation; intake of micronutrients; feeding practices; and food cultural practices.[43]

16. **IFAD's commitments to nutrition have been accompanied by the introduction of mechanisms to support nutrition mainstreaming and the monitoring of results**. Nutrition performance ratings were introduced into IFAD's guidance for supervision and midterm reviews in 2017; nutrition has been integrated into IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP) in 2017; nutrition core indicators have been included in IFAD's monitoring system (Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W) in 2017 and Knowledge Attitudes and Practices (KAP) in 2021); and guidelines for mainstreaming nutrition were issued which include clear criteria for COSOPs and projects to be nutrition sensitive in 2019.[44] In 2019, IFAD also introduced a framework for mainstreaming environment and climate, gender, nutrition and youth into programmes in an integrated way.[45] Supplementary funds received from Canada, Germany and Norway in particular provided critical funding for these initiatives. An overview of IFAD nutrition milestones since 2010 is provided in Annex III.A.

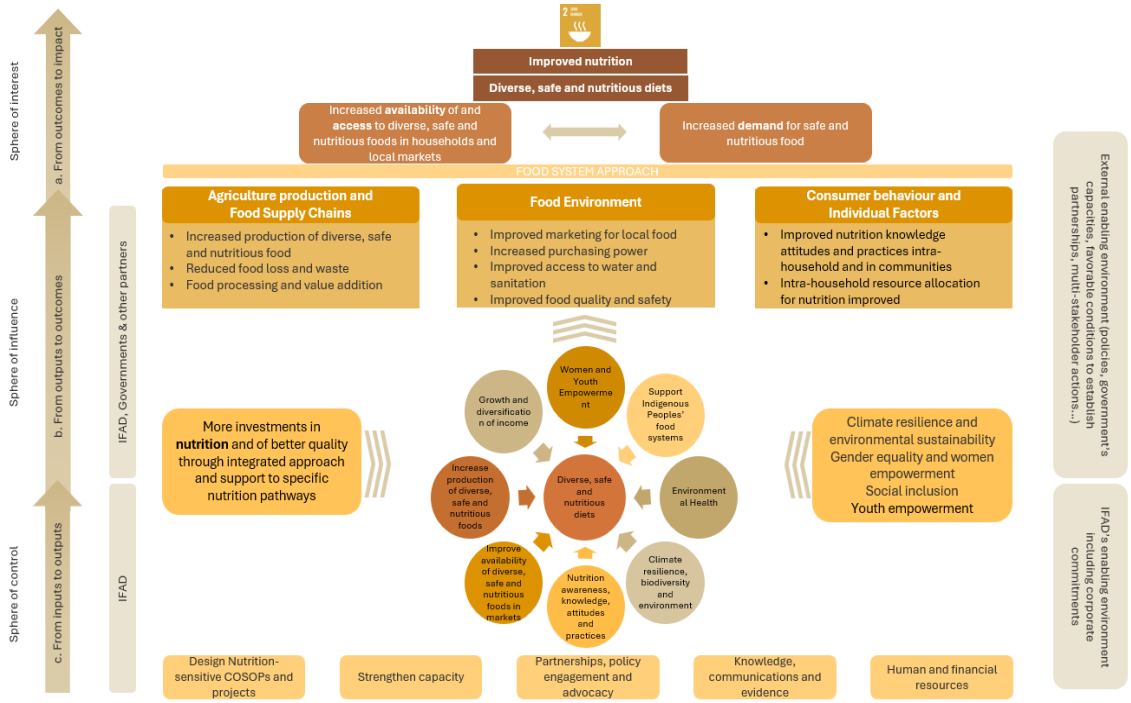
E. Analytical framework and evaluation approach

17. This TE followed a theory-based design, with the theory of change (ToC) providing the overall framework for the evaluation. The ToC was reconstructed to reflect IFAD's nutrition approach at evaluation design stage (in 2024) while the detailed evaluation recognized the evolving context as outlined earlier, and which is further elaborated on in Annex III. An expanded version of the ToC is found in Annex II.A.

[41] IFAD, 2019c.
[42] https://www.fao.org/nutrition/assessment/tools/minimum-dietary-diversity-women/en/#:~:text=The%20Minimum%20Dietary%20Diversity%20for%20Women%20%28MDD-W%29%20indicator,diversity%20as%20a%20proxy%20for%20dietary%20micronutrient%20adequacy.
[43] IFAD, 2021a. Appendices.
[44] Section II.C and IFAD, 2019b.
[45] IFAD, 2019a.

Figure 1

Thematic Evaluation theory of change of IFAD's support to nutrition including reconstructed potential outcomes



Source: IOE

18. The ToC is presented schematically in the diagram above (Figure 1), and the underpinning change theory is as follows:

- **IFAD's main nutritional objective is to contribute to diverse, nutritious and safe diets** of target populations (top of the diagram).[46]
- The ToC follows a *food systems framework. Different pathways* enable IFAD's projects to: i) play a role in shaping sustainable food systems to make them more nutrition-sensitive, contributing to increasing the availability and affordability of diverse, nutritious food; ii) develop capacities to influence consumer behaviour, improve attitudes and practices, and increase demand for and use of safe and nutritious food contributing to healthy diets.[47]
- To influence nutrition outcomes, rather than investing in stand-alone nutrition actions, *IFAD's is expected to apply a nutrition lens* to the design and implementation of investments in agriculture, sustainable food system and rural development, so as to optimize their contribution to improving nutrition.[48] At higher levels of the ToC IFAD's role is one of influencer, together with the multitude of partners that are part of the nutrition and sustainable food systems landscape.
- *Nutrition outcomes* at country level will reflect the quality of COSOP and project design, the implementation capacity of government and partners, the support provided by IFAD, and the existence of an enabling environment in-country. Knowledge management, policy engagement, partnerships, advocacy, and an adequate allocation of financial and human resources are all important factors influencing the external and internal enabling environment for achieving nutrition outcomes at country level.

[46] The TOC is an attempt to summarize the main elements of the first and second NAP.
[47] See annex II.B for a description of the main nutrition impact pathways.
[48] IFAD, 2019c (p. 22).

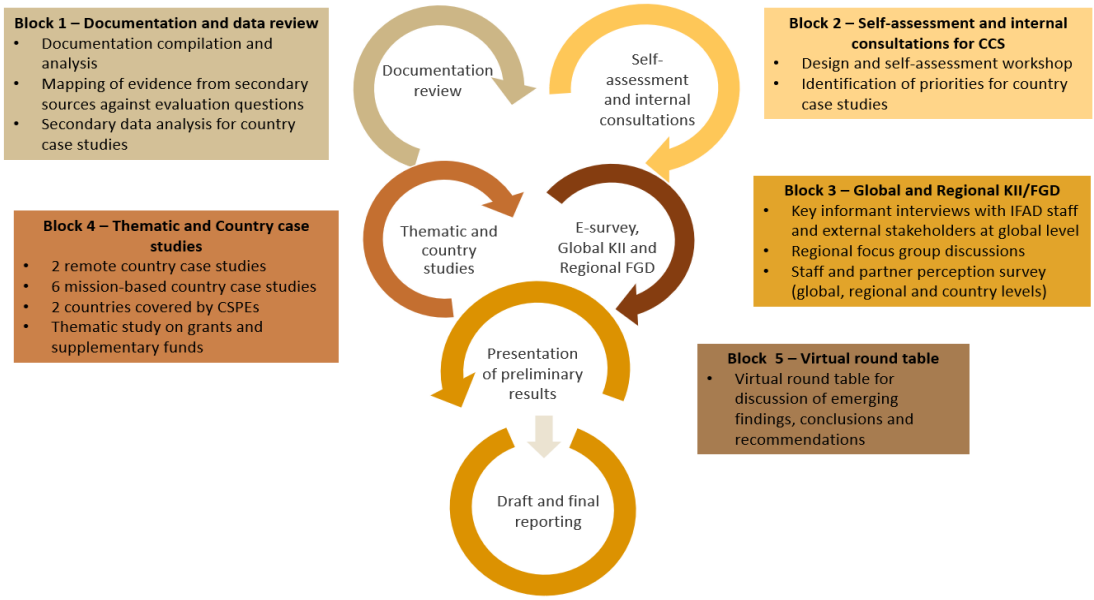
19. Assumptions underlying the ToC were identified at design stage (see details in Annex II.A). Internal assumptions relate to the design quality of IFAD projects, conduciveness of IFAD's organizational culture and systems, adequacy of staff capacity, the presence of internal incentives, adequacy of resources and their duration, and the use of evidence and learning as well as the capacity to demonstrate impact. External assumptions relate to the conduciveness of the external environment, the willingness of national governments to use IFAD resources to improve diets, and the nature of the broader environment.

F. Methodology and data collection

20. The evaluation matrix (see appendix I) detailed lines of inquiry, sub-questions, indicators, and sources of data and information. It provided the framework for evaluation data collection, synthesis and triangulation. The ToC assumptions were included in the evaluation matrix as lines of inquiry with the evaluation focusing on establishing their validity.

21. The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach for data collection in line with the building blocks shown in the diagram below. The diagram reflects the sequencing of the evaluation process, including slight variations from the design to accommodate for efficiency and specific opportunities.

Figure 2
Evaluation data collection blocks and sequencing



Source: IOE

22. The evaluation drew evidence from various sources of information which are discussed in further detail below.

23. **Documentation and data review –** The review included IFAD's NAPs and guidance documents, country strategies (COSOPs) and project design reports, as well as supervision reports, project completion reports and IOE evaluations. Relevant global literature and reports on nutrition and sustainable food systems were also consulted and analysed. The document review started at design phase to inform the ToC and the evaluation priorities and continued during the evaluation process. A full bibliography can be found in Annex XII.

24. **Global staff and partner survey** - An electronic survey was addressed to IFAD professional staff in relevant divisions and project coordinators and covered questions related to: IFAD's work on nutrition; the integration of nutrition in the design of IFAD's operations; support to implementation, monitoring and evaluation

systems; knowledge management; IFAD's role in nutrition; and, existing challenges influencing effective performance of nutrition interventions in IFAD's operations. A total population of 575 potential respondents was identified (397 IFAD staff and 178 coordinators of IFAD funded projects) of which 191 provided complete valid responses (103 IFAD staff and 88 project staff), equivalent of a response rate of 33 percent. Annex X provides details on the survey and an analysis of the results.

25. **Global internal and external Key Informant Interviews (KII)** – These focussed on gathering the perspectives of IFAD Management and technical staff as well as of external informants. Internal consultations informed the design phase and priorities for the evaluation. An IFAD self-assessment workshop complemented the collection of internal perspectives, with IFAD personnel from key divisions sharing presentations on strengths and weaknesses of IFAD's work on nutrition organised around a set of predefined questions drawn from the evaluation framework. Further internal and external interviews were conducted at data collection stage. Semi-structured guidelines guided the conduct of all interviews. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions at global level involved 99 internal stakeholders and 21 external stakeholders.

26. **Country case studies (CCS)** - CCS focused on gathering deep insights into IFAD's work, including on nutrition impact pathways and best practices. CCS drew on a combination of documentation review and KIIs. Regional Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with IFAD staff informed a refinement of priorities for the country studies. Desk reviews mapped existing information against evaluation areas of enquiry in advance of the country missions. CCS covered aspects related to programme design, implementation, partnerships, knowledge management and policy engagement, with attention to both IFADs work as well as the broader environment.

27. Ten country case studies were conducted, six were mission-based (Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Indonesia and Mozambique), two remote (Bangladesh and Zimbabwe) and two conducted as part of country strategy and programme evaluations led by IOE (Egypt and Laos). Two additional 'light touch' remote country studies (Djibouti and Nicaragua) were added to the initial list to ensure higher diversity and to cover specific topics. These drew on a more limited desk review and involved a lower number of interviews (see Table 1). As part of the CCSs, the evaluation consulted 205 people through individual or group interviews (of which 21 were IFAD staff) and organised 63 focus group discussion with 829 participants in the project sites visited.

Table 1
Country Case Studies by Region and Type of data collection during the evaluation process

Asia Pacific Region (APR)	Eastern & Southern Africa (ESA)	Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)	Near East, North Africa (NEN)	West and Central Africa (WCA)
Bangladesh remote	Burundi mission based	Brazil mission based	Egypt CSPE	Benin mission based
Laos CSPE	Mozambique mission based	Nicaragua light remote CCS	Djibouti light remote CCS	Burkina Faso mission based
Indonesia mission based	Zimbabwe remote			

Source: IOE

28. Criteria for country selection had been defined during the scoping phase and included in the approach paper. The selection prioritized countries with a relatively mature and diversified IFAD nutrition-sensitive portfolio to ensure that case studies provide meaningful insights. The criteria were as follows: i) countries with two or more nutrition-sensitive projects of which at least one has gone through a midterm review or has been completed; ii) a good mix of different types of nutrition

activities and pathways; iii) countries reflecting geographic/regional diversity, including examples of fragile contexts; and iv) examples of cofinanced investments and projects receiving supplementary funds. External criteria included prioritising countries with high levels of malnutrition and including two countries with significant issues of overweight and obesity. The views of the Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division (ECG) and regional divisions were sought to fine-tune the selection of countries. The list of projects covered by the CCS and the level of coverage is presented in Annex IX.

29. **Regional focus group discussions** were conducted with IFAD staff at the end of the data collection to further validate and triangulate initial findings from CCS against evaluation questions and to gather inputs on conclusions and recommendations.

30. **Thematic case studies**. A specific study on grants and supplementary funds was conducted given the central role these funds have played in mainstreaming nutrition.[49] Special attention was accorded to the thematic supplementary funds provided by Canada and Norway and grants that had a global and capacity development focus or that complement investments in countries selected as case studies for this TE. Information on the selection of grants for the analysis is reported in Annex VI. The case study drew on a documentation review, evidence from the CCS on the use of the grants, and interviews with grantees and donors. Particular attention was also given to School-based Interventions in response to a demand from the Evaluation Committee, and similarly drew on secondary and primary evidence.

G. Process

31. **Phasing.** The table below reflects the evaluation activities and timeline.

Table 2
Overview of main activities and key dates of the Thematic Evaluation on Nutrition

Activity	Dates
Evaluation scoping and design	September 2023 – February 2024
Presentation of the Approach Paper to the Evaluation Committee	March 22, 2024
Design and Self-Assessment work	March and April 2024
E-survey	July – September 2024
Conduct of Country Case Studies Analysis of supplementary funds and grants	June – September 2024
Conduct of global and regional interviews and focus group discussions	May – October 2024
Presentation of preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations	October 30, 2024
Reporting and Quality Assurance	November – January 2024

Source: IOE

32. **Evaluation Team.** The evaluation was led by IOE with the support of a team of external consultants. Expertise in the team included evaluation, nutrition, rural development, resilience, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, gender, and food security.

33. **Quality assurance mechanisms.** The draft report went through a peer review process within IOE and was also reviewed by a senior external adviser expert in nutrition and sustainable food systems to ensure technical quality.

[49] A thematic study on Partnership was foreseen in the initial methodology. As partnerships were covered through global interviews and in the CCS, a specific study was not considered necessary.

34. **Core learning partnership group.** A core learning partnership group was established comprising representatives of the five regional divisions and relevant IFAD Headquarter (HQ) divisions.[50] The evaluation team met with this group at key moments during the evaluation to gather their views and feedback, in particular during the design workshop, the self-assessment workshop, and the emerging findings workshop. The group also reviewed and commented on the draft evaluation report, and supported dissemination and use of the evaluation results throughout IFAD and beyond.

35. **Presentation of preliminary findings.** A hybrid event was organised at the end of the data collection in October 2024 to share emerging findings, conclusions and recommendations with the Core Learning Partnership Group, ECG management and the nutrition team to engage colleagues in a discussion and reflection on the implications of the findings for IFAD's work moving forward.

36. **Synthesis and reporting.** The evaluation team synthesized evidence from all sources against the evaluation questions. A framework for analysis was developed based on the evaluation matrix to ensure aggregation of data. The CCS were used as illustrations of what worked and did not work, and the evaluation only generalized where clear pathways emerged across countries and types of interventions and where evidence was sufficiently triangulated.

37. **Ethical guidelines.** Ethics, data privacy and inclusiveness were prioritized. The TE lead evaluator ensured that each team member adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethical principles for evaluation as outlined in IFAD's Evaluation Manual.

H. Limitations

38. **Limitations during data collection**. The evaluation did not face major operational limitations during the data collection. Some difficulties were encountered in organising the interviews as part of the remote country case studies. Where this happened the evaluation sought to rely on alternative sources of evidence (mainly documentary) to fill gaps.

39. **Methodological limitations.** The main methodological issues that emerged during the evaluation are as follows:

- The evaluation was designed to focus primarily on nutrition sensitive (NS) projects with a view to understanding the linkages between these projects and non-NS projects. For projects approved before IFAD11, the evaluation relied on a list of NS projects provided by ECG while for projects approved from IFAD11 onward the team relied on the list of projects classified as NS at design. The analysis conducted by the team to inform the selection of CCS, showed that some projects while not included in the lists provided, and therefore not considered NS, included nutrition activities contributing to nutrition results. Thus, in the selection of CCS and in deciding which projects to visit, non-NS projects were also selected where this was relevant. This was the case for the Brazil and Mozambique CCS.[51]
- An assessment of nutrition outcomes was not feasible due to data limitations. CCS projects included midline and endline studies with MDD-W and/or KAP results. However, due to methodological issues and lack of data from previous surveys it was not possible to use these studies to assess nutrition outcomes or trends. As a result, outcomes as presented in the evaluation are limited to lower-level results along the impact pathway drawing on data

[50] This included: ECG, Research and Impact Assessment Division (RIA), Sustainable Production, Markets and Institutions Division (PMI), Quality Assurance Group (QAG), Office of Strategic Budgeting (OSB), Global Engagement, Partnership and Resource Mobilization Division (GPR), Operational Policy and Results Division (OPR), Communications Division (COM), Financial Management Services Division (FMD) and Food System Coordination.
[51] Namely the Small-scale Aquaculture Development Project (PRODAPE) and Inclusive Agrifood Value Chain Development Programme (PROCAVA) projects in Mozambique, and the Pro-semi-arid Project (PSA) in Brazil.

available and stakeholder perspectives of progress towards envisioned changes (including FGD with beneficiaries and project staff), reflecting a more qualitative approach to data collection.

- The evaluation survey received a 33 percent response rate. However there was a slight imbalance in terms of the respondents. For IFAD staff, out of 397 there was a 26 percent response rate for IFAD staff, while in the case of project staff, out of 178 potential respondents, 49 percent responded. Survey responses may therefore reflect more strongly the views of project staff. However, IFAD staff were widely consulted and involved in KII and their views on numerous issues were integrated as part of the overall analysis. And more broadly, in analysing all data the evaluation team carefully triangulated evidence from different sources and have noted in the report where responses deviated by specific stakeholder group.
- Other limitations included difficulties in organising remote interviews, particularly in the case of the Nicaragua light CCS. This was addressed by drawing the information for this light CCS mainly from the desk review of documents and data.

40. These limitations in data collection and methodology did not impact on the evaluation. They have been attended to through the mitigation measures mentioned above and through careful triangulation of information collected.

II. Relevance of IFAD's current nutrition priorities and approaches (EQ 1)

41. This chapter provides evidence in responding to EQ 1 on the relevance of IFAD's nutrition priorities and approaches. It consecutively discusses the alignment of IFAD's priorities with the evolving global nutrition context (Section A); the relevance of nutrition-sensitive interventions to contextual and beneficiary needs (Section B); and the design of nutrition sensitive projects (Section C).

A. Alignment of IFAD's nutrition priorities with the evolving global nutrition and food security context

42. This section of the report examines to what extent IFAD's nutrition priorities are aligned to the global context. It provides an analysis of the NAP and of IFAD's policies to assess how these guide the nutrition work of the organisation.

43. **IFAD has strengthened its strategic commitment to nutrition to reflect global commitments.** IFAD has considerably reinforced its efforts on nutrition in the last decade (see section I.D and Annex III.A on the evolution of nutrition in IFAD) and its priorities in nutrition have kept pace with the major global policy commitments. IFAD actively participates in and contributes to a number of strategic global initiatives, as follows:

- **Alignment with global commitments and initiatives –** IFAD committed to the World Health Assembly (WHA) targets which were important milestones to unify and standardize global targets related to nutrition and pledged its commitments to the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) targets starting in 2013. IFAD was the first United Nations agency to formulate specific commitments in support of the United Nations declaration of the Decade of Action on Nutrition, which underlines IFAD's role in contributing to improved nutrition.[52] IFAD is a member of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, contributing to the global nutrition dialogue and is a member of the United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanism for Nutrition (UNN) and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).
- **Engagement in key food systems and nutrition-sensitive agriculture fora** – IFAD participated in the Second International Conference on Nutrition, held in 2014 which resulted in the endorsement of the Rome Declaration and the Framework of Action that reinforced the importance of food-based approaches to address malnutrition in a sustainable manner. In 2017 and 2018, IFAD actively participated and contributed to the Action Plan of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028),[53] which promotes substantial transformations in current food systems to focus on family farming as essential to achieving the 2030 SDG Agenda. IFAD contributed to the United Nations Food Systems Summit, held in 2021 which focussed on global food systems transformation to achieve the SDGs.

44. **IFAD is strongly committed to SDG2 and its principles of engagement, as expressed in the NAP 2019-2025, are in line with global initiatives and existing evidence on nutrition.[54]** IFADs nutrition action plans have maintained a consistent set of priorities allowing for continuity and long-term support. The Action Areas in the first NAP 2016-2018 and the second NAP 2019-2025, which are similar, remain relevant. The NAP 2019-2025 ToC clearly demonstrates the ambition to contribute to SDG2. Whilst the NAP does not explicitly refer to the WHA targets,[55] its ToC does identify the triple burden of malnutrition (undernutrition,

[52] IFAD's contribution to the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2030) is available at https://www.unscn.org/en/topics/un-decade-of-action-on-nutrition?idnews=1686
[53] https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/5479e317-17b9-428b-9963-ba88e681ff16/content
[54] The principles of engagement in the NAP 205-2018 are also in line with global initiatives and evidence
[55] WHO. 2014. Global nutrition targets 2025: policy brief series.

micronutrient deficiencies and overweight/obesity) as a challenge. The NAP also clearly states that IFAD's main goal for nutrition is to contribute to diverse, nutritious and safe diets to address all forms of malnutrition.

45. **The NAP lists four important principles of engagement that IFAD will adopt to accelerate the mainstreaming of nutrition into operations and deliver on the commitments of the NAP 2019-2025.** These are: i) coherence with other cross-cutting themes,[56] ii) apply a nutrition lens to investments, iii) adopt a multisectoral approach, and iv) follow a life cycle approach (see Box below for a description of these principles).[57] The principle of applying a nutrition lens to investments is relevant to ensuring that investments in agriculture, sustainable food systems and rural development are optimized to have a clear and major contribution to nutrition outcomes. This has been the intention for a long time (also reflected in the IFAD's 1994 nutrition strategy and the NAP 2016-2018) and leverages important areas of IFAD comparative advantage (see Section III A). The last two principles are in line with global initiatives on nutrition (a multi-sectoral approach is reflected in the establishment of the SUN Movement) and existing evidence (i.e. strong global evidence exists on the importance of a life cycle approach).

Box 3
IFAD's Principles of engagement for nutrition mainstreaming

The four principles of engagement listed in IFAD's Nutrition Action Plan are the following:

- **Ensure coherence and increase effectiveness through the integration of nutrition with other cross-cutting themes**, namely environment and climate, gender and youth. IFAD will systematically analyse and address the cross-cutting themes in an integrated manner, searching where possible for linkages, synergies and complementarities to improve nutrition, increase resilience and mitigate risks.
- **Apply a nutrition lens to investments**. Rather than investing in stand-alone nutrition actions, IFAD will apply a nutrition lens to the design and implementation of investments in agriculture, food systems and rural development, so as to optimize their contribution to improving nutrition. This will apply to geographical areas with high levels of malnutrition and will depend on the type of investments. Applying a nutrition lens entails systematically identifying entry points and opportunities for nutrition in specific IFAD investment areas, as well as identifying potential risks for nutrition (vector-borne diseases due to unsafe water management, overburdening of women, etc.) and devising mitigation measures.
- **Adopt a multisectoral approach and engage with other actors**. Addressing the problem of malnutrition requires a multisectoral approach and the involvement of various stakeholders at all levels of government. IFAD will therefore optimize the complementary contributions that other sectors and actors make to nutrition, including policy engagement and coordination with partners working particularly in health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene. Supporting such an approach and the required partnerships should encourage programmatic convergence, sustainability, coherent messaging and scaling up.
- **Adopt a life cycle approach**. IFAD aims to improve the nutrition of all household members, primarily through improvements in dietary quality. However, to make sure that no one is left behind, attention will be given to the most nutritionally vulnerable groups in the household and their specific nutrient requirements (children, adolescent girls, women of reproductive age and in particular pregnant and lactating women), thus tailoring interventions to address their nutrition needs.

Source: IFAD. 2019c.

[56] Namely environment and climate, gender and youth.
[57] The life cycle approach to addressing malnutrition is a framework that considers the nutritional needs of individuals, particularly girls and women, at each stage of their lives, from preconception to adulthood. By focusing on the critical stages, the approach seeks to prevent malnutrition (both undernutrition and overnutrition) and its consequences across generations.

46. **IFAD adopted the MDD-W at corporate level to measure its contribution to nutrition in terms of dietary diversity, which is an important aspect of diet quality.** This is currently the most appropriate indicator to assess achievements of nutrition sensitive agriculture investments. Early adoption of this indicator is a measure which external informants emphasized was highly innovative at the time. It demonstrates IFAD's commitment to nutrition and understanding of its role in promoting healthy diets as a means to improve nutrition. The strengths and weaknesses of using MDD-W as a corporate indicator are discussed in Section V.B.

47. **Enhanced corporate commitments - as demonstrated through IFAD's replenishment targets - have had a positive effect on the profile of nutrition within IFAD and externally.** Both internal and external stakeholders agree that strong commitments have contributed to setting the bar higher for the organization and have pushed the nutrition agenda. Among donors this has reinforced the image of IFAD as an organization with strong ambitions in the realm of nutrition. Among international partners, the increased attention on nutrition is seen as positive and makes IFAD an attractive partner for collaborations.

48. **IFAD's focus in terms of delivering against its objectives remains largely production-driven with insufficient consideration of other critical entry points along the different elements of the food system**. Although the aim to systematically promote the availability, accessibility, affordability and consumption of diverse, nutritious foods is appropriate for IFAD - and reflects its experience, track record and knowledge - the framing of nutrition in the Strategic Framework (2016-2025) is reductionist since it refers mainly to production and income generation with some additional behaviour change components. There is much more limited focus on other entry points for addressing sustainable healthy diets as part of the broader food systems approach although these are areas where IFAD also has expertise. The NAP 2019-2025 does identify other entry points to tackle nutrition, such as increased availability in markets; growth and diversification of income; nutrition knowledge and practices; empowerment of women; environmental health; climate resilience and environmental sustainability; and Indigenous Peoples; but these are much less prominent throughout the narrative, compared to the production-driven investment areas.

49. **The NAP 2019-2025 has insufficiently guided organizational understanding and prioritization of the full range of elements that are part of a system approach.** The NAP 2019-2025 identifies the main problems underpinning the triple burden of malnutrition, but the ToC and the narrative do not adequately explain the causal linkages between outcomes-results-overall goals and envisioned impact. This is particularly visible in the project-level outcomes proposed in the NAP,[58] which can be considered entry points for IFAD's nutrition investments. These outcomes are presented as a list markedly descriptive without explaining the logic of causality between them and their integration into food systems. The *How To Do Note on Mainstreaming Nutrition into COSOPs and IFAD's projects*" (2019) also highlights the need to develop a ToC to identify the nutrition impact pathways, but it does not go into sufficient detail on how to effectively integrate nutrition into investments in a meaningful way (i.e. how to apply a nutrition lens). This may explain some limitations found in terms of effectiveness of IFAD's nutrition investments (see Section IV). The *How to do Note* also implies specific allocation (and disaggregation) of financial resources and the inclusion of nutrition indicators – both of these are areas where IFAD institutional capacities and resources are scarce (see Section V.A and V.B).

[58] Those entry points are: growth and diversification of production; increased availability in markets; growth and diversification of income; nutrition knowledge and practices; empowerment of women and youth (especially adolescent girls); environmental health; climate resilience and environmental sustainability, indigenous people; and enabling environment.

50. **The review of the NAP by the evaluation shows lack of precision in the language used**: i) Food systems, agriculture and rural development are often used interchangeably, without clarifying the difference (or relationship) between these concepts; ii) Food systems are put forward as an approach, but there is no explanation of what implementing a food systems approach to programming means or entails, with the NAP just presenting a short definition in the final glossary; and iii) The terms "nutrition-sensitive agriculture approach" and "food systems approach" are often used concomitantly, narrowing the approach, because although agriculture is central in food systems, there are other important elements required to apply a system-based approach (e.g. people, institutions, norms, ecosystems and natural resources, among others).

51. **The IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025 does not reflect the current global discourse relating to achieving sustainable healthy diets through food systems transformation.** This is largely because the discourse has become more prominent since its development with the food systems conceptual framework proposed by the HLPE (2017) and the food system summit in 2021. In the same way, while the NAP 2019-2025 acknowledges that "*IFAD's approach to nutrition mainstreaming primarily entails promoting investments in nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems targeting smallholder producers, which are crucial to the world's food security and nutrition*" its aim of achieving diverse, safe and nutritious foods is not yet framed through a food systems approach. This would require taking a 'farm to fork' approach that examines the entry points for promoting sustainable healthy diets across food supply chains, food environments, and consumer behaviour to achieve environmental, social, and economic outcomes.

52. **The majority of IFAD thematic policies and plans recognize the importance of nutrition.** There has been a positive evolution of nutrition being included in IFAD's policy guidance. The analysis shows a recognition of the predominant role of women in agriculture, food security and nutrition in the Gender Action Plan 2019-2025;[59] recognition that malnutrition tends to be high among persons with disabilities and often severe among children and girls with disabilities in IFAD's Disability Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027,[60] evidence of guidance on how a youth-sensitive agriculture approach can support results in nutrition in the Rural Youth Action Plan 2019–2021;[61] attention to indigenous farming systems and fostering the resilience of indigenous food systems in the Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples 2022[62] which represents an improvement from the 2009 policy which did not reference nutrition at all; continuing priority on the poorest and most excluded, including those who are food-insecure in the Policy on Targeting 2023;[63] recognition of the diversity in agriculture and food systems for resilience and livelihoods of rural families, including of biodiversity as a foundational pillar for food security and improved nutrition in the Strategy on Biodiversity 2022-2025;[64] and an emphasis on broadening support provided to smallholder farming and rural transformation to contribute to rural poverty eradication, sustainable agricultural development, and global food security and nutrition in the Regular Grants Policy 2021.[65]

53. **Nutrition is still absent or insufficiently prioritized in IFAD's policies on environment, knowledge management and private sector.** The Strategy and Action Plan on Environment 2019-2025,[66] does not provide guidance on how to

[59] https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/126/docs/EB-2019-126-INF-6.pdf
[60] https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/137/docs/EB-2022-137-R-7.pdf?attach=1
[61] https://www.ifad.org/en/w/corporate-documents/policies/ifad-action-plan-rural-youth
[62] https://www.ifad.org/documents/48415603/49475487/ip_policy_e.pdf/ca674067-5151-412f-ff7c-339cbf9cf6b7?t=1726605272364
[63] https://www.ifad.org/documents/48415603/49478356/targeting-policy-2023_e.pdf/40c71fa6-90dc-bd88-f465-f88fa0e071cd?t=1726605437073
[64] https://www.ifad.org/documents/d/new-ifad.org/biodiversity_strategy_e-pdf
[65] https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/132/docs/EB-2021-132-R-3.pdf
[66] https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/125/docs/EB-2018-125-R-12.pdf

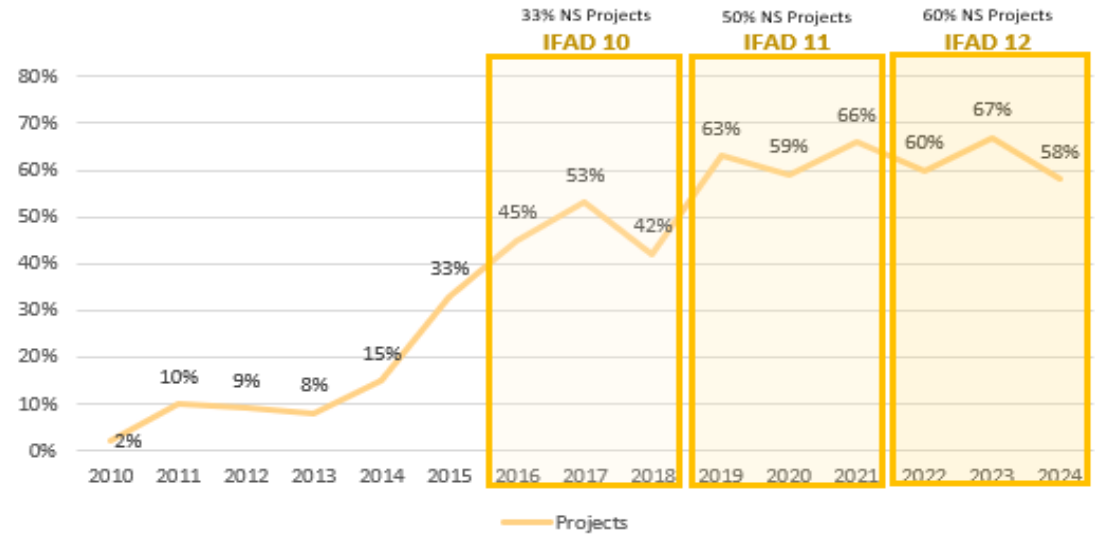
overcome climate challenges to promote better nutrition or resilience. The Private Sector Engagement Strategy 2019–2024[67] intends to strengthen IFAD's development impact, and specifically its contribution to SDGs 1 and 2, by crowding-in private sector funding. However, connections (or priorities) related to nutrition or even with food security – in a broader sense, are not provided and the strategy does not specify in what specific areas the private sector can play a conducive role in nutrition. The Knowledge Management Action Plan 2016-2018[68] outlines IFAD's knowledge management priorities and actions, but there is no guidance with regard to nutrition or any of the thematic areas.

B. Relevance of IFAD's nutrition activities and approaches to the contexts and the needs of IFAD's target groups

54. This section of the report considers the extent to which IFAD supported activities are designed and tailored to the needs of specific contexts (countries or regions) and to the needs of IFAD's target populations.

55. **Since 2016, the COSOPs as well as projects have become progressively more consistent and aligned with IFAD's nutrition priorities.** From 2016 onwards, according to figures reported by management, IFAD has met the design targets for nutrition-sensitive projects (see Figure 3 below showing achievements against targets). IFAD10 set operational targets for 33 percent of projects to be nutrition-sensitive, which was increased to 50 percent for IFAD11 and 60 percent for IFAD12.[69] Evidence from CCS confirm this positive trend.[70,71] The geographical distribution of projects shows a concentration in three regions (East and Southern Africa Division (ESA), Asia and Pacific Division (APR) and West and Central Africa Division (WCA) corresponding to the regions where problems of undernutrition are most prevailing.

Figure 3
Percentage of NS projects per year against commitments



Source: Evaluation self-assessment workshop (April 2024) before IFAD11 and ODE for IFAD11 onward

[67] https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/127/docs/EB-2019-127-R-3.pdf
[68] https://www.ifad.org/documents/d/new-ifad.org/km_actionplan_2016-18-pdf
[69] A system to categorize projects as nutrition-sensitive at design has been adopted with IFAD11, while for older projects they have been categorised retrospectively to track commitments.
[70] For example, the 2011-2015 COSOP for Mozambique did not include a single mention of the word "nutrition" throughout the document, which is symptomatic of the lack of attention to this issue at the time, while the following COSOPs 2018 - 2022 and 2023 - 2027 address nutrition aspects.
[71] A target for nutrition-sensitive COSOPs was set at 100% in IFAD10 but it was discontinued in IFAD11 and IFAD12. Mainstreaming of nutrition in COSOP is not tracked.

56. **There are weaknesses in nutrition context analysis.** The NAP states that COSOPs and projects shall include a nutrition situation assessment, specifying how objectives and connected activities relate to improving nutrition. The SECAP guidelines also require the conduct of a context analysis and an annex on this is part of the *How To do Note* on integrating nutrition into COSOPs and projects. The quality of context analyses improved over time. There is evidence that IFAD has supported some countries to conduct situation analyses and explore entry points and pathways of nutrition-sensitive activities, also assisted by grant funded research with partners, for example in Zimbabwe, Ghana, Lesotho through Wageningen University and in Burkina Faso through the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). Still, the evaluation also identified many cases where COSOPs and projects have not included an adequate analysis of the nutritional situation and/or their strategic objectives did not relate to the nutrition problems faced by the countries. For example: the Egypt COSOP does not present a consistent analysis of the nutritional situation, nor does it include nutrition in its strategic objectives; the Burundi's COSOP provides a superficial analysis and fails to adequately address the factors underlying stunting, despite the high rate; and the 2013-2023 Indonesia CSPE rated the relevance of IFAD's COSOP and programme as moderately satisfactory, highlighting concerns about insufficient support for the Government's nutrition priorities, particularly regarding improved diets. Annex V.D provides further elements derived from the CCS regarding the design of NS projects.

57. **Investments are not always sufficiently tailored to different contexts and existing nutrition needs**. Interviews indicate that tailoring to country context and needs continues to be challenging, with various examples of the same types of activities being replicated across contexts without adequately shaping them to the context specificities. For example, in Burundi, the funded nutrition sensitive actions are not commensurate with IFAD's organizational commitment or the importance of the problem of chronic malnutrition in the country, which has the highest rate of stunting in the world (56.5 percent in 2022). The focus of interventions was mainly on community-based management of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) and the referral of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) cases to health centres. In Mozambique, although the focus on nutrition is strong, nutrition has been implemented in a siloed way and mostly focusing on the consumption side, which limits a comprehensive and holistic connection with food production, food supply, food market dynamics, including the linkage of nutrition with the sustainable food systems approach.[72] In Zimbabwe, nutrition was weak at design in that nutrition outcomes were known, but activities towards achieving these were narrowly framed around knowledge exchange. In Egypt, nutrition-sensitive projects had a primary focus on women and children but the strategies to reach them were not always clearly elaborated. In Indonesia, stunting is the current main concern for government and stakeholders, but IFAD lacks a comprehensive strategy to address its underlying causes.

58. **Nutrition has not been systematically integrated with other investments at design stage, although there has been an improvement over the evaluation period.** Under IFAD 10, before nutrition became a distinct thematic area with criteria for nutrition-sensitive projects, nutrition actions were not always designed at the same time as other investments. According to the interviews and in most of the CCS, many of the projects were already underway before IFAD's increased its attention to nutrition. This resulted in nutrition being incorporated late, and often as only a "component", "sub-component" or even simply by adding ad hoc activities, mainly focused on social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) aimed at diet diversification and healthy eating habits. For example, in

[72] However, there are some exceptions, as for example the case of PROCAVA that implements an approach which include support to research on the development and release of Nutrition sensitive seeds, production and processing technics that are nutrition sensitive including fortification and then consumption.

Benin (Agricultural Development and Market Access Support Project (PADAAM) IFAD10), Norway funding in 2019 resulted in nutrition sensitive activities being refined and actually implemented. In Zimbabwe, (Smallholder Irrigation Revitalization Programme (SIRP) IFAD10), the nutrition activities at design only included the development of a small number of materials and a few nutrition education sessions. Scale-up and the addition of other activities (e.g. keyhole gardens) was only possible after Norwegian supplementary funds became available in the fourth year. Similarly, in Bangladesh (Smallholder Agriculture Competitiveness Project (SACP) IFAD10), nutrition education, awareness raising, and homestead gardens were only introduced later in implementation. In Burkina Faso there was an attempt to retrofit nutrition in an existing project supported by a specific study (Neer Tamba) and Norway funds also helped to strengthen the nutrition component of a value chain project (Agricultural Value Chains Support Project (PAPFA) IFAD10).

59. **Starting from IFAD11 and IFAD12 an improvement is noticed as nutrition actions are included at design, but the quality of the design still varies significantly** (see Annex V.I). Project design reports identify more clearly nutrition impact pathways and activities and the related allocation of financial resources in the budget. However, according to KII, nutrition activities are still in some cases added to the project design in order to meet the IFAD corporate 60 percent commitment, rather than being driven by a clear need and logic to nutrition being included in the investment. This results in a "siloed-approach" to nutrition through separated activities.

60. **IFAD rigidly uses 'nutrition' to frame its nutrition-sensitive work limiting the possibility of garnering support at design for nutrition as a critical element of achieving sustainable, healthy diets through food systems transformation.** Solely using the term 'nutrition' to frame the objectives and activities, misses an opportunity to shape a contextually-appropriate narrative that could align with the specific context. In a region like Near East, North Africa and Europe (NEN) for example, the term malnutrition is not well accepted by many governments since they perceive it is only relevant for low income countries.[73] Interviews highlighted that for some governments presenting the business case for nutrition would be a better way to harness government interest and engagement, while in other contexts explaining the human capital benefits (emphasizing economic, health and environmental outcomes) would be an effective selling point. The corporately mandated target for 60 percent of new projects to be nutrition-sensitive has not been complemented by regional target settings or guidance reflecting nutrition needs of the context. This contributes to priorities being implemented with insufficient shaping of targets according to contextual differences across and within regions.

61. **Addressing obesity and overweight is not yet part of IFAD investments focusing on nutrition.** IFAD recognises the importance of tackling all forms of malnutrition, yet its programmes rarely include specific activities to respond to the rising needs of addressing overweight and obesity. For example, in Indonesia while the more recent COSOP (2023-2027) addressed the weaknesses in context analysis that were referenced above and based priorities on a more detailed context analysis, it still does not include consideration of overweight and obesity rates and causes. An exception was found in Brazil where the entry point to address obesity is through healthy diets, addressing both households (behavioural changes) and children at school (school feeding).[74] To fill in this gap, IFAD more recently conducted a study on overweight and obesity and its linkages to food

[73] Key information interviews
[74] Indonesia and Brazil were included among the CCS as they both present the double burden of malnutrition. In Brazil, 28.2 percent of adult (aged 18 years and over) women and 21.1% of adult men were living with obesity in 2019 while in Indonesia 10.9 percent of women and 6.3 percent of men respectively. Source: https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/ consulted on February 2025.

systems in LMICs. The study highlights interventions targeting these two issues, and identifies enablers and barriers to putting in place interventions.

Targeting

62. **Nutrition is part of IFAD's guidance on targeting.** As discussed earlier, IFAD's new Targeting Policy 2022 reflects nutrition priorities, as did the 2019 revised operational guidelines and even the 2006 Targeting Policy promotes malnutrition indicators as a means on informing targeting.[75] The NAP states that effective targeting of nutritionally vulnerable groups is essential for achieving nutrition results while "leaving no one behind". The *How To do Note* on mainstreaming nutrition into COSOPs and projects provides guidance on whether to target the household or certain groups such as women, or adolescents and IFAD's traditional target groups have been considered in interventions that address nutrition, namely on family farming (agriculture and fisheries), with a growing emphasis on women and young people.

63. **Geographic targeting is based on vulnerabilities to nutrition, in accordance with IFAD's nutrition guidance.** The evaluation found that in most cases geographic targeting was defined based on nutritional criteria and/or focus on the areas most vulnerable to food insecurity. Malnutrition rates are often included as criteria for the definition of the target and coverage area (e.g. Benin, Burundi, Zimbabwe), or geographical targeting is focused on climate disaster-prone areas or semi-arid regions where the vulnerability and risk of food insecurity is highest (e.g. Brazil, Mozambique, Laos). Even though there are still cases where nutritional criteria are not being explicitly used to identify target areas, poverty is used as an appropriate proxy to identify nutritionally vulnerable locations (e.g. use of poverty maps in Egypt, Indonesia, Bangladesh).

64. **Selection of beneficiaries is based on nutrition criteria. The majority of target groups are rural family farmers, including women, children and youth.** CCS analysis, corroborated by field visits and beneficiary consultations show that overall beneficiaries were selected based on nutritional criteria, for example: i) in addition to local production potential (supply chain approach), poverty rate, food insecurity and chronic malnutrition prevalence at departmental level are used in Benin; ii) in Burundi, the Agricultural Production Intensification and Vulnerability Reduction Project (PIPARV-B) targeting includes chronic malnutrition prevalence at municipality level and productive capacities of family farmers and marginalised communities, and MAM cases at household level, offering a coherent range of activities adapted to the different categories of beneficiaries, and prioritising women and young people; iii) in Mozambique the portfolio includes projects aimed at both rural and fishing communities, who are the most vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition; iv) in Laos criteria include highly vulnerable food-insecure households and poor households that are moderately food insecure. A good example illustrating the application of the "leaving no one behind" principle was found in Brazil, as illustrated in the box below.

[75] IFAD Poverty Targeting Policy 2022, IFAD 2019 revised Operational Guidelines on Targeting and the IFAD Policy on Targeting 2006.

Box 4
Good practice in applying the "leaving no one behind" principle to targeting in Brazil

After an initial first step of geographical targeting to highest vulnerability and risk of food insecurity, in a second step, the design phase included visits, studies, data collection and dialogues with different stakeholders to identify the target groups and the territories to focus the investments. As a result, the projects focused on families and communities that are "invisible" to public policies, prioritising family farmers, settled families, with special attention given to women. Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities are also a consolidated target group, and the portfolio includes specific activities focused on their livelihoods and culture (e.g. indigenous food systems and valorisation of food culture, indigenous heritage).

Source: Brazil Country Case Study and desk review

65. **IFAD's focus on 'active or productive poor' populations can reduce the extent to which nutrition-sensitive projects reach the poorest and therefore most vulnerable to malnutrition.** IFAD's target group is poor rural people including the poorest.[76] However, the 2023 IOE Targeting Synthesis[77] found that there was a shift in the interpretation of IFAD's target group between 2008 and 2018 with projects focusing more on targeting the 'active or productive poor' and less on targeting poorer and extremely poor people.[78] Yet, the poorest population groups carry the highest risk for nutritional vulnerability. Targeting them with a package of appropriate interventions to gradually improve their livelihoods and generate income through agriculture activities would improve their access and, potentially, the consumption of a diversified diet, and is key to contributing effectively to the reduction of malnutrition in a region or a country.

66. **Indigenous Peoples have not been consistently included as an explicit and distinct target group within nutrition sensitive projects.** IFAD has a specific policy to encourage the involvement of Indigenous Peoples in its investments.[79] The evidence collected in the case studies showed that Indigenous Peoples have not been systematically identified as an explicit and distinct target group.[80] In Africa, but at some extent also in Asia, this is largely because the expression 'Indigenous Peoples' is not applicable. In practice, public policies and the discourse of policy makers do not distinguish between Indigenous Peoples and other population groups, which invalidates the fact that minority or more vulnerable ethnic groups can be identified and considered as beneficiaries with specific measures tailored to their needs. Vulnerability is more acute for Indigenous Peoples given the discrimination they face and the lack of recognition of their rights, culture and the specificity of their livelihoods, which require more focused responses. Only few examples were found where IFAD made efforts to include these groups. For example, in Burundi there were some activities targeting Batwa communities[81]. Conversely, in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region

[76] IFAD Poverty Targeting Policy 2022, IFAD Targeting Policy 2006 and IFAD 2019 Revised Operational Guidelines on targeting.
[77] IFAD, 2023. Targeting in IFAD-supported projects Evaluation synthesis note. Available at f2641a43-edaf-467f-4695-12e4565354f1
[78] The 2019 IFAD operational guidelines clarified that where IFAD economic investments do not immediately benefit the poorest people, IFAD should promote a gradual approach to facilitate their access to resources (by supporting activities to improve their knowledge, self-esteem and agency) so that they are then able to benefit from the investments.
[79] IFAD, 2022. IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples: 2022 update. Available at https://www.ifad.org/documents/48415603/49475487/ip_policy_e.pdf/ca674067-5151-412f-ff7c-339cbf9cf6b7?t=1726605272364. This policy recognizes that the term "Indigenous Peoples" is a common denominator for more than 476 million persons, representing 6.2 percent of the world's population. Indigenous Peoples and their livelihood systems, occupy about 25 per cent of the world's land surface, with about 40 per cent of all terrestrial protected areas and ecologically intact landscapes, where they have preserved 80 per cent of the remaining terrestrial biodiversity.
[80] However, it is important to note that IFAD, without using the terminology Indigenous Peoples if they are not recognised as such by the Governments, targets them as 'ethnic groups', 'tribal groups', 'ethnic minorities', etc. This is an aspect that also emerged from CCSs.
[81] For example, in the project PRODEFI phase II, Batwa community members have been included in the milk value-chain support (production, processing and marketing).

specific legislation provides a stronger framework for characterizing and identifying these groups. Consequently, these populations are systematically considered priority target groups, as evidenced in the Brazil CCS. The later country has potential for evidence-based learning in this regard since the portfolio includes specific activities focused on the livelihoods and culture of Indigenous Peoples, for example around indigenous food systems and valorisation of food culture, and indigenous heritage. In Nicaragua, the NICAVIDA project included a focus on indigenous families and communities that suffer from higher rates of poverty and malnutrition and targeted six indigenous communities. Its strategy for Indigenous Peoples considered their worldview, experiences, knowledge and practices and a study was also conducted on ancestral knowledge and good food practices in four indigenous municipalities (with local recipes), which also included an inventory of neglected and underutilized species.[82]

67. An example of IFAD's effort to shape support to Indigenous Peoples to contribute to nutritional results is the Indigenous Peoples' Assistance Facility (IPAF).[83] IPAF provides long-standing funding opportunities to strengthen indigenous people's organisation and culture, which includes nutrition as one of the IPAF thematic areas. This is reflected in a review of the fifth cycle of the IPAF approved micro-grants (approved in 2018), which shows that 38 percent of those micro-grants incorporate nutrition (13 out of 34 IPAF micro-grants).[84] These grants do so by considering nutrition as an outcome or as an action area.[85] None of these nutrition relevant grants were implemented in the countries selected for the CCS, as such they were not covered by the evaluation. A digital toolbox on Sustainable and Resilient Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems for improved nutrition was also developed by IFAD in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and financed through supplementary funds received from Canada.[86]

C. Design of nutrition sensitive projects

68. This Section of the report reflects on the quality of the design process of nutrition sensitive projects including expertise, guidance and tools.

69. **Lack of nutrition expertise at design stage jeopardizes the quality of the design of nutrition-sensitive projects.** The expertise that is included in project design teams has been a significant factor in the quality of the design of nutrition-sensitive projects. Limited budgets coupled with a lack of dedicated experts, resulted in social inclusion staff being frequently tasked to cover various aspects of social inclusion, such as gender, youth as well as nutrition, in the project design, with implications for the depth of analysis of these topics. As evidenced in the Table below, in 10 countries covered by the evaluation, nutrition experts were present in only 10 missions out of 27 while in other cases nutrition was covered by the social inclusion expert or there was no specific expert covering this aspect. There has also been insufficient attention to ensuring that experts developing main components of a project have an understanding of how to integrate nutrition at

[82] CCS Nicaragua.
[83] IPAF was established in 2006 by IFAD in cooperation with the World Bank and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). Since 2007 IPAF has mobilized around USD12.5 million from IFAD, the World Bank, Governments (Canada, Finland, Italy, Norway and Sweden), foundations (Packard Foundation, Tamalpais, Christensen Funds, Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean) and NGOs (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs). The Facility aims to strengthen indigenous peoples' communities and their organizations in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean and supports initiatives designed and implemented by indigenous peoples' communities and their organizations that build on their culture, identity, knowledge and natural resources by financing small projects (USD 30,000 to USD 50,000) to foster a self-driven development in the framework of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The sixth call for proposals was launched in 2022, previous calls were in 2007, 2008, 2012, 2015 and 2018.
[84] Of these 13 micro-grants, three were implemented in APR (India, Philippines, and Thailand), one in ESA (Uganda), six in LAC (Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Paraguay) and three in WCA (Cameroon, Congo and Ghana).
[85] IFAD. Summary of IPAF projects approved in Africa, LAC and APR. Available at https://www.ifad.org/en/initiatives/indigenous-peoples-assistance-facility
[86] IFAD, 2022c.

project design. In 2014, IFAD organized a workshop on "Applying Concepts of Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture and Rural Development to Project Design".[87] Although this predates the evaluation period, it demonstrates that IFAD has undertaken initiatives in the past to build capacity. However, other workshops focusing specifically on project design have not been organised during the evaluation period (see Annex III.C for the list of workshops organised).

Table 3
Nutrition Experts in Design Missions since IFAD10 in the 10 country case studies[88]

	Number of projects analysed	Nutrition Expert	Social inclusion expert covering nutrition	No specific expert covering nutrition	No information available on mission composition
IFAD10	10	4	0	5	1
IFAD11	9	3	1	3	2
IFAD12	8	3	4	1	0
Total	27	10	5	9	3

Source: IOE based on Project Design Reports

70. **Involvement of national partners outside the agricultural sector in the design phase is limited.** At government level, difficulties in engaging multiple government sectors in design often derive from weaknesses in the functioning of government-led nutrition coordination at country level, particularly between the Ministry of Agriculture, which primarily focuses on nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems and therefore has a strong role to play in promoting sustainable healthy diets, and the Ministry of Health, which normally focusses on interventions delivered through the health sector (e.g. Indonesia). There is also a lack of collaboration with national social protection mechanisms which is a missed opportunity given agriculture can provide a means of graduating from social assistance. On the positive side, Brazil offers an experience where multiple government sectors - at national, provincial and municipality levels - were engaged in design through a territorial approach, thus providing opportunities for long lasting synergies and complementarities in implementation. In Indonesia, the Regional Development Planning Agency (BAPPEDA) (i.e. local office of the Ministry of Planning) in Southern Sulawesi facilitated intersectoral collaboration by engaging various local State offices, including education, health, villages and agriculture, to support and pre-finance the Rural Empowerment and Agriculture Development Scaling-Up Initiative (READSI) activities. This coordination effort recognized the cross-cutting nature of nutrition and ensured that different government sectors were aligned in their efforts, using READSI as an opportunity to integrate nutrition more effectively.

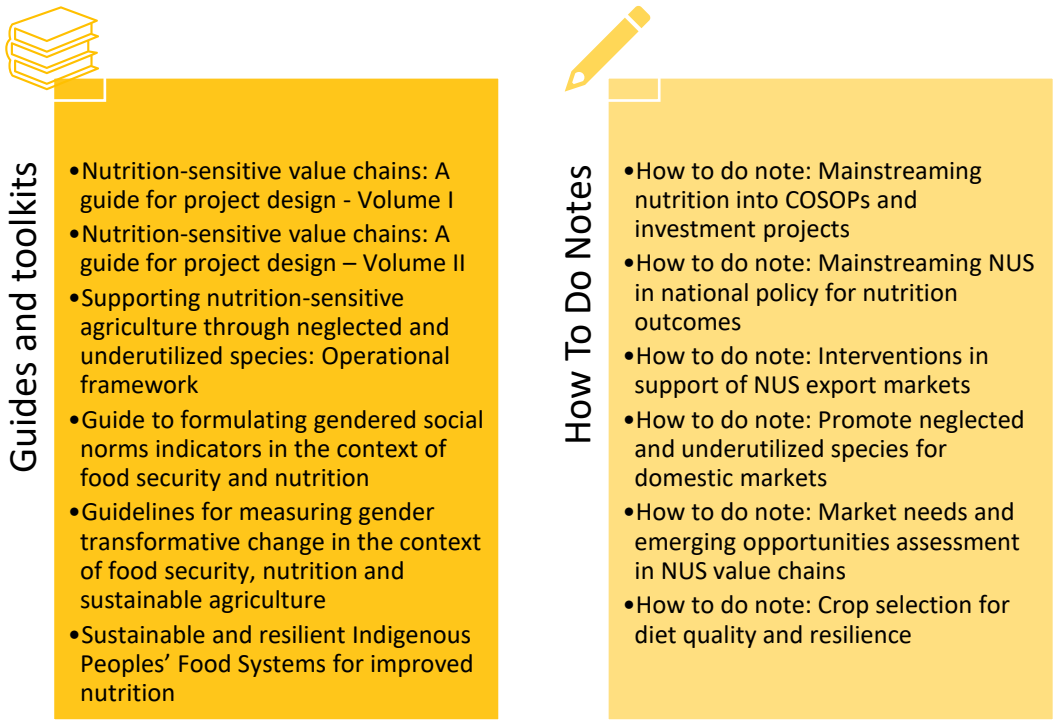
71. **The involvement of other United Nations Agencies in the design of NS projects is sub-optimal.** This was the case in Bangladesh where the agency providing technical assistance to a project did not feel sufficiently engaged in the design of a spin-off phase. In Mozambique engagement of other United Nations agencies in the design phase was a clear gap, with the exception of PROPEIXE which did involve United Nations agencies, with the FAO serving as the lead project writer and other agencies participating in consultations.

[87] The workshop report indicates that it was a prototype training and sensitization initiative to introduce/familiarize program professionals with project design work involving nutrition-sensitive agriculture and that particular care was taken to capture the format given the likelihood that many such workshops will follow. This workshop, organized by a joint IFAD/FAO team with inputs also from the World Bank and REACH, sought to expand the pool of experts (independent consultants and TCI staff) that these organizations can draw upon for assignments.
[88] Information by project is provided in Annex V.L.

72. **The guidance and tools to support nutrition design, and throughout the project cycle, are of good quality but some key topics are not yet covered**. IFAD has produced a series of tools, guidance and *How to Do Notes* over the course of the evaluation period in line with the aims of the NAP which provide guidance through the project cycle. These tools cover project design, supervision and other aspects through to project completion (see Figure below). Interviews indicate that the tools and guidance are generally thought to be of good quality, and that this has contributed to enhancing thematic and strategic prioritization of nutrition at various levels. The guidance on nutrition-sensitive value chains is well regarded and was informed by research, which brought together the latest knowledge in value-chain development and nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems with field-based experience from Nigeria and Indonesia in the design of Nutrition Sensitive Value Chain projects (NSVC). Supplementary funds provided by Germany were used to support the operational research which culminated in the development of the NSVC guide and a research paper. An Operational Framework on Neglected and Under-utilised Species in 2019 was prepared in collaboration with Bioversity International and developed before this topic became more common in global discourse and it was found to be very useful to staff.[89,90] IFAD has also developed five How-To Notes on Neglected and Underutilised species. There are also examples of guidance integrating other thematic areas such as the *guidance to formulating gendered social norms in the context of food security and nutrition* and a *toolbox to improve the diets and nutrition of Indigenous Peoples.*[91,92] There has not been yet explicit guidance on how agricultural investments can address overweight and obesity through sustainable healthy diets, although a specific study on this topic was conducted,[93] and there is also no guidance on designing investments through a food systems lens.

[89] McLachlan, M. Garrett, J. Grigoletto, R. Kennedy, A. Portelli, S., Translation and Use of Knowledge In Nutrition-Sensitive Projects at IFAD.
[90] Padulosi S., Phrang Roy and Francisco J. Rosado-May.2019. Supporting Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture through Neglected and Underutilized Species - Operational Framework. Rome: Bioversity International and IFAD.
[91] FAO, IFAD and WFP. 2022. Guide to formulating gendered social norms indicators in the context of food security and nutrition. Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0673en.
[92] IFAD. 2022. Sustainable and Resilient Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems for Improved Nutrition. Rome: IFAD.
[93] In partnership with Wageningen University IFAD conducted a research on overweight and obesity: Overweight and Obesity LMICs in rural development and food systems. This research highlights interventions targeting overweight and obesity as well as related enablers and barriers. The same document also includes country profiles for Bolivia, Egypt, Nigeria, Zambia, and Indonesia highlighting drivers and policy context. IFAD research series 91 also published on the UN Nutrition website.

Figure 3
Guidance and tools

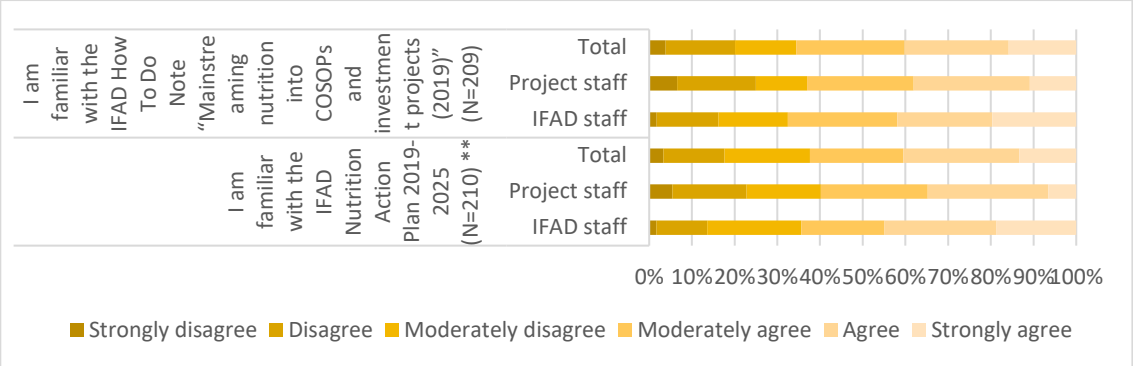


Source: IOE based on the knowledge products list provided by ECG

73. **IFAD staff are relatively familiar with the NAP and the *How to Do Notes* on mainstreaming nutrition.** Forty percent of the survey respondents reported agreement or strong agreement to being familiar with IFAD NAP 2019-2025 (27 percent agree and 13 percent strongly agree) and the *How To Do Note on Mainstreaming nutrition in COSOPs and investment projects*"[94] (24 percent agree and 16 percent strongly agree).[95] Although a definition of a nutrition-sensitive project is presented in the NAP 2019-2025[96] as well as in some *How to Do Notes*, doubts persist among stakeholders and IFAD staff on how to apply this approach in practice.

[94] Mainstreaming nutrition into COSOPs and investment projects (2019).
[95] Evaluation survey results.
[96] As stated in the NAP glossary, 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.

Figure 4
Awareness on IFAD's work on nutrition



Source: TE Nutrition electronic survey

74. **There is still a lack of understanding among staff of how, and in what ways, IFAD contributes to improving nutrition.** The evaluation found that IFAD as an organisation has not fully grasped the significant role it has to offer in promoting sustainable healthy diets and sustainable food systems which is directly related to its mandate. The NAP is clear on the role of IFAD in supporting nutrition through contributing to diverse, nutritious and safe diets to address all forms of malnutrition and the nutrition team has been very active in promoting IFAD's approach across the organisation. However, KIIs at headquarters level evidenced a widespread and consistent lack of understanding about whether IFAD should be involved in improving nutrition. Only a few informants expressed the view that IFAD's contribution to improving nutrition is through improving sustainable healthy diets. Some KII expressed the view that nutrition is a health issue and therefore under the responsibility of the health sector. Most informants failed to demonstrate understanding of the critical role of agriculture and the food system. Many KIIs (including those in the countries and at headquarters) expressed lack of clarity (or uncertainty) about food systems concepts and approaches, which may explain the lack of a more consistent organisational culture on food systems.

75. **IFAD's corporate risk assessment tool – SECAP - includes specific guidance on nutrition. However, this does not cover the need for a deeper analysis of the negative side effects that large-scale investments could have on nutrition.** In order to meet social, environmental and climate sustainability objectives, IFAD has developed the SECAP. This corporate tool sets out a framework and process for managing risks and impacts, and for integrating mainstreaming priorities into new IFAD-supported investments. The SECAP has nine standards that help to identify potential risks and impacts (both those that affect the project and those caused by the project) and how those should be addressed.[97] Nutrition is included under Standard 6 "Community health and safety" and IFAD requires its borrowers/recipients/partners to identify potential unintended negative impacts on nutrition in the project design phase based on the unique project context, and develop a mitigation plan, in order to ensure that IFAD-supported projects abide by the "do no harm" principles. In the section on integrating mainstreaming themes the SECAP discusses targeting, mainstreaming and risk assessment at each stage of the project cycle for all mainstreaming themes without going into detail for each one. However, identifying unintended side effects on nutrition of IFAD's large-scale investments for example on agriculture production or value chain likely requires a more in depth-assessment. This would include examining how interventions could impact access to and

[97] Standards include: Standard 1: Biodiversity conservation; Standard 2: Resource efficiency and pollution prevention; Standard 3: Cultural heritage; Standard 4: Indigenous peoples; Standard 5: Labour and working conditions; Standard 6: Community health and safety; Standard 7: Physical and economic resettlement; Standard 8: Financial intermediaries and direct investments; and Standard 9: Climate change.

consumption of healthy foods and affect the nutrition situation and how to avoid or mitigate such negative sides effects.

76. **A strong context analysis with identified nutritional needs relevant for IFAD's mandate and a well-done SECAP, do not guarantee well-designed nutrition-sensitive projects or secure the required budgetary allocation for nutrition.** The Bangladesh Rural Microenterprise Transformation Project (RMTP) (2019) and the Lao PDR Agriculture for Nutrition - Phase 2 (AFN II) (2022), provide excellent examples of mainstreaming nutrition in their design. The analysis of the nutritional context and the SECAP were done well, and the project design narrative demonstrated a strong integration of nutrition across all relevant components. Furthermore, nutrition and adequate indicators were integrated at all levels of the results framework, as well as in the work and the procurement plans (e.g. human resources, training, equipment), and detailed guidance was provided in the project implementation manual. In contrast, the Lao PDR Partnerships For Irrigation and Commercialisation of Smallholder Agriculture Project (PICSA) (2019), the Zimbabwe SACP as well as the Zimbabwe Horticulture Enterprise Enhancement Project (HEEP), which are also classified as nutrition-sensitive projects, conducted a SECAP and included a nutrition analysis, did not mainstream and resource nutrition adequately.[98]

77. **Projects (re) classification efforts as NS have not been fully successful in aligning resources and support where nutrition activities are being implemented.** Before IFAD11, projects have been reclassified as NS based on a review of the project design report in order to allow for reporting against commitments. The classification included four categories: A (No nutrition); B (Minimal consideration of nutrition), C (Nutrition-sensitive) and D (Integrated approach to nutrition). The categories reflected the extent to which a project had the potential to contribute to nutrition outcomes, besides offering a potentially gradual (or iterative) scenario on how to approach nutrition in investments. Since IFAD11, criteria for classifying a project as NS have been modified (see Table 4) with the adoption of a binary system (i.e. NS or non-NS). The current classification groups projects which have very different levels of attention to nutrition i.e. those proposing integrated approaches for improving nutrition with projects that have nutrition as their main goal (e.g. the Diversified Resilient Agriculture for Improved Food and Nutrition Security (RAINS) in Bangladesh) and with projects that have simply added some nutrition-sensitive activities. The coding is used for reporting on commitments but also internally for prioritising allocation of time by the nutrition team in design and support to implementation. The elimination of categories for classifying projects in favour of a binary system makes it difficult to determine the degree and extent of their contribution to nutrition.

[98] Only one component considered nutrition, there are insufficient human and financial resources and nutrition is not in the Environmental, Climate and Social Management Plan matrix.

Table 4
Essential requirements for nutrition-sensitive investment projects since IFAD11

Requirement	Description
Situation Analysis	• Description of national policies, strategies and actors addressing nutrition, analysis of main nutrition problems and underlying causes of malnutrition of affected groups in the project area. • Identifies nutritionally vulnerable beneficiaries by group.
Theory of Change	• The Project Design Report includes nutrition impact pathways, and presents linkage between nutrition related problems, outcomes and impacts.
Mandatory Logframe indicators	• Disaggregate Outreach indicator (C.I.1) by sex, youth and (if relevant) indigenous peoples. • Specify Households provided with targeted support to improve their nutrition (C.I.1.1.8 on Output). Disaggregate by households, household members, sex, youth, and (if relevant) indigenous peoples. • Include one of these outcome level nutrition indicators: 1.2.8 (MDD-W); 1.2.9 (KAP).
HR & Budget	• There is dedicated human and financial resources to nutrition and or a partnerships consultant to support implementation. • Allocate funds to deliver nutrition-related activities.

Source: IFAD12: Deepening Impact and Building Resilience through Mainstreaming (IFAD12/2/R.3/Rev.2). Rome.

79. **The current classification and reporting requirements lead to some projects that contribute to nutrition being overlooked.** Projects reclassified as NS before IFAD11 are in many cases not considered NS by the country teams.[99] Under IFAD11, there are cases where projects have an explicit contribution to nutrition but because they do not meet all the criteria they are not considered nutrition sensitive for IFAD. Equally there are cases where staff reported preferring not to classify a project as NS so as to avoid the complexity generated by adding an additional mainstreaming theme with related reporting requirements. As a result, these projects are not then included in the list monitored and supported by the nutrition team.

[99] As evidenced in the CCS conducted by this evaluation.

Key points

- IFADs commitment to nutrition reflects SDG2 prioritization and recognizes global malnutrition challenges and global initiatives.
- Principles of engagement as expressed in the NAP 2019-2025 are in line with global initiatives and existing evidence on nutrition.
- There is evidence of an enhanced internal profile of nutrition, with positive spin-off to how IFAD is seen by partners. IFADs work on nutrition is supported by the inclusion of nutrition in the majority of the organization's policies and plans and IFAD has been an early adopter of MDD-W.
- The NAP reflects nutrition priorities but does not provide sufficient guidance on how to apply a nutrition lens to investments.
- IFAD's Strategic Framework 2016 to 2025 and the NAP 2019 – 2025 do not yet reflect the current (and more recent) global discourse on achieving sustainable, healthy, diets through food systems transformation.
- There is a positive trend of the COSOPs and projects formulated since IFAD10 towards integrating nutrition priorities.
- IFAD's Strategic Framework and the first and second NAPs have supported stronger nutrition integration in investments but there are still gaps in tailoring priorities to contexts and nutrition needs.
- Corporate targets are applied equally across different contexts and subsequent nutrition sensitive projects do not always reflect national priorities.
- The way IFAD frames its nutrition work, especially in dialogue with national governments, is not sufficiently tailored to contexts (for example related to poverty, nutrition and political economy), affecting the focus, scope and buy-in to IFAD nutrition projects.
- IFAD's targeting and coverage is generally informed by nutrition criteria and includes poor farmers (with a strong emphasis on women) and the most food insecurity vulnerable areas. While Indigenous Peoples were not systematically included among the target groups, positive examples were found in Brazil and Nicaragua.
- Addressing obesity and overweight is not yet part of IFAD investments focusing on nutrition though its importance is clearly recognized by the global nutrition community.
- Lack of nutrition expertise in the design mission and limited involvement of external partners in the design phase, affect the quality of design of nutrition sensitive projects.
- Guidance and tools to support nutrition design and implementation are of good quality but insufficiently known by IFAD staff.
- Strong efforts over the recent years resulted in enhanced attention to nutrition in the context analysis. However, the extent to which nutrition is considered at the project design, is included in work-plans, and has a resource allocation, varies and often depends on the availability of grants or co-financing opportunities.
- Despite the introduction of the criteria with IFAD11, classification of projects as NS and non-NS has not been fully accurate as several projects classified as non-NS were still found to have a nutrition relevance.

III. Coherence of IFAD's efforts for delivering on nutrition (EQ2)

80. This chapter reviews evaluation evidence against EQ 2 on the coherence of IFAD's efforts in delivering on nutrition. It consecutively discusses findings with respect to IFAD's comparative advantage in nutrition (Section A); IFAD's partnerships (Section B); IFAD's policy engagement at global and country level (Section C); IFAD's efforts at knowledge generation (Section D); and the use of grants and cofinancing (Section E).

A. IFAD's comparative advantage in nutrition

81. This section of the report examines perspectives from within and beyond the organisation on IFAD's comparative advantage in nutrition.

82. **Key comparative advantages of IFAD highlighted by different actors reflect an opportunity to maximize IFAD's positioning on nutrition.** IFAD holds a long track record of supporting smallholder farmers who are at the front line to produce diversified and healthy foods, with a focus on improving their access and intake, while also supplying markets in food deficit locations. This contributes to a relationship of mutual trust with governments and donors.[100] Reflecting on IFAD's role in nutrition, external partners value the increase of nutrition actions in investments, the consistency of IFAD's work with smallholder farmers and farmer organisations, the direct entry point with governments (particularly the Ministry of Agriculture), the ability to mobilise significant resources, and capacity to access remote areas where some agencies do not operate (including in fragile states).

83. **United Nations agencies acknowledge the important role that IFAD plays in nutrition.** Interviews at global and country level revealed that FAO, WFP and UNICEF recognise the important role that IFAD plays in nutrition. This positioning is also reflected in the strategic documents of the FAO[101] and WFP,[102] which recognise IFAD as a strategic partner, including for nutrition.[103] Overall, IFAD, FAO, WFP and UNICEF share a common vision on the urgent need of tackling global malnutrition and ensuring sustainable healthy diets, although with different approaches and entry points (see comparison in Annex V.A). UNICEF is exclusively focused on a global response to maternal and child malnutrition working on health, water and sanitation, education, and social protection to improve access to nutritious diets to end malnutrition in all its forms.[104] WFP, as the world's largest humanitarian organization, has a critical role in ensuring access to food and addressing malnutrition in emergency and humanitarian contexts, although its focus has been broadened to also include actions related to the root causes of malnutrition so that communities can become more resilient. Thus, in addition to the humanitarian response, currently WFP's work also includes actions centred on social protection, school feeding, climate resilience, inclusion and productive food systems.[105] FAO's overall approach to nutrition focuses on addressing malnutrition through food-based approaches, agri-food systems and safe, affordable, sustainable and healthy diets. As can be observed, FAO's approach and entry points for nutrition are very similar to those proposed by IFAD. Addressing nutrition through this prism involves numerous technical areas such as access to land, agriculture, fisheries, natural resource management, rural employment and finance, social protection,

[100] Evidence from Country Case Studies.
[101] FAO (2021). FAO's Strategic Framework 2022-2031
[102] WFP (2021). WFP Strategic Plan 2022–2025
[103] For example, WFP's Strategic Plan mentions that "Engagement with FAO and IFAD, which covers a broad spectrum of analytical and operational work to improve food security in both the humanitarian and development spheres, is essential as WFP strives to accelerate progress to achieve SDG 2 and in the follow-up to the food systems summit" (WFP 2021, WFP Strategic Plan 2022–2025, p.36)
[104] UNICEF (2020). UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030
[105] WFP (2013). WFP Nutrition Policy; WFP (2023). WFP Strategy to improve diets and address malnutrition 2024 - 2030

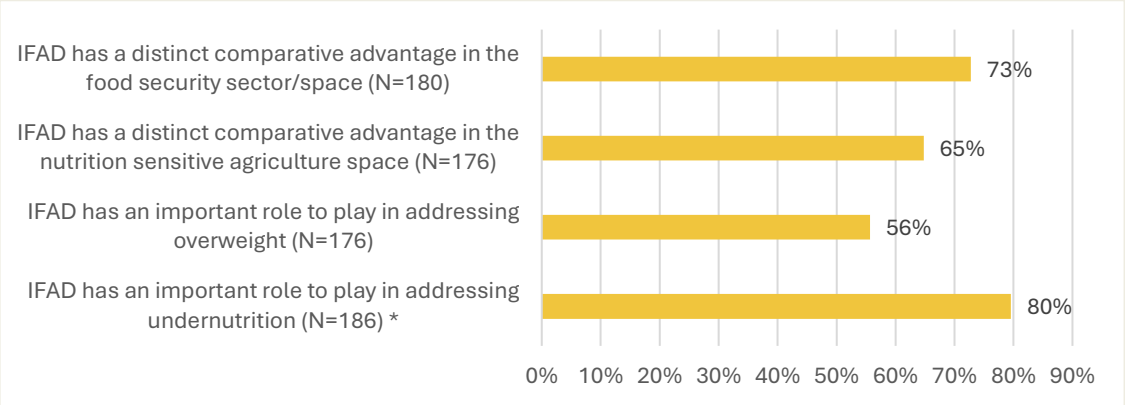
environmental sustainability, among many others. FAO has the advantage over IFAD of having extensive technical capacity in most of these areas, linked to its multiple technical divisions[106] and large number of staff. In turn, IFAD has the advantage over FAO of managing a large rural investment portfolio, with a potential to scale up innovations and foster inclusive rural transformation through its financed projects.[107] Potential complementarities have well been recognized by partners in both organisations interviewed for this TE, and strategic documents have been developed. The cooperation at the global level is reportedly well organised and effective, while the cooperation has not always been translated into tangible country level efforts (see Section III.B).

84. **Approaches of other United Nations Agencies provide insights for IFAD to rethink its positioning and enhance its partnerships in nutrition and maximise opportunities.** Stakeholders brought up some opportunities where IFAD can partner with other United Nations agencies to strengthen its positioning on nutrition. For example, partnering for institutional and policy development, an area in which FAO is very strong and recognised, as pointed out in interviews. As shown in Section III.D, this has been, however, a pathway that is still little followed in IFAD's investments in nutrition, although foreseen as a key entry point in the NAP towards creating an enabling environment through the formulation of public policies, the development of laws and regulations or strengthening institutions and governance mechanisms for nutrition. Another area where IFAD may partner with FAO is regarding capacity-building for nutrition. For example, there is only one course on "nutrition-sensitive agriculture" available on the "IFAD's E-learning Portal",[108] while the "FAO E-learning Academy" offers dozens of courses on this subject, including in several languages and some with certification.[109] The same is true for WFP, which even has a specific portal for nutrition (WFP Nutrition's Learning Platform).[110] WFP and FAO are also very strong in advocating for and sharing knowledge on nutrition, another area that IFAD can explore as an opportunity to maximize it's positioning in nutrition.[111]

85. **IFAD has not yet been able to clearly articulate how its entry points can contribute to nutrition so that it can maximise its comparative advantage.** The clear majority of IFAD and project staff that responded to the survey were of the view that IFAD has an important role to play in addressing undernutrition (nearly 80 percent), with 39 percent agreeing and 40 percent strongly agreeing (Figure 6).[112] Respondents also attribute a strong comparative advantage in the food security sector, and somewhat lower/less prominent role in the nutrition sensitive agriculture space. Just over half of respondents also suggested an important role for IFAD in overweight (significantly less than other areas of suggested comparative advantage). Supporting smallholder farmers and working on agriculture, rural development, and value chains are recognized by respondents as key entry points to addressing nutrition, but interviews with IFAD staff at regional and country level suggested that IFAD has not yet managed to articulate how its work can contribute to nutrition. Several interviewees said that IFAD needs to improve the rationale behind its strategy to address nutrition so that the process of negotiating with governments on nutrition is stronger and more straightforward.

[106] Currently FAO has 18 technical divisions, all of which cover topics relevant to nutrition, in addition to a specific division centred on Food Security and Nutrition (ESN Division).
[107] See "FAO and IFAD: Complementarity and cooperation", available at https://www.ifad.org/documents/48415603/49744833/FAO+IFAD+Complementarity+and+cooperation.pdf/fee9dda6-e794-12ab-4f83-14658916b92e?t=1726644848376
[108] https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/e-learning?mode=search&catTopics=39130767
[109] https://elearning.fao.org/
[110] https://cdn.wfp.org/nutrition/nutx/
[111] For example, a search for 'nutrition' and 'food security' on the IFAD portal found 94 publications (https://www.ifad.org/en/knowledge-and-data), while the FAO portal found more than 270 publications (https://www.fao.org/publications/en/) and the WFP portal more than 400 publications (https://www.wfp.org/publications).
[112] Evaluation survey results

Figure 5
IFAD's role in nutrition – percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree with the statement



Source: TE Nutrition electronic survey

86. **At country level IFAD is not perceived as a nutrition actor, particularly in the eyes of governments, but the duration and scale of investments are opportunities that can contribute to maximize its positioning.** The interviews conducted in several of the case studies, showed that IFAD at country level is not yet perceived as a nutrition actor, and this was also an issue raised during interviews with IFAD staff: "Governments do not recognize IFAD's comparative advantage in nutrition, and we fall behind WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR and FAO". Interviews also showed that there is still a lack of understanding of NSA concepts and approaches by governments, which also explains the views expressed. Nevertheless, the case studies pointed to some differentiating aspects of IFAD's investments compared to other agencies that can be seen as opportunities to maximize its positioning. One of those aspects was the duration and scale of investments, when compared to nutrition interventions led by other agencies which have shorter timeframes and are smaller in scale. This could potentially allow more time to achieve results, which is of particular importance for nutrition related work.

87. **IFAD's operating model puts constraints on the extent to which the organization can maximize its comparative advantage.** As discussed later in this report (see Section IV.D), there are significant challenges in translating the numerous mainstreaming themes to be covered by IFAD supported projects into effective project design and implementation, including internal human capacity constraints. IFAD's operating model, with limited funds for technical staff and the narrow size of the grant portfolio and supplementary funds mobilised (which have an important complementary role to IFAD's own funding - see Section III.E and V.A) are critical areas that constrain the extent to which IFAD can play a strong complementary role in nutrition.[113] Finally the fact that IFAD is dependent on government endorsement for nutrition can be a significant constraint in translating perceived comparative advantage into practical attention and priority to nutrition in design and implementation (see Section III.B on Partnerships). Limited IFAD's country presence and capacity issues also affect the extent to which IFAD can engage in policy development (see Section III.D on Policy Engagement). Annex V.C provides further elements from the CCS to support evidence on IFAD's comparative advantage at country level.

88. **Internal coherence has been affected by the mismatch of the approaches adopted by investments vis-à-vis the global nutrition narrative that places nutrition within the sustainable food systems.** The number of COSOPs and

[113] As a multi-lateral donor, IFAD's operating model, its fiduciary strength, and the existing formal agreements with member states, allows to raise significant amount of financial resources for agriculture investments. This lays the basis for IFAD to attract additional funding opportunities in the form of grants to complement loan investments, e.g. co-financing through GAFSP or EU, or supplementary funds provided by the Norwegian, Canadian or German Government.

nutrition-sensitive projects has been growing steadily (see Section II.B), in alignment with the pledges of the global agenda and IFAD's corporate commitments on nutrition (Section II.A). However, the approaches followed by projects have not been coherent with the current global discourse relating to achieving sustainable healthy diets through food systems transformation because they are based on dispersed and isolated activities and fail to take a systemic approach, which has a negative impact on results (see Section IV.B) and reduces IFAD's internal coherence on nutrition.

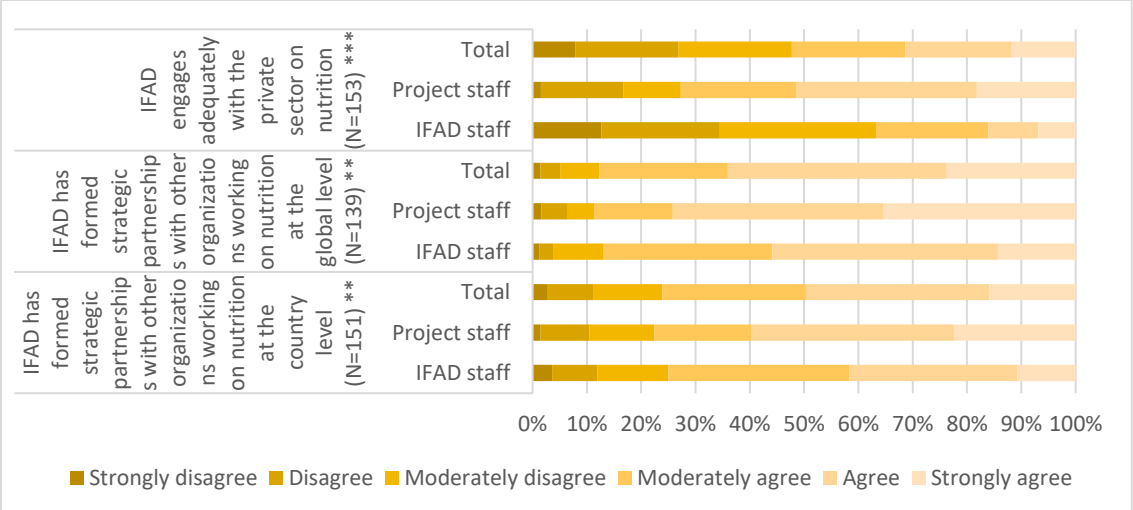
B. Partnerships

89. This section considers how effective IFAD has been in identifying and pursuing partnerships at different levels, and how these partnerships have been supported.

90. According to the NAP 2019-2025, IFAD should take strategic partnerships as the cornerstone of its operations, leveraging these for financing, knowledge, advocacy and influence at the national, regional and global levels. Partnerships are also an essential part of IFAD's scaling-up strategy. By working with partners, IFAD should leverage the impact of its investments and enhance their sustainability. Partnerships at the country level are identified as particularly relevant for nutrition, given that the causes of malnutrition are multidimensional and require interventions across sectors. The NAP stresses that IFAD should therefore facilitate partnerships between agriculture and other sectors – particularly health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene.[114]

91. **At global level there has been an effort towards enhancing collaboration with other partners/entities to maximize synergies in mainstreaming nutrition.** The survey results confirm that IFAD's partnerships for nutrition are perceived by staff to be more effective at global level rather than at country level. Indeed, 56 percent agree or strongly agree that IFAD has formed strategic partnerships with other organizations working on nutrition at the global level; 42 percent of IFAD staff considers that IFAD has formed strategic partnerships with other organizations working on nutrition at the country level; and only 16 percent agrees that IFAD engages adequately with the private sector on nutrition.

Figure 6
Results of the e-survey on Partnerships



Source: TE Nutrition electronic survey

92. According to interviews, such efforts have expanded with the adoption of IFAD's NAP and have continued throughout the replenishment cycles. Examples of partnerships for nutrition where IFAD has been active include the Committee on

[114] NAP 2019-2025, p.26

World Food Security (CFS),[115] the United Nations Nutrition under the SUN Movement, the United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub[116] and the participation in the Tokyo Nutrition four Growth (N4G) Summit 2021. Other collaborations include the State of Food Insecurity and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report with the other RBAs, UNICEF and WHO, and the development of FAO e-learning course on sustainable value chains for nutrition with WFP, Bioversity and CIAT.[117] However, with few exceptions, the globally established partnerships have not necessarily been translated into country level partnerships for joint actions. Annex V.C provides CCS evidence on IFAD's partnerships for nutrition at country level.

93. **At global level, there is an opportunity for IFAD to deepen its partnership with the World Bank on nutrition.** IFAD has a Memorandum of Understanding with the World Bank to partner on specific items and has already various co-financing projects with the World Bank. IFAD is also engaged with the World Bank's Global Challenge Programme on Food and Nutrition Security. In 2017, the World Bank Investment Framework for Nutrition set the stage for transformative nutrition investments, culminating in strong donor and country commitments at the 2021 Tokyo N4G Summit. The recently published World Bank Investment Framework for Nutrition (2024) further underscores the importance of the agriculture interventions and analyses potential actions and their costs.[118] This more robust move towards financial commitments to nutrition on the part of the World Bank presents an opportunity for IFAD to deepen its strategic partnerships by complementing resources and extending investments with mutual benefits for both International Finance Institutions, particularly focusing on nutrition. The African Development Bank is another important actor working on nutrition investments.

94. **At country level, the extent to which IFAD has developed strategic and operational partnerships for nutrition varies and evidence shows mixed results.** From the sample of CCS there are cases where fruitful partnerships have been established with government institutions, service providers, academia or international organisations (see Box below). However, in various countries partnership challenges reflect the fact that government departments prefer to manage the funds loaned or granted themselves, for example: in Indonesia, funding channelling limited the possibility of establishing direct partnerships with external agencies; in Egypt, limited partnerships were implemented on the ground and an untapped potential for synergies between IFAD and development partners was identified; in Indonesia, the projects visited do not present any external partnership on nutrition, all actions in this area were implemented by government agencies, primarily the Ministries of Health and Agriculture. While IFAD can suggest partnerships, the project's owner is the government which decides which partnerships to invest upon.

Box 5
Examples of successful partnerships at country level

Bangladesh: partnerships with FAO and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) for technical support to Project Management Units (PMU and with the Foresight Initiative (Oxford and Wageningen University) for policy dialogue.

[115] The CFS has a permanent Secretariat which includes staff from FAO, IFAD and WFP. Its task is to support the Plenary, the Bureau and Advisory Group and the HLPE in their work.
[116] The UN Food Systems Coordination Hub is hosted by FAO on behalf of the United Nations system, supported by the leadership of the FAO Office of SDG's which has a direct report line to the Office of the FAO Director-General. Resources come from through the provision of staff and financial resources from FAO, IFAD, the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UN DCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), WFP and the World WHO.
[117] FAO e-learning Academy course "Sustainable food value chains for nutrition" was developed jointly with IFAD, WFP, Bioversity International and CIAT.
[118] World Bank 2024. Investment Framework for Nutrition 2024.

Benin: partnership with the Directorate for Food and Applied Nutrition (DANA) for the development of IFAD's nutrition awareness strategy and the monitoring of activities, and with the WFP for support to school feeding.

Brazil: partnerships with different actors (e.g. CSOs and social movements, universities, public institutions, etc.) to support beneficiaries' inclusion in public policies related to nutrition, especially the Food Acquisition Programme (PAA), the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE), the National Agroecology Policy and the National Technical Assistance Policy.

Burkina Faso: projects established partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations for nutrition related activities such as nutrition education and awareness raising.

Mozambique: partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) for nutrition promotion activities (e.g. campaigns, awareness-raising actions, trainings, and SBCC).

Source: Country case studies

95. **At country level the extent of collaboration with United Nations agencies varies and reflect opportunistic rather than strategic considerations.** For example, in Benin IFAD has created an effective partnership with the WFP for school feeding, but links with other agencies, such as actors supporting the education sector have not been sufficiently developed despite the obvious complementarities that school feeding can only be effective to contribute to educational outcomes where quality education services are provided.[119] In Burundi, apart from a dedicated partnership with WFP on school feeding (supply of milk), IFAD has made only very limited progress in collaborating on joint programmes with other United Nations agencies. In Burkina Faso partnerships with FAO and WFP were established but not based on the added value that these agencies could bring which limited Government interest in continuing the collaboration. In Laos IFAD has an established partnership with WFP, however, UNICEF, the other members of the SUN network, as well as the World Bank and the European Union (EU) have all been important players in nutrition, but IFAD has not maintained functional partnerships with them, despite the intentions expressed in the COSOP and project design documents.

96. **At country level, United Nations agencies express a desire for stronger collaboration with IFAD in the area of nutrition, but this is constrained by internal factors and remains to be further prioritized.** Interviews with the United Nations agencies suggest that they are interested and willing to collaborate with IFAD in the area of nutrition and leverage their complementarities (particularly FAO, WFP and UNICEF), given the large volume of financial resources of IFAD funded projects. However, establishing collaboration and effective partnerships have been challenging as IFAD operates differently from other Rome Based Agencies (RBA) as it provides loans to Governments and thus the latter are the decision makers for partnerships.[120] Factors affecting the effectiveness of RBA collaboration identified by the 2021 Joint RBA evaluation include: the global, regional and country contexts which present a spectrum of support and constraints for RBA collaboration; interactions between the RBAs and their Member States through governance processes which reveal mixed understandings, motives and priorities with regard to RBA collaboration; administrative and programming

[119] IFAD has provided financial support to the World Vegetable Centre to establish school gardens in the schools benefiting from the WFP school canteens, which could have been complemented with technical support from the FAO for the centre, but did not materialise. Collaboration with other agencies such as UNICEF and WHO remains non-existent for the time being, that could be useful to reinforce dimensions not covered by IFAD such as WASH and attention to children in school. It is also worth mentioning that an agreement between IFAD and FAO headquarters has made it possible to fund a project implemented by FAO in Benin ("increasing water productivity for nutrition-sensitive agriculture: 2021-2023), but this has not resulted in joint work on the ground, despite the geographical overlap of this project with other projects.

[120] With specific reference to IFAD the evaluation points out that "The key principle in IFAD funding is that its loans, although typically designed and managed with strong IFAD input, are used at the borrowing government's discretion (within the terms of the loan). IFAD cannot influence the allocation of these loan funds (which are the vast majority of its funding) so that they are used for activities by FAO and WFP, for example." (FAO, IFAD and WFP, 2021, p. 68.)

processes and procedures which are a significant obstacle to RBA collaboration; and insufficient resources provided for RBA collaboration.[121]

C. IFAD's efforts at knowledge generation and management

97. This section of the report examines IFAD's efforts at knowledge management in nutrition, looks at whether these are commensurate to the needs of the organization and its partners, and examines whether these efforts are effectively supporting its work.

98. In the NAP, knowledge management is identified as one of the critical action areas for IFAD to move forward with the nutrition agenda. IFAD's knowledge management evaluation defines knowledge management as "the systematic management of the generation, sharing, use and brokering of substantive knowledge through tools and practices at organizational and individual levels with a view to enhance IFAD's role and contribution to rural transformation globally and in partner countries".[122] According to the NAP 2019-2025, IFAD should improve generation, packaging, dissemination and use of evidence on nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems, the NAP also summarises knowledge management focus areas.[123]

99. **There are visible growing corporate efforts to generate knowledge for nutrition.** IFAD HQ has produced numerous different knowledge products as well as financed research that responds to IFAD`s specific needs such as the research series on food systems. A large share of the knowledge products has been financed through grants. The knowledge products cover areas such as strategic and operational frameworks, operational guidance, tools and trainings, research, thematic papers and *How To Do Notes*. Since 2016, a total of 25 videos, 14 reports, 12 podcasts, 12 studies, six *How to Do Notes*, six guides and 18 other products were developed (see Annex III.E for the list of a selection of products). The IFAD-International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) co-publication, Nutrition-sensitive Value Chains: A guide for project design (2018-19) is a good example of how teams across IFAD departments can work together in different specialties to produce an evidence-based knowledge tool. Knowledge products developed informed the strategic discussion and decision and provided operational guidance for mainstreaming nutrition at the country level. IFAD has also taken steps to understand knowledge flows within the organisation by commissioning a study that investigated how knowledge flows to, and through, IFAD to inform nutrition-sensitive programme and project design.[124]

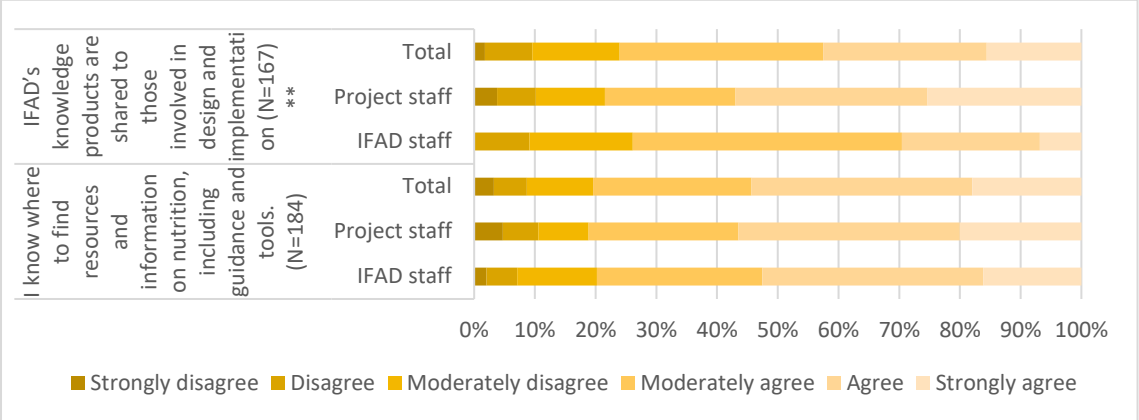
[121] FAO, IFAD and WFP 2021. Joint evaluation of collaboration among the United Nations Rome-Based Agencies. Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7289en (section 2.4: finding 8,9,11 and 12).
[122] IFAD (2024). Corporate-level evaluation on IFAD's knowledge management practices.
[123] NAP 2019-2025, p.27-28: The NAP also states that IFAD should develop a clear and operationally relevant research and knowledge agenda to support the effectiveness of nutrition mainstreaming. It should also 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.
[124] McLachlan, M. Garrett, J. Grigoletto, R. Kennedy, A. Portelli, S. (2022) Translation and Use of Knowledge In Nutrition-Sensitive Projects at IFAD.

Figure 7
Nutrition Publications

Source: IOE based on information provided by the nutrition team

100. **Most IFAD and project staff are aware of and know where to find nutrition knowledge products.**[125] The e-survey conducted showed that one third of IFAD staff (30 percent)[126] and a higher number of project staff of IFAD funded investments (57 percent) agreed or strongly agree that knowledge products were shared with those involved in design and implementation[127] and the majority of respondents (54 percent) said they knew where to find resources.

Figure 8
Knowledge Management



Source: TE Nutrition electronic survey

101. **The IFAD corporate system for managing nutrition knowledge products is not adequate.** An accessible, repository for managing knowledge products and facilitating their application does not exist.[128] Although users of products may know where to find them, the system is not standardised or user-friendly. In particular, while globally managed knowledge products are published and therefore more easily accessible, the country level products and knowledge generated are not aggregated and remain insufficiently accessible (for example some may not be

[125] The Nutrition Team at HQ send products to regional level who then distribute them.
[126] 16 percent strongly agreed, 25 percent moderately agreed and 24 percent agreed.
[127] IFAD staff: 7 percent strongly agreed, 44 percent moderately agreed, 23 percent agreed. Project staff: 25 percent strongly agreed, 22 percent moderately agreed, 32 percent agreed.
[128] Key information interviews.

online) and not systematically disseminated. [129] As one informant stated: '*Knowledge management often depends too much on the goodwill of project managers and country teams, rather than being a standardised part of IFAD's system'*. This aligns with findings of the recent IFAD knowledge management evaluation which recommends that *"more adequate and easy-to-access knowledge repositories would enable staff to share operational experiences more effectively*".[130] The Knowledge Flows study found that "*Rather than having access to an efficient, user-friendly and integrated system to promote knowledge flows and use, finding and using knowledge was largely left to individual initiative and the experience of staff members.* The study also emphasized that a substantial volume of evidence and knowledge is created, but that these resources are *"not systematized and therefore not readily available to project teams for use in project design and implementation*".[131] The study highlighted that most of the reporting emphasis is on progress against targets and that there is very limited attention to generating deep learning and including learning from failed projects.[132]

102. **Knowledge management efforts insufficiently draw from country implementation experience, and the use of knowledge products to inform the design and implementation of projects is not systematic.** The Knowledge Flows study found that there is a need for more project-based knowledge and case studies, a point that was also raised at the self-assessment workshop. Capturing the knowledge generated and available in the countries to inform policy and implementation at country level, to strengthen knowledge sharing between countries and regions and to feed into knowledge generation at a corporate and global level could be stronger.[133] Although there have been efforts to foster peer-to-peer learning, such as the recent regional events that brought together project and IFAD staff from different countries to share experience as well as Nutrition Labs conducted in the LAC region (see section V.A), there is also a view that comprehensive learning processes from projects within IFAD is not done systematically. The Benin country case study found insufficient effort has been made in terms of knowledge management in the area of nutrition whilst in Egypt the country office lacks a strong knowledge management strategy with clear responsibilities and dedicated budget and little emphasis was generally given to nutrition. In Bangladesh the country team worked on communication including events on nutrition, but there is no structured knowledge management on nutrition. In Indonesia, innovative practises[134] set up to compensate for nutrition-related budget shortfalls identified during the CCS were not documented nor shared with other NS projects. The Knowledge Flows study notes that knowledge use in design and implementation depends on effective access and uptake which are influenced by time, government commitment and priorities, and adaptive capacity,[135] particularly of consultants, PMU members and implementing agents.

103. **External stakeholders do not see IFAD as a producer of knowledge on nutrition sensitive agriculture.** Though IFAD contributed to generate global knowledge products on nutrition, none of the external informants for this evaluation view IFAD as a go-to resource on nutrition sensitive agriculture. IFAD has also missed an opportunity to produce a robust document that highlights how its investments in nutrition-sensitive agriculture can impact sustainable healthy diets. This is related to IFAD's difficulty in collecting reliable evidence and

[129] IFAD did establish a Rural Solutions platform (https://ruralsolutionsportal.org/en/about) but it was not widely referred to in interviews
[130] IFAD (2024) Corporate-level evaluation on IFAD's knowledge management practices p. v.
[131] McLachlan, M. Garrett, J. Grigoletto, R. Kennedy, A. Portelli, S., Translation and Use of Knowledge In Nutrition-Sensitive Projects at IFAD p.34.
[132] McLachlan, M. Garrett, J. Grigoletto, R. Kennedy, A. Portelli, S., Translation and Use of Knowledge In Nutrition-Sensitive Projects at IFAD p.
[133] Key informant interviews.
[134] Establishment of community vegetable gardens as local multisectoral and gender-balanced platforms, READSI project.
[135] Ability of people to change what they do based on new knowledge.

demonstrating nutrition results (see Section V.B on Monitoring and Reporting). A product of this kind would make an important contribution to the global evidence base and enhance IFAD's credibility and reputation in this space, making it more attractive for grant-providers.[136]

D. Policy engagement at global and country level

104. This section reflects on evaluation evidence related to the extent to which IFAD's policy engagement has sought to advance the nutrition agenda.

105. Policy engagement and advocacy are with partnerships one of the action areas for IFAD's work in nutrition. According to the NAP 2019-2025, IFAD should support regional and IFAD Country Office (ICO) staff to engage in global, regional and country-level policy dialogue, as well as in institutional coordination platforms to bring about more effective and efficient nutrition governance. As stated in the document, ultimately this should result in more coherent policies and programmes; highlight the role of nutrition-sensitive agriculture in reducing malnutrition and transforming food systems to deliver sustainable healthy diets; promote collaboration and convergence; and ensure adequate levels of funding for nutrition.[137]

106. **At global level, IFAD's policy engagement on nutrition and food systems has positively evolved over time**. As shown above (para 40) IFAD's engagement in policy dialogue at global level has evolved and IFAD is perceived as having made an important contribution at this level. For example, for the Summit on Sustainable Food Systems IFAD contributed by developing a guide with core messages and evidence on the importance of a system-based approach.[138] IFAD, jointly with UNICEF, FAO, the World Health Organization (WHO) and WFP prepared and submitted commitments at the Tokyo N4G Summit 2021[139] including actions ranging from prevention of stunting, wasting, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity to ensuring access and availability to healthy diets for beneficiary populations. IFAD has been an active contributor to the Global Nutrition Report (GNR), the SOFI report, the Rural Development Report and the development of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition.[140] IFAD also has kept a regular participation and contribution to policy dialogue at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP), which provided opportunities to share IFAD's nutrition and food systems approach. For example, for the COP 29 IFAD's engagement focussed on empowering communities for resilience, transforming food systems for climate action among other themes.[141]

107. **At the national level, IFAD is only partially taking advantage of existing opportunities to influence the sustainable food systems agenda**. Very few examples were found where IFAD is deliberately seeking to influence the dialogue around sustainable food systems. Exceptions included Brazil where IFAD, together with the Ministry of Agriculture, has launched an award on "Traditional Agricultural Systems" aiming at raising awareness and influencing the policy agenda on this topic, and Bangladesh where IFAD funded the Foresight Initiative, which leads a policy dialogue around food systems transformation, jointly with GAIN and other international partners. In Zimbabwe, IFAD contributed to organizing a nutrition policy dialogue workshop with the Ministry of Agriculture and other stakeholders including FAO, UNICEF and WFP and, as part of the Food Systems Summit, engaged with the Ministry of Agriculture in the development of the Agriculture and Food Systems Transformation Strategy 2025-2030. The absence of other examples

[136] Key informant interviews.
[137] IFAD 2019c., p.2.
[138] https://www.ifad.org/documents/d/new-ifad.org/foodsystems_paper-pdf
[139] https://nutritionforgrowth.org/events/
[140] https://www.fao.org/cfs/vgfsn/en/
[141] https://www.ifad.org/en/w/events/ifad-at-cop29

highlights that IFAD is missing opportunities to enhance its visibility and influence the food systems agenda at country level and also suggest a lack of IFAD participation in national strategic discussions on nutrition.[142] IFAD's decentralisation process presents an opportunity to increase engagement in policy dialogue at country level. The following Box summarizes some missing opportunities identified.

Box 6
Missing opportunities for IFAD engagement in the sustainable food systems agenda at country level

Benin: GAIN is actively collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture to develop a roadmap for transforming food systems that involves all stakeholders, except IFAD; the Ministry of Agriculture expects that IFAD could support the development and implementation of its national roadmap for the transformation of food systems, which is behind schedule.

Laos: IFAD had a small contribution to the dialogue on "Pathways to Sustainable Food Systems" but is not consistently participating in the United Nations country team where the discussion has been gaining momentum, pushed by FAO and WFP.

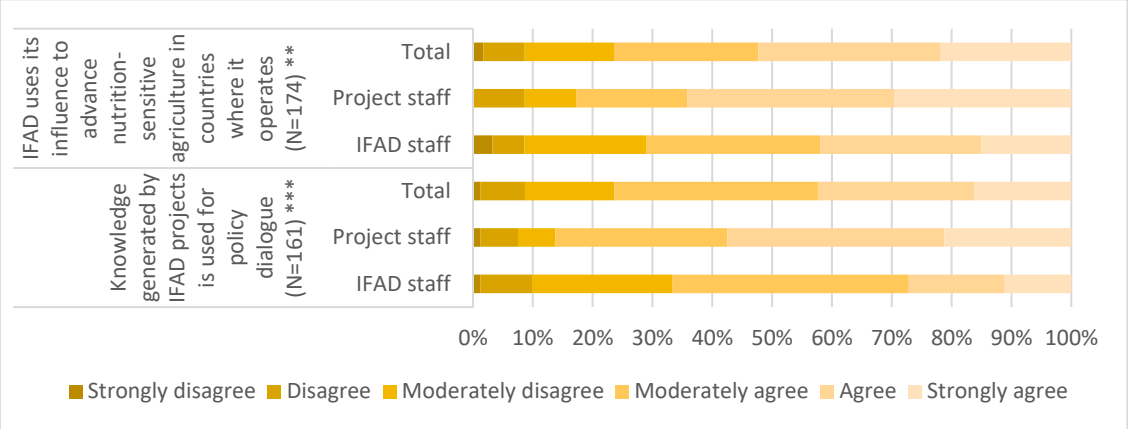
Mozambique: IFAD is not actively participating in the national discussion towards the definition of the "Road Map for Sustainable Food Systems", currently being led by the Ministry of Agriculture with active participation of FAO, WFP, GAIN and the Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA).

Source: Country case studies

108. **IFAD's investments at country level are not sufficiently contributing to creating an enabling environment for nutrition.** While the NAP 2019-2025 identifies the external enabling environment as a key pathway for nutrition-sensitive project design, in most cases this option has not been prioritized, which limits the opportunities to engage in policy dialogue and support the development of public policies and strategies.[143] Only a small proportion of nutrition-sensitive projects covered in the CCS have included policy dialogue, advocacy, multi-sector coordination and capacity strengthening among all activities that are critical to promote an enabling environment to nutrition. The survey results also corroborate this trend as only 27 percent of IFAD staff consider that knowledge generated by IFAD projects is used for policy dialogue; and only 42 percent of IFAD staff believe that IFAD uses its influence on advancing nutrition-sensitive agriculture in countries where it operates.[144] Nonetheless, a few exceptions were identified where opportunities to explore this dimension further have been grasped. For example, in Zimbabwe one of the projects contributed to the bio-fortification policy dialogue which ultimately resulted in the government passing the "National Food Fortification Strategy" 2022-2026; and in Laos, IFAD in partnership with WFP supported the implementation of the National Nutrition Strategy (through the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) funding). In Brazil the policy dimension has been systematically included in IFAD investments, not only in terms of participation in policy dialogue, but also by consistently promoting effective integration of beneficiaries into public policies (e.g. Food Acquisition Program and the National School Feeding Program).

[142] Findings from the CCS.
[143] E.g. as reflected in CCS in Benin, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Mozambique, Bangladesh.
[144] Evaluation survey results.

Figure 9
Results of the e-survey on policy dialogue



Source: TE Nutrition electronic survey

109. **Limited staff presence in country affects IFAD's capacity to play a role in policy development and influencing.** An important (and obvious) reason for the low level of policy engagement is a practical one, i.e., in countries where IFAD does not have an ICO engagement is limited (e.g. Benin and Zimbabwe) and even in countries with ICO, staff are stretched and face challenges. Limited staff affects the capacity to participate in multi-stakeholder platforms for nutrition[145] and means little contact with the various stakeholders, less access to and sharing of information, less ability to influence the policy agenda, fewer opportunities to establish partnerships and identify synergies or complementarities for nutrition. Mozambique is a paradigmatic case that illustrates this gap. While there are various nutrition-related platforms[146] and while IFAD is technically a member of these, its effective participation is rare, mainly due to limited staff. A similar situation was evident in the CCS for Burundi, Burkina Faso, Bangladesh and Indonesia, where IFAD's participation in the existing nutrition-related platforms was also reportedly very low. Annex V.C provides further elements from the CCS to support evidence on IFAD's policy engagement for nutrition at country level.

110. **IFAD is missing an opportunity to use its privileged position vis-a-vis government to strengthen commitment of ministries of agriculture and other sector ministries to the nutrition agenda.** Interviews with project staff and government officials revealed that there is still a need to work on strengthening the multi-sectoral engagement in nutrition. Interviewees stressed there is an opportunity to take advantage of IFAD's relationship of trust with the Ministries of Agriculture to progressively open up new opportunities to strengthen policy engagement and collaboration between sectors on nutrition. In fact, in several CCS there are national nutrition policies or strategies that are multisectoral, i.e. with responsibilities clearly assigned to multiple sectors. This could be an entry point for IFAD engagement with national governments, for increasing allocation of loan resources to nutrition, and an area where IFAD leverage its comparative advantage. Stronger engagement with United Nations agencies on nutrition at country level (including the United Nations country team, joint programming and reporting and UN-Nutrition) are also areas for improvement,[147] a view which is shared by donors.

[145] This includes platforms of food and nutrition security development partners, the various SUN groups, and other multi-partner country coordination platforms.
[146] For example, the Technical Secretariat for Food and Nutrition Security (SETSAN); the Scaling Up Nutrition Initiative (SUN Initiative); the Nutrition Partners Forum, created in 2011, which brings together UN agencies and other development partners and donors in the area of nutrition; or the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSAN), created in 2019.
[147] Self-Assessment workshop.

E. The use of grants in support of nutrition priorities

111. The final section of this chapter considers the extent to which grants have been instrumental to mainstream nutrition in the organization and the degree to which they have been appropriately used. The focus is on grants used for non-lending nutrition priorities - such as research, analytical work, evidence generation, capacity development or policy engagement - and grants used to complement loan investments to achieve their nutrition-sensitive objectives.

112. **Grants have been instrumental in gathering experience, providing evidence and building partnerships for mainstreaming nutrition and have been highly relevant to IFAD's commitments.** As laid out in the preceding chapters, over the recent decade, IFAD has strengthened its strategic commitment to nutrition in alignment with the global evidence on the importance of sustainable healthy diets for improving nutrition and the central role of the agriculture sector and the food system. Nutrition grants, either funded through donor supplementary funds or IFAD's regular budget, helped to inform operations, consolidate best practices and provide evidence on the importance and options for mainstreaming. Grants also assisted in demonstrating linkages to other mainstreaming subjects, mainly climate change and indigenous people and have allowed IFAD to expand its network of partners by including relevant research institutions increasing external coherence to nutrition matters. Grant objectives included operational as well as strategic support to the formulation of IFAD's country level investments as well as consolidating evidence and fostering global partnerships for mainstreaming nutrition in the agriculture sector. The majority of the grant objectives were found by the TE to be relevant and coherent to IFAD's strategic objectives of mainstreaming nutrition.

113. **Grants helped clarify the role of the agriculture sector in mainstreaming nutrition, brought out opportunities for doing so, and, hence, contributed to the formulation of IFAD's strategic directions in nutrition.** Grant funded research and analysis has helped to create a better understanding of effective approaches to mainstreaming nutrition. The knowledge products developed contributed to strategic discussions on nutrition mainstreaming. Examples of these include: the promotion of underutilised and indigenous foods,[148] climate and nutrition nexus,[149] leaving no one behind focusing on adolescent girls and the importance of healthy nutrition during adolescence,[150] and addressing overweight and obesity in Lower Middle Income Countries (LMIC) through rural development.[151] Knowledge products developed created an awareness on the importance of nutrition and healthy and sustainable diets and were the basis for IFAD's strategic discussions for the incorporation of nutrition into numerous larger scale agriculture investments.

114. **Grants provided opportunities for making IFAD's loan investments nutrition sensitive, but they were often delayed, limiting opportunities for integration in relevant components.** Grants were available through the supplementary funds provide by Norway for a total of nine projects in seven countries, as well as the EU and GAFSP co-financing, in four of the ten CCSs. The

[148] Bioversity Grant Report, Grant No. 2000002361 Strategic support on mainstreaming nutrition in IFAD's investments Phase II, Period: 17 September 2018 - 28 February 2019, Final Report and Handing Over of Grant Deliverables.
[149] Wageningen University, Climate adaptation and mitigation measures for nutrition co-benefits in IFAD investments in Zimbabwe, Pre-design mission report. June 2021; product available at: https://www.wur.nl/en/show/wcdi-literature-review.htm; country reports were as well released for Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Ghana.
[150] Grant name: "Leaving no one behind making the case for adolescent girls (Adolescent girls)" - ID 2000002378, workshop report available at: Leaving no one behind: making the case for adolescent girls.
[151] Climate change and nutrition linkages in IFAD's investments - ASAP2 (Climate change and nutrition) - ID 2000003246. Product available at: https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/-/addressing-overweight-and-obesity-in-lmics-in-rural-development-and-food-systems-country-mapping

grants complemented IFADs loan investment.[152] These experiences contributed to enhancing the understanding of nutrition and to gaining experience with nutrition sensitive agriculture within IFAD and among government partners. However, synchronising timing between loan and grant assistance has been extremely challenging. In various cases the grants were not available during the strategic country planning or during the design stage. For example for the SIRP in Zimbabwe, the grant funded nutrition component only started in year four of the loan investment. The same is true for projects such as PADAAM/Market Gardening Development Support Project (PADMAR) in Benin and PAPFA in Burkina Faso which received complementary grants support for nutrition while already in full implementation. In Mozambique, nutrition education activities were retrofitted in IFAD investments in the frame of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 1c Programme. Similarly for Bangladesh where with support of GAFSP co-financing, the RAINS project was formulated as a separate project complementing the initial loan investment SACP. A regional grant, the FoodSTART, implemented in five countries also faces challenges of this kind.[153] In Mozambique, the grant was supposed complementing the Inclusive Agrifood Value Chain Development Programme (PROCAVA), but it became active very late when some of the loan investments were already well advanced. Across these examples, the late addition resulted in standalone nutrition activities, which were added on to ongoing lending investments, hence missing opportunities to fully integrate nutrition across the project. This retrofitting limited the potentially wider impact of the grant.

115. **Grants strengthened IFADs nutrition partnerships and enabled IFAD to contribute to the global and national policy dialogue.** Grants have been pivotal to providing the resources that have resulted in strengthened strategic partnerships for mainstreaming nutrition in agriculture investments (e.g. Bioversity, FAO), strengthening linkages to other mainstreaming themes (e.g. Slow Food International), and contribute to a global and national dialogue on food systems, with funding going to universities (e.g. Foresight Initiative for Food Systems Transformation). Furthermore, IFADs regular financial contribution to the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition and the UN-Nutrition, have been significant and have been funded through a grant deriving from IFAD's regular budget.[154]

116. **Challenges have been faced in ensuring close and systematic linkages between grant-funded country research or capacity support and loan investments.** Valuable and meaningful country level research or capacity development support has been funded through grants. All grant proposals reviewed included provisions for linkages to specific IFAD country investments. However, the evaluation did not find evidence that such linkages were well established during the implementation. Reasons include the high workload and limited human resources at the ICO or PMU, and insufficient traction by the ICO, PMU or Government partners for the research subject. Grant funded research has also not been coordinated closely with other development partners, limiting options for an uptake and incorporation of results into the IFAD's country investments, and reflecting a missed opportunity for building stronger partnerships.[155]

[152] Norway provided funds to 9 projects in 7 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Malawi, Myanmar, Sudan and Zimbabwe), co-financing by GAFSP in Bangladesh and Lao, as well as by EU in Burundi and Mozambique (Source: Annual Reports).
[153] FoodSTART (2000001639) faced significant challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic, political unrest, and climate-related droughts and floods in some target countries (Source: GSR).
[154] Annual contribution to the UN-Nutrition.
[155] Grant: Strengthening capacity of local actors on nutrition-sensitive agri-food value chain in Zambia and Malawi, ID 2000000974; Project-Friendly Metrics and Technologies for Better Results in Nutrition-Sensitive Projects, 2000002023; Strategic support on mainstreaming nutrition in IFAD's investments, 2000001833; Linking Research to Impact: Increasing the Effectiveness of Agriculture and Food Systems in Improving Nutrition, 2000001514; Climate change and nutrition linkages in IFAD's investments - ASAP2, 2000003246; Strengthening Nutrition in Agri-food Systems in East and Southern Africa through Root and Tuber Crops, 2000001639.

117. **Evidence that grants triggered longer-term government financial commitment to NSA is limited.** Grant-funded NSA implementation helped bring momentum, which enhanced understanding and resulted in good opportunities for a scale up. However, there is little evidence that this triggered Government interest or commitment for an uptake through loan financed investments. In Zimbabwe, for example, a grant supported the integration of nutrition into SIRP, the success led to nutrition being integrated in the design of the new investment (HEEP), yet, those planned nutrition activities were largely underfunded. In Burkina Faso, despite the successful results of the Norway funding, there has been hesitation in integrating nutrition activities in the larger investment operations something that was then made possible only when GAFSP co-financing resources had been made available.

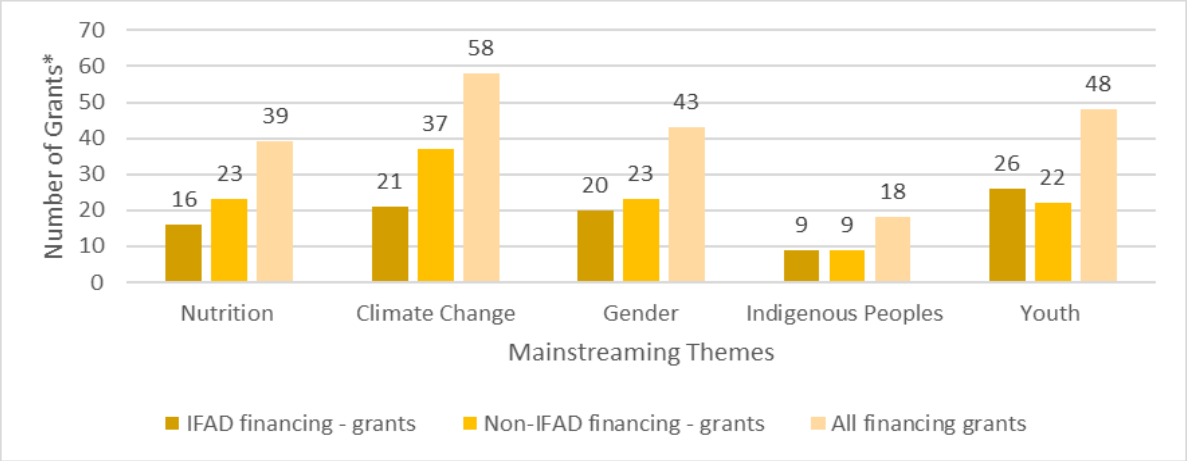
118. **The management, transfer and application of the knowledge generated through grants - both at global or country level - is weak.** Products developed through grants are not systematically shared and systematic management of knowledge and follow-up is missing. A standard reporting template and or a data base for final products is not available. Hence, application, transfer into new investments, and a sustained use of the results is more limited, reflecting the findings under knowledge management in the preceding section of this report.

119. **Monitoring and evaluation or quality assurance for grants analysed has not been common, which bears the risk of in-adequate quality of results.** Global grants analysed under this TE, implemented by international partners with similar mandates, resulted in high-quality products, as reported in the knowledge management discussion above. Differently, grants implemented at country level often faced challenges indicating a need for closer guidance, supervision and oversight by IFAD. The system of quality assurance for grants is mainly desk based with related limitations. Out of the 13 grants analysed in depth, only one had an external evaluation and only one had a steering and technical committee established. These two examples are good practice that can contribute to enhancing learning and ownership, and could be adopted more widely.

120. **Grants funded through IFAD's regular budget are not prioritizing nutrition**. Since 2016, out of a total of 92 grant agreements funded through IFAD's regular budget, 16 grants were used for the thematic area of nutrition, while 26 grants were used for youth, and 21 grants available for matters of climate change (see Figure 11).[156] The IFAD's selecting committee responsible for approving direct grants does not set or influence the thematic use of IFAD's grant resources and there is no effort to compensate for the lack of external funding for nutrition vis-à-vis other mainstreaming themes. For example, of the 13 grants analysed as part of this TE, only two were entirely funded through IFAD's regular grants[157] and five were co-financed, where IFAD contributed the biggest share, six were entirely funded by donors.[158]

[156] It should be noted that although some grants may have nutrition related activities or impacts, they are not profiled necessarily in OBI system as such.
[157] Grants entirely funded by IFAD regular budget: Empowering Indigenous Youth and their Communities to Defend and Promote their Food Heritage (through Slow Food International); Strengthening capacity of local actors on nutrition-sensitive agri-food value chain in Zambia and Malawi (through McGill University).
[158] Co-funded by IFAD and the grant recipient were linking research to impact, through Bioversity; strengthening nutrition in agri-food systems with the International Potato Centre; increasing water productivity for NSA with FAO; project-friendly metrics for better results with McGill; linking family farming with school meals with co-financing of WFP and the Government of Guatemala.

Figure 10
Number of IFAD financed and non-IFAD financed grants by mainstreaming theme (2016 onward)



* Note: Numbers include multiple counting where the grant contributed to multiple mainstreaming themes.
Source: OBI provided by ODE (former QAG division)

Key points:

- There are clear points of IFAD comparative advantage which are acknowledged by external partners. These include the significant volume and long duration of its investments (compared to that of other partners), and the fact that it combines both a financing and technical capacity as a specialized agency.
- The close relationship with national governments' institutions – and in particular with those operating in the agriculture sector - is also a valued attribute which gives it a privileged position and potential entry points.
- A range of internal challenges prevents translating the recognized comparative advantages into design and implementation to give sufficient emphasis to nutrition. These challenges include the large number of mainstreaming priorities which IFAD subscribes to, IFAD's operating model, narrow size of the grant portfolio, limited country presence, and the fact that national governments decide on the priorities to be funded through loans.
- IFAD's partnership efforts at global level are relatively strong and positively assessed by internal and external stakeholders.
- At country levels, partnerships emerge as being weaker and more fragmented. This reflects limited involvement of partners in programme design, as well as issues related to IFADs limited presence and reduced staff capacity in many contexts.
- Partnership with United Nations agencies is mostly characterized by opportunistic rather than strategic considerations, though there is an expressed desire for closer cooperation.
- IFAD has made progress in terms of knowledge generation over the evaluation period, but there is limited aggregation of lesson learning and knowledge generated is not sufficiently used to inform design and implementation.
- At international level, IFAD involvement in the nutrition food systems dialogue and priority setting has evolved positively.
- At country level IFAD is missing an opportunity to use its privileged position vis-a-vis government to strengthen commitment of Ministries of Agriculture and other sector ministries to the nutrition agenda. This reality also reduces the extent to which it can react to, and take advantage of, opportunities to influence the sustainable food systems agenda.
- While constituting a small portion of the portfolio, grants have provided critical resources in support of designing and implementing NSA interventions which complement and enhance IFAD's country level investments.
- Grant funded research and evidence generation is, however, only weakly linked to design of NSA loan investments. Monitoring and quality assurance of grants is weak as is management of knowledge generated by grants.

IV. Effectiveness of IFAD's nutrition pathways and contribution to nutrition results (EQ 3)

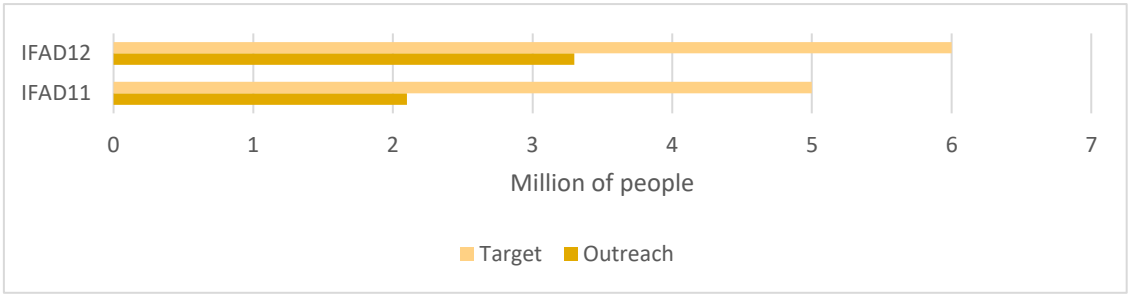
121. This chapter reviews evaluation evidence against EQ 3 on the effectiveness of IFAD's nutrition pathways and contribution to nutrition results. It starts with an assessment of the outreach of nutrition-sensitive projects (Section A); followed by an overview of the main pathways implemented in IFAD-funded operations to support the nutrition agenda and contribution to nutrition results (Section B); innovation (Section C); and finally, synergies with other IFAD's cross cutting themes and areas of work (Section D).

A. Outreach

122. This section discusses people reached by IFAD with nutrition support globally and regionally and project targets for the last two replenishment cycles.

123. **IFAD has not reached its planned beneficiary targets for nutrition.** The IFAD11 replenishment introduced the indicator "number of persons/households provided with targeted support to improve their nutrition (millions)" as a new indicator with a baseline to be provided in 2020.[159] The target was fixed at 5 million. Figures provided by the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) (in particular, by the former Operational Policy and Results Division (OPR)) indicate that only 42 percent of this target was reached. The target was increased for IFAD12 to 6 million and the Report on IFAD's Mainstreaming Effectiveness (RIME) shows that only 55 percent has been achieved to date.[160] The analysis of data available indicates that nutrition sensitive projects are not reporting systematically on this indicator, which shows gaps in the monitoring and reporting systems.

Figure 11
Number of persons/households provided with targeted support by IFAD to improve their nutrition (millions)

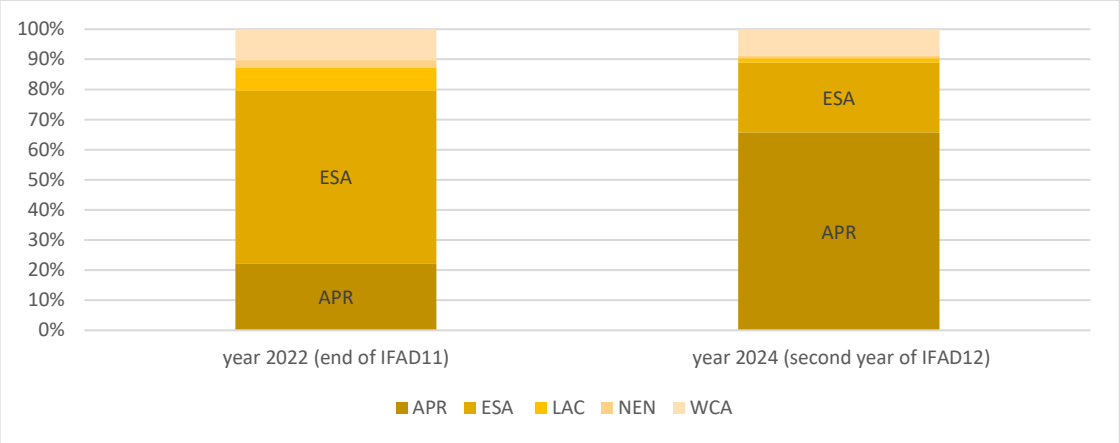


Source: ODE

124. **The largest number of beneficiaries provided with targeted support to improve their nutrition were in ESA and APR.** As shown by the figure below at the end of IFAD11, of the 2.1 million people provided with targeted support to improve their nutrition 67 percent were in the ESA region reflecting predominantly the contribution of five projects,[161] while for IFAD12 of the total 6 million people, 66 percent were in the APR region. These differences across regions are difficult to explain as for example also WCA concentrates a high number of NS projects. The significant variation across regions should trigger an internal discussion on the reasons which might include availability of resources for nutrition activities but also reporting capacities.

[159] Report of the Consultation on the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources, Leaving no one behind: IFAD's role in the 2030 Agenda, Agenda: 6 Date: 14 February 2018 Distribution: Public Original: English. https://webapps.ifad.org/members/gc/41/docs/GC-41-L-3-Rev-1.pdf
[160] https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/142/docs/EB-2024-142-R-22.pdf
[161] SAPP is contributing 39 percent of the total.

Figure 12
Distribution by region of persons/households provided with targeted support to improve their nutrition – IFAD11 (end of cycle) and IFAD12 (second year)



Source: ODE

125. **Nutrition sensitive activities target a relatively small percentage of IFAD project beneficiaries.** The figure below shows the percentage of population targeted with nutrition sensitive activities on the overall population targeted by IFAD projects for IFAD11 and IFAD12. The percentage has increased from 12 to 17, yet remains relatively small, and raises questions around the capacity of IFAD to achieve the RMF impact target of people with improved dietary diversity.[162] Indeed, according to the 2021 IFAD's Impact Assessment, the target of 12 million people with improved dietary diversity (of 10 per cent or more) is the only target not met during IFAD11 and one of the reasons provided was the limited number of people reached with nutrition support.[163,164]

Figure 13
Population targeted with nutrition support in IFAD overall portfolio

* Figures include data for all projects approved in these cycles. Results related to additional financing approved in each cycle are linked to projects in the cycle when they were initially approved. For example, results related to additional financing approved in IFAD12, for a project first approved in IFAD11, are aggregated in the figure for IFAD11.

Source: ODE Based on ORMS Logframe report 25 November 2024

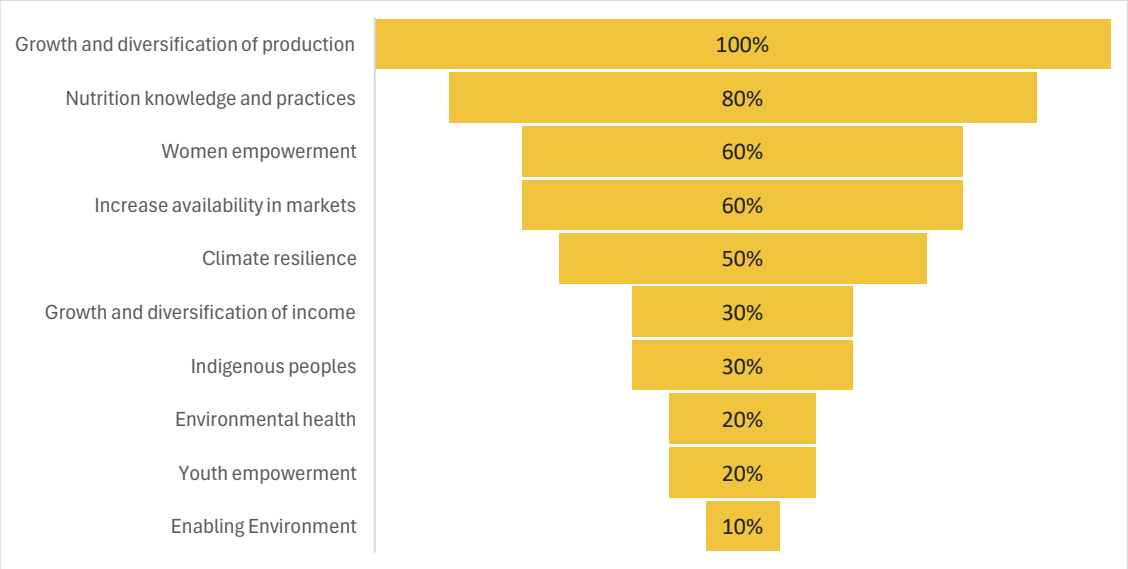
[162] The target population for the overall portfolio is 85.6 million for IFAD11 and 34.9 million for IFAD12 of which 9.6 million and 5.9 million respectively will be provided with targeted support to improve nutrition.
[163] The other IFAD RMF impact indicators were: increased income, improved production, improved market access and greater resilience.
[164] The other main reason mentioned is that projects assessed during the IFAD11 Impact Assessment (2019-2021) were designed 7-8 years prior, which was before nutrition became a mainstreaming theme (in 2019). Thus, these projects were not designed to have nutrition objectives.

B. Effectiveness of pathways in contributing to nutrition results

126. This section provides an assessment of results along the pathways implemented in IFAD-funded operations (according to the IFAD's list of project level outcomes provided in Annex III.D) to support the nutrition agenda and their contribution to nutrition results. To define the list of pathways the evaluation used the list of project level outcomes as presented in the NAP, with the outcomes representing the entry points for these pathways. In this section the entry point refers to the whole pathway.

127. IFAD's investments include various pathways implemented to address nutrition. Annex V.B provides evidence in the form of an overview of the typology of activities found in the 10 country case studies under the various nutrition entry points. Overall, the two most frequent pathways identified in the CCS conducted are 'growth and diversification of production' and 'nutrition knowledge and practices' (see Figure 15). These are present simultaneously in almost all nutrition sensitive projects. Women's empowerment, climate resilience and increased availability in markets are also included in more than half of nutrition sensitive projects. A similar pattern was found in the analysis carried out by IFAD's nutrition team of typologies of nutrition activities covering the whole portfolio of nutrition sensitive projects (see Annex IV.B).[165]

Figure 14
Main entry points for nutrition identified in the 10 Country Case Studies (percentage)



Source: Evaluation Team analysis

128. **IFAD's investments included a strong focus on growth and diversification of food production, but evidence of a direct link to improved diets remains limited.** Growth and diversification of production addresses an important dimension of diets as it contributes to the availability and stability of food at household level, which may lead to a positive effect on diets if linked to household consumption. Aggregated data from the IFAD11 Impact Assessment showed an average increase of 23 percent in beneficiaries' food production capacity, against a target of 20 percent. All IFAD investments assessed in the present evaluation included this pathway (see Annex V.B), namely through diversification of production through the introduction of vegetables, poultry, and other nutritious foods (e.g. yellow cassava, purple maize, orange-flesh sweet potato, bio-fortified

[165] The categories of activities and sub-activities, as presented in annex, were designed by IFAD's nutrition team, who also clustered the investments in IFAD11 under each activity and sub-activity. For IFAD10 and IFAD12 projects, categorization was conducted by IOE, drawing on the database developed by the nutrition team to identify nutrition-sensitive projects, and project design reports.

crops). Less frequently, production-related interventions also cover the distribution and improvement of livestock practises, which were more related to the increase of income, as explained below. FGDs conducted[166] and some project reports[167] revealed that these activities have contributed to increasing household food production and availability. However, evidence of improving diets through changes in dietary diversity (MDD-W) is difficult to demonstrate. For example, in Zimbabwe, beneficiaries of SIRP produced and consumed more maize than non-beneficiaries,[168] but in terms of other grains (sorghum was the most produced and consumed followed by finger millet) there were no notable differences between project beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries; in Indonesia, while beneficiaries of the Integrated Participatory Development and Management of The Irrigation Sector Project (IPDMIP) indicate increased vegetable consumption, the evidence does not conclusively link this to improved dietary outcomes. To a large extent the lack of evidence can be explained by the weaknesses in monitoring and reporting systems and scarcity of data available (see Section V.B). Even so, in cases where data is available, the evidence that this is happening is limited.[169]

129. **The effectiveness of growth and diversification of food production pathway has been affected by implementation in isolation of some activities.** Homestead gardens are the most common approach in IFAD investments to increasing food diversification and the CCS revealed that these have potential to trigger dietary changes in households (see Annex V.J). However, the CCS showed that homestead gardens have often been implemented in isolation, without sufficient connection to marketing or complementary income-generation activities or access to financial services to ensure that households can buy seeds where needed. In addition, while the focus on vegetable production can be relevant, it reflects a narrow vision of diets that overlooks the importance of integrating nutrition interventions across the broader investment to achieve more comprehensive and sustainable improvements in diets. In Djibouti, where the main focus of the investment was on support to pastoralist activities, the establishment of vegetable gardens was probably not so relevant given water scarcity and in the final assessment there is no mention of outcomes related to this activity. In Egypt (PRIDE), the promotion of vegetable gardens in the arid districts was an innovative approach, however, its effectiveness was affected by lack of access to water.[170] While homestead gardens are in general implemented along with nutrition education and SBCC for nutrition, the CCS found cases where this was not the case.[171] For example, in Indonesia, the IPDMIP project initially proposed nutrition mainstreaming through homestead gardens – especially via women's groups – to encourage households to produce and consume their own food. However, during implementation, the approach was shifted to value chain development support to paddy and horticulture production and specific nutrition education sessions were not included.

130. **The pathway towards increased availability of food in markets requires better alignment with nutritional objectives.** IFAD has made several investments in this direction (e.g. rehabilitation of market infrastructures

[166] Notably in Benin, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Brazil.
[167] Despite the scarcity of statistical data, it was possible to find data in some reports, for example in Burkina Faso with 98 percent of beneficiaries reported increase in food production; or in Laos 79 percent of the beneficiary farmers reported "very satisfied" with the adoption of new technologies that led to increase in food production.
[168] Beneficiaries consumed 2781.11kg of unfortified maize and they reserved 1121.94 kg for future use, which was more than that reserved by non-beneficiaries (408.46 kg) (NORAD Endline Survey Report).
[169] For example, in Bangladesh the SACP mid-term impact assessment survey reported that beneficiaries consumed their self-produced food for 10.65 months in the last year, whereas it was 10.63 months as recorded during baseline survey and among the control group consumption of self-produced food in the last year was for 11.28 months, whereas in baseline control groups, it was 11.35 months.
[170] For example, only 65 percent of SIRP beneficiaries reported access to a homestead garden by the end of the project (NORAD Endline Survey Report).
[171] According to the NS projects analysis within IFAD NAP 2019 2025 assessment conducted by ECG Nutrition team, Homestead gardens and small livestock are the most common activities and they usually come along with nutrition education (89%) and SBCC for nutrition (61%).

strengthening farmers' groups improving market information systems, supporting processing units, etc.)[172] – see Annex V.B. However, despite the well-perceived guidance on nutrition-sensitive value chains, value chains for nutrition are currently limited. Value chains either do not fully consider how the crops or livestock can impact nutrition or the entry points along the whole value chain are not sufficiently explored. There is also a potential trade-off between the "income" and "nutrition" objectives. For example, in Burundi the dairy value chain highlights tensions between commercialization and household consumption, as milk is mostly sold to cooperatives for incomes, which is then sold to private actors such as IFAD-supported bakeries for making cakes, reducing its direct nutritional impact. While these initiatives show promise, challenges persist in raising producers' awareness which is essential to encouraging the consumption of a minimal part of their nutrient-rich production, but also for evaluating nutritional impacts at consumer level.

131. **Market-related interventions highlight the need for better integration of nutritional objectives at all stages of value chains.** CCS surfaced only marginal evidence of efforts at addressing processing and conservation,[173] and food safety[174] as part of nutrition interventions. While cooperatives supported by IFAD play a key role in processing and marketing, their contribution to nutrition, namely in terms of awareness, remains underutilized. In Benin (PADAAM) or Indonesia (IPDMIP), for example, cooperatives had the potential to serve as platforms for disseminating nutrition messages, but this was not integrated into the projects assessed.[175] This situation reflects that IFAD has not supported governments in working toward more cohesive nutrition strategies that engage all actors within supported value chains to maximize the nutritional impact of investments.

132. **IFAD could more strongly respond to the growing interest of both consumers and value-chain stakeholders in organic value chains.** In Benin, although initiatives such as the production of organic fertilizers and the promotion of sustainable farming practices have been implemented, their scope remains limited. For example, the processing of products like organic tomato puree (PADMAR) or purple maize flour (PADAAM), while promising and healthier for consumers, lacks institutional and technical support to ensure compliance with organic standards and traceability, and therefore scaling up. In Indonesia (IPDMIP), efforts to promote organic farming are often confused with campaigns focused on balanced diets, complicating consumer understanding of messages around dietary diversification and the fight against obesity. The observed challenges in communication and support mechanisms reflect a broader difficulty in establishing coherent organic value chains adapted to local contexts. Through its projects, IFAD still insufficiently integrates organic certification, capacity building for farmers' organizations, and support for processing infrastructure. In this respect it could draw inspiration from integrated approaches observed in Brazil, where agroecological fairs and participatory certification systems have helped to enhance the value of local products for consumers through markets, or in Egypt,

[172] It is worth noting that the evidence is getting strong related to the importance of local markets influencing diets: Nguyen, T. T., & Qaim, M. (2025). Local and regional food production diversity are positively associated with household dietary diversity in rural Africa. Nature Food, 1-8.
[173] In Benin (PADMAR and PADAAM) and Indonesia (READSI) investments targeted cooperative-based processing units to promote food processing and add value to agricultural products. In Burundi, the IFAD portfolio has made important, targeted investments to support cooperatives, in particular as related to access and management of storage facilities and processing equipment/machinery. However, this has not included deliberate actions to encourage the consumption of products by producer households (e.g. milk).
[174] According to the NAP 2019 - 2025 assessment conducted by the ECG nutrition team, 39 percent of the 164 projects included a food safety approach, which rises to 49 percent for IFAD11 and IFAD12 NS projects. Considering NSVC projects in IFAD11 and IFAD12 (17 projects), 82 percent (14 projects) included food safety activities.
[175] In the case of Benin, a supported private company has become a key player in the production and marketing of enriched products, such as flour for complementary feeding of young children. However, its marketing strategy raised concerns due to the distortion of nutrition messages, conflicting with WHO recommendations on exclusive breastfeeding for children under six months. GAIN has initiated a SUN business network in Benin to enhance the nutritional vision and capacities of private companies, which can be an opportunity for IFAD to engage.

where the PRIDE project contributed to the certification of organic products and the promotion of marketing associations. In Brazil, in PDHC II and PSA projects, IFAD's investments also successfully supported organic certification processes[176] in order to give these groups of farmers organic quality seals to obtain better prices on the market and healthier products for consumer, as well as when selling their produce to public markets.

133. **Income growth and diversification have been supported through various approaches, but their translation in nutrition outcomes is challenging.** The CCS presents different examples of activities with positive effects on incomes (e.g. Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) which enabled beneficiaries, particularly women, to diversify their income sources by investing in income-generating activities, promotion of small-scale livestock farming, etc.) – see Annex V.J. However, these interventions frequently lack accompanying SBCC focused on nutrition, financial literacy, as well as gender equality training[177] which is crucial to ensuring that women beneficiaries have the knowledge and decision-making power to translate income gains into nutritional improvements for their families. In this regard, the use of the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) approach is very relevant. CCS met with communities benefiting from nutrition activities which also were involved in GALS trainings, however a formal integration of nutrition in the GALS methodology in the CCS was not observed. Experiences exist in other countries, but these have not been extensively documented.[178]

134. **Private sector support and job creation offer opportunities for income growth but require better integration of nutritional objectives.** In Egypt, the Programme for Rural Irrigation Development (PRIDE) supported women-led small enterprises, particularly in food processing, while promoting climate-smart agricultural practices to diversify incomes and increase the economic resilience of households. However, these initiatives did not benefit from incorporating nutrition awareness components to maximize their impact on household well-being. In Benin (PADAAM project), some cereal cooperative members, and employees from supported private companies have received SBCC on nutrition, which is interesting in trying to reach a mass effect for adoption of good practises.

135. **Nutrition education for changing nutrition behaviours is among the most frequent pathways and includes a wide range of appropriate and effective approaches.** Nutrition education and SBCC were among the most frequently applied nutrition pathways integrated into IFAD's lending investment - out of the ten countries evaluated, seven applied that pathway – see Annex V.B. Common approaches to nutrition education and SBCC were the development of nutrition education and communication materials, training of trainers and/or trainings or awareness raising sessions at the community level, particularly focussing on the importance of diversifying diets, introducing more nutritious foods, but also on changing attitudes and practices related to health, hygiene and nutrition. Sessions were mainly directed to women, and in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Laos, there was an assumption that women transfer that knowledge to men. In Zimbabwe, local recipe books were developed and applied to guide value chain actors to understand and prioritize nutrition goals. Cooking demonstrations were also seen as a promising approach and were successfully applied in Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Indonesia and Zimbabwe. These demonstrations introduced new recipes to maximise the use of locally available food sources and promote the use of

[176] In Brazil PSA and PDHC II projects adopted the Participatory Guarantee Systems (SPG), a participatory certification model where producers must be organised into groups that are responsible for assessing the group's organic compliance.
[177] In Burundi for example, women declared that distributed animals and related incomes fall under the property of the husband.
[178] Examples of these experiences provided by the Nutrition Team include the SRLP project in Sudan, the PIPARV-B in Burundi, and the KELCOP in Kenya which integrated nutrition modules into GALS. Also in LAC, the approach "integrando brechas", aiming at empowering women, includes a nutrition module.

neglected and underutilised species. In Bangladesh (SACP), capacity development of agriculture extension workers, who also delivered the nutrition education, has taken place. In both Bangladesh (SACP) and Zimbabwe (SIRP), such nutrition education was delivered in cooperation with the health sector. However, across all countries studied, the cooperation with other sectors and actors (e.g. the health sector) was mostly opportunistic, focusing on specific trainings or workshops, and missing opportunities to establish institutional linkages to synchronise efforts and strategically work together on shared principles and objectives in support of nutrition goals.

136. **Though there is an assumption that nutrition education and SBCC resulted in improvements in household diets, the evidence base is still weak.** Methodological challenges limit opportunities to demonstrate the impact of the actions on knowledge (KAP) or consumption (MDD-W). Only a few of the studies conducted in countries covered by the evaluation allowed for a solid interpretation of achievements. The SIRP annual outcome survey reported that about two thirds of the households were reached by at least two educational messages, while changes in KAP were inconclusive. The Norway-funded end-line survey, also conducted in Zimbabwe, showed very positive results. Here respondents who benefited from nutrition education were more likely to consume an adequate diet (79.9 percent) compared to those that did not benefit from the interventions (69.0 percent). In Bangladesh (SACP), results of a project survey revealed that changes achieved were rather small. For Indonesia (READSI), improvements in knowledge, and in Lao PDR (AFN II) improvements in practices for healthy diets and meal preparation have been reported, but not systematically assessed. Overall, it is difficult to draw evidence-based conclusions on the effectiveness of IFAD's nutrition education on improving diets, due to methodological issues in the measurement of indicators, [179] while global evidence is strong. Methodological shortcomings are being recognised by IFAD, and despite limited resources, efforts are underway to gradually improve capacities and ensure coherence in the application of the methodology. Options to engage external, global or regional, capacity holders, with solid experience monitoring and evaluating dietary changes, including in using MDD-W and KAP, might be considered for the future.

137. **Promotion of women empowerment has been effective in addressing nutrition concerns.** Women empowerment is an important pathway to nutrition and typically includes promoting women's access to productive resources, time and labour-saving technologies and income-generating activities. Interesting examples in this regard were found in various CCS. In Burkina Faso, with additional funding from Norway, activities aimed at reducing women's workload were introduced, including the supply of dryers, the construction of boreholes, donation of improved stoves, and the provision of mills and rickshaws but on a limited scale. The field visits and available data confirmed that these activities had a very significant impact on the time available to the women.[180] In Burundi, testimonies from beneficiaries of the PRODEFI project highlighted the importance of working on the economic empowerment of women and raising awareness among husbands about the importance of nutrition for all members of the household. In one project in Indonesia, [181] the systematic inclusion of women in farming field schools focusing on food crops (traditionally managed by men) produced results in terms of shared decision-making between women and men on these crops within households. In Brazil (PSA and PDHC II) innovative women's empowerment methodologies have been promoted by IFAD's investments with a significant increase in women's

[179] Section V.B below gives details of M&E information related to nutrition.
[180] The NORAD Endline Survey of PAPFA reports that the time used by women to collect water is less than one hour in 89.9 % of NORAD beneficiaries, against 54.7% in the control group; between 1 and 2 hours in 9.2% NORAD and 44.2% in the control group. However, due to limited funding, only the Hauts Bassins region has been able to benefit. The 10 mills and 18 dryers distributed are also insufficient for the size of the project, which is more akin to a pilot initiative.
[181] READSI project 2017-2024.

capacity over food production and consumption options, an increase in women's self-esteem and control over productive resources (see Section IV.C on innovations below). In Laos (AFN) "farmer nutrition schools" adopted a gender approach that positively enhanced knowledge of family nutrition and meal preparations (including by men). In Benin, it was possible to adapt awareness-raising messages targeting women, and projects have adopted approaches such as positive masculinity, targeting men to raise their awareness of the importance of child nutrition. In Indonesia, Farmer Field Schools were originally focused on production of crops, but the READSI project managed to merge home-gardening and nutrition education and systematically included women with benefits for knowledge and practice changes by families. In Nicaragua, the NICAVIDA project developed a model for women's economic empowerment implementing 20 business plans which included food and nutrition security, the preservation of native seeds, income generation and disaster risk reduction.

138. **Despite IFAD's priority on access to water for both climate resilience and environmental health, its importance for nutrition remains to be consistently translated into practice in investments.** Access to water has been identified by IFAD as an important pathway to nutrition, with the recognition that water is essential for a functioning food system and for rural communities to flourish, and acknowledging that small-scale farmers must be supported so they can sustainably access and manage water.[182] Rehabilitation and maintenance of water sources and incorporation of small infrastructure to improve access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene are some activities suggested by IFAD for the design of nutrition-sensitive projects.[183] However, across the various initiatives reviewed, there were considerable gaps in ensuring consistent attention to these issues. For example, an agreement between IFAD and FAO headquarters has made it possible to fund a project implemented by FAO in Benin – "Increasing water productivity for nutrition-sensitive agriculture (2021-2023)" -, but this has not resulted in joint work on the ground despite the geographical overlap of this project with other IFAD-funded projects. In Indonesia, climate change is likely to impact water availability, health and nutrition, but the CCS did not find substantive evidence of promoting access to water to strengthen resilience. In Benin, lack of access to water is a major challenge for continuous production in home and school gardens and access to drinking water is also a barrier to the adoption of good hygiene practices. In Burundi field visits showed that the WASH dimension is under-addressed, which is crucial for improving nutrition. In Laos (FNML), improving irrigation and access to clean water was not successfully implemented, as many families undertaking home gardens did not have adequate water supply to sustain them. Often water infrastructure for human consumption are not included in NS projects, in spite of evidence that it is among the interventions that contribute significantly to reducing malnutrition in rural communities.

139. The above underscores that there has been insufficient focus on water, considering the importance of water for nutrition and the important link to IFAD's climate priorities (see Section IV.D on synergies with other mainstreaming themes). On a positive note, important activities to promote access to water are present in some projects, mainly those focused on semi-arid contexts, such as in Brazil (through rainwater harvesting and storage and water reuse systems), Mozambique (construction of multi-use water access systems for consumption and irrigation), Burkina Faso (promotion of water-saving techniques in vegetable gardens), and in Djibouti with a focus on ensuring access to water. In these semi-arid regions, water activities have enabled increased production, especially through homestead gardens, thus increasing the availability of food. In addition to agricultural production, in some countries this pathway was found to have an effect on

[182] https://www.ifad.org/en/water
[183] IFAD, 2019b.

nutrition by improving access to drinking water.[184] In Nicaragua, the NICAVIDA project prioritized improving access to safe water with technical assistance provided by the state water company. These initiatives focused on the use and treatment of safe water for human consumption and for the municipalities as partners in the Territorial Plans, and contributed to the execution of investments in water infrastructure and roads rehabilitation.

140. **Nutrition has been addressed mostly through stand-alone activities with insufficient attention to other key food system components and without systematically applying a nutrition lens.** A food system comprises all the activities and elements – including environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructure and institutions – that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, along with the outputs of those activities – including any socio-economic and environmental aspects.[185] Evidence presented above shows that nutrition has been addressed mostly through stand-alone activities which do not take sufficient account of the broader food systems. Furthermore, it also shows that projects do not systematically apply a "nutrition lens" towards including a full set of explicit actions supporting measurable contributions to improving nutrition. The provided examples have shown that increasing and diversifying agricultural production must be accompanied by activities that promote sustainable healthy diets, otherwise nutritional gains will not be made. The evidence also showed that investments in access to markets need to be coupled with nutrition aspects, encouraging families to consume nutritionally rich foods, but also that these pathways should be integrated into broader nutrition strategies, which include attention among others to environmental aspects, in particular access to water, and women's empowerment as a key determinant for nutrition. NS-projects are now required to develop a nutrition strategy at the beginning of implementation, this requirement have the potential to contribute to promote a more holistic approach in mainstreaming of nutrition across the investment.

C. Focus on school-based interventions

141. This sub-section focusses specifically on school-based interventions as this is an area that has been gaining ground in IFAD's nutrition portfolio. It reflects on specific experience and opportunities in this growing area of IFAD's work.

142. **School-based interventions have been increasingly encouraged by IFAD investments for nutrition.** IFAD acknowledges that home-grown school feeding can provide well-balanced, fresh meals at school, so that every child can get the right nutrition at the right age and learn to make food choices that set them up for a life of good health, while small-scale farmers have a reliable buyer.[186] IFAD has joined the School Meals Coalition (SMC) and participates in its monthly Partner Group meetings.[187] It contributed to the SMC White Paper and the School Meal and Food system Report. In 2023, IFAD also contributed to the Concept Note on the Rome Based Agencies (RBA) Joint South-South Technical Cooperation (SSTC) Initiative on School Feeding.[188] An analysis of project design reports conducted by ECG shows that 37 projects in 28 countries planned to include school-based nutrition related activities (see annex V.F.). Activities proposed at design include linking smallholder producers to schools as a market outlet for their produce (in 25 projects); using the schools for nutrition education targeting pupils and local communities (19 projects); supporting the establishment of school gardens (18

[184] For example, in Burkina Faso, the PAPFA project allowed the majority of households to obtain drinking water from improved boreholes (i.e. 76.9 percent of beneficiaries compared to 69.2 percent in the control group) as reported in the NORAD Endline Survey.
[185] IFAD, 2019c.
[186] https://www.ifad.org/en/w/rural-voices/everyone-wins-with-school-meals
[187] Further info at https://schoolmealscoalition.org/
[188] Available at https://www.ifad.org/documents/48415603/49749059/rbas-home-school-feeding.pdf/0e9ee5df-b516-a47a-6014-127c3cf1300e?t=1726642172404

projects). As there is no central monitoring on the actual implementation, it is not possible to know if these activities have finally materialised.

143. **IFAD's school-based interventions have been of small scale and conducted mainly through the establishment of school gardens.** In most cases school-based interventions are on a small scale and mostly focusing on school gardens. Although the latter are effective in terms of sensitizing children and can have spillover effects on families, they are very narrow considering IFAD's positioning towards structuring value chains and its potential to link producers with institutional markets, such as school feeding. Furthermore, the sustainability of school gardens can be challenging. In Tunisia, the Siliana Territorial Development Value Chain Promotion Project (PROFITS) project restructured five canteens with connected school gardens but refrained from expanding due to the government's lack of interest in continuing the programme. In Burkina Faso, through NORAD grants 20 school gardens have been established of a small scale and as an isolated activity which will likely challenge sustainability. In Laos, PICSA has supported 100 school gardens, however, as observed by the Mid-term Review (MTR)"*to support a sustainable plan, in accordance with government policy, reliance on school gardens alone for school meals is not insufficient. PICSA should support District Nutrition Committee, village authorities, and Village Nutrition Committee/Parent-Teacher Associations to develop strategies, to support and scale up planned school meal activities to reach more children*." Some positive results are observed in Benin, where IFAD has created an effective partnership with WFP for school feeding. This collaboration has been particularly fruitful in the creation of school gardens (e.g. the number of schools supported has risen from 10 in the pilot phase in 2022 to around 100 with the extension of PADMAR+).

144. **There is room to invest more in linking producers to school feeding programmes.** In the IFAD13 replenishment consultation report, IFAD highlights the importance of school feeding for nutrition, health and children's education and indicates that IFAD will seek opportunities to do more in relation to linking local production to school food supply. The analysis of Project Design Reports (PDRs) shows that 25 of the 37 projects that have school-based interventions among their activities planned to link smallholders to schools as a market for their produce. Of those, fifteen projects planned to link with government sponsored school feeding programs and fourteen of them to establish a collaboration with WFP. However, only few projects (5) provide information on number of farmers and schools involved (see Table below). While for the other projects, reports available (supervision missions) do not provide such evidence or projects are too recent. This indicates that this type of intervention is not yet widespread.

Table 5
Projects reporting linking farmers to schools

Country	Project Name	Number of schools involved	Number of farmers/families involved
Bhutan	CARLEP	137	278 farmer groups
Guatemala	Linking Family farming with the school meals national programme in Guatemala (Grant)	60	35 farmer groups (308 farmers)
Guinea Bissau	PADES	110	154 farmers
Tajikistan	CASP (SFSP Grant)	28	32 farmers
Brazil	PSA; PDHC		4.918 farmers; 1709 families
Rwanda	RDDP – supply milk to schools	36	

Source: IOE based on project documents and interviews

145. **Most interventions linking farmers to school-feeding programmes are small scale or not monitored.** In Guatemala, IFAD partnered with WFP and FAO to create a local food chain enabling smallholder farmers to supply fruit and vegetables for school feeding. In Bhutan, IFAD's investments were linked with the national school feeding program and were successful in supporting family farmers to supply fresh products to school feeding, coinciding with the government's initiative to improve dietary diversity and access to food in schools. Nevertheless, in Guinea-Bissau, despite a direct agreement with the WFP since 2021, the functioning of this partnership is still cumbersome, since the Economic Development Project for the Southern Regions (PADES) needs to pay WFP to buy the food produced by beneficiaries. In Tajikistan, the project supported the establishment of greenhouses in 28 schools and 32 partner farmers have been selected to support the production. They are linked to the school with a five-year agreement to supply for free 40 percent of the vegetables needed for school feeding. In Burundi, the Value Chain Development Programme Phase II (PRODEFI II) facilitated ad-hoc collaboration with WFP for the supply of agricultural products, such as milk, to schools. In Rwanda, the RDDP piloted the supply of milk to schools and RDDP II is planning to create market linkages for Milk Collection Centers with school feeding programmes in support to the national school feeding policy and progamme.[189] However, this collaboration lacked a formal agreement and did not include an indicator for tracking results. Similarly, in Liberia, farmers involved in the Smallholder Agriculture Transformation and Agribusiness Revitalization Project (STAR-P) established links with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) for food processing. This partnership presented an opportunity to sell food to schools. However, STAR-P does not maintain a direct agreement with schools, it only connects farmers with SMEs.

146. **Brazil offers a positive example of linking farmers to institutional markets for school feeding.** In Brazil, both the Rural Sustainable Development Project in the Semi-arid Region of Bahia (PSA) and the Policy Coordination and Dialogue for Reducing Poverty and Inequalities in Semi-Arid North-east Brazil (PDHC) projects enabled farmers to access public procurement programs (Food Acquisition Programme (PAA), National School Feeding Programme (PAA, PNAE), providing them with markets for their produce. Indicators are included in the result frameworks and monitored over time which allows to capture results on farmers'

[189] RDDP PCR and RDDP II PDR.

access to public purchasing programmes.[190] Furthermore, regarding IFAD's involvements in school feeding in Brazil, IFAD trained school cooks promoting the use of locally available, healthy food for the preparation of school meals. The existence of a government school feeding programme and progress of national policies in this area are explanatory factors for the results of the initiative.

Box 7
Brazil: Integrating family farmers into institutional markets for school feeding

Brazil has some of the largest government procurement programmes for family farmers in the world. As part of the national Zero Hunger strategy, from 2003 onwards the government began buying the produce of family farmers, and since then it has been expanding policies and programmes that facilitate these farmers' access to the market. Specific legislation stipulates that at least 30 percent of PNAE funds must be used to purchase food items from family farming, thus promoting positive inclusion of this vulnerable group.[191]

IFAD's investments in Brazil are supporting the integration of family farmers (including indigenous peoples) into these institutional markets by strengthening their productive organisation, supporting them in the administrative procedures to be eligible for PAA and PNAE purchases, providing technical assistance to increase and diversify production (including organic production), among other actions. The benefits in terms of increasing family farmers' incomes are visible, as is the availability of fresh, quality food in school meals.

Source: Brazil Country Case Study and desk review

147. **Efforts towards linking smallholder farmers to school feeding programmes remain underdeveloped and represent a missed opportunity.** IFAD's comparative advantage in value chain structuring and its position as RBA alongside FAO and WFP positions it well to focus on value chain structuring. This could facilitate stronger links between smallholder producers and institutional markets and improve local supply of nutrient-rich food, while providing stable markets and incomes for smallholders. However, most projects reviewed showed that such an approach is still not in place.

D. Innovation

148. This section of the report considers evidence of contributions by IFAD to generating innovative nutrition approaches and solutions, as well as whether these are being adopted and scaled up.

149. **Innovation is not present in the NAP, and IFAD's corporate commitment to innovation does not recognize nutrition.** IFAD defines innovation as any new process, product or approach that adds value and helps to sustainably, equitably and directly impact poor rural people.[192] Innovations push boundaries, enabling IFAD to adapt, leverage emerging technologies, and unlock new opportunities.[193] However, IFAD's Innovation Strategy (2007)[194] does not refer to nutrition, and the role and importance of innovations in address nutrition is also absent in the NAP (2019-2025).

[190] This access was quantified using an indicator defined as "Families accessing public purchase programmes". According to the 2021 virtual evaluation of the Rural Sustainable Development Project in the Semi-arid Region of Bahia (PSA), it is observed that 35% of the organizations access the institutional market as the main type of partnership with public agencies through the National School Feeding Program (PNAE) as a result of the work developed by the PSA. Indicators available in the Supervision Mission Report 2023 show that 4.918 families accessed public purchase programmes (PAA, PNAE). For the Policy Coordination and Dialogue for Reducing Poverty and Inequalities in Semi-Arid North-east Brazil project (PDHC), the Supervision Mission Report 2023 reported that the project has enabled beneficiaries to access federal public policies, for example, beneficiaries considerably increased access to food acquisition programs (PAA): cumulative value of 1.709 families.
[191] Law 11.947/2009. PNAE legislation stipulates that at least 30% of the programme's resources must be invested in food purchases from family farmers. Recent national statistics show that the national average has risen from 37% in 2019 to 45% in 2022.
[192] https://www.ifad.org/en/embracing-innovation
[193] IFAD (2023). Report on IFAD's Mainstreaming Effectiveness (RIME) 2023.
[194] IFAD (2007). Innovation Strategy. Available at https://www.ifad.org/documents/d/new-ifad.org/innovation_e-pdf

150. **At country and project level nutrition innovations are clearly in evidence.** The sample of CCS revealed that there are innovations being developed in different countries and regions that have the potential to motivate communities and translate into positive results in nutrition, for example:

- In Benin (PADAAM) the promotion of purple corn, considered to be potentially rich in zinc, illustrates an innovation in dietary diversification. Another innovation was the use of a card game to explain dietary diversification with locally available foods, which is consider an effective approach, that can even be reinforced by including the new crops being promoted.
- In Mozambique (PROMER), the whole use of food products - which means the use of 'unconventional' parts of the food products for consumption such as leaves, peels, seeds – has been promoted and disseminated in rural communities with considerable success, helping to make better use of the food available in a context of scarcity, providing nutrients that would otherwise be wasted.
- In Zimbabwe (SIRP) the promotion of key-hole gardens in the arid districts utilizing greywater for addressing water shortages has been gaining attention and an innovative SBCC approach that use radio jingles and short message sending (SMS)/bulk messaging were introduced.
- In Brazil, "Traditional Agricultural Systems Award" has been acknowledged as an innovative strategy to draw attention to the importance of food systems and their contribution to the country's social, economic and cultural development (including promoting nutrition), serving as a source of knowledge and inspiration for the development of new projects and initiatives on the ground (see details in Annex V.G).[195]
- Also in Brazil, the Agroecological Logbook was created as a political-pedagogical instrument for "empowering" women by generating visibility and awareness of the importance of their own work, having as a starting point their own perception of the importance of their participation in food production and in the family income (see details in Annex V.G).

151. **Attention to documenting, systematizing and scaling up innovations has been limited**. Innovations related to promoting sustainable healthy diets are not being sufficiently systematised and disseminated. This is an obstacle to scaling up such innovations, including in other countries and regions. IFAD has established an Innovation Network as an informal space to share ideas, good practices, tools and lessons learned on how members can use innovation to improve performance and better address the needs and challenges of target groups and beneficiaries.[196] A brief assessment of the activity of this network reveals that very few initiatives or publications on innovations that have contributed to improved diets have been promoted; the network also has an initiative called 'IFAD Innovation Talks' available on YouTube,[197] but so far no session has specifically addressed diets or nutrition; only one study was found, systematizing innovations from the IFAD/EU co-funded programme 'Putting Research into Use for Nutrition, Sustainable Agriculture and Resilience' (PRUNSAR), which was implemented from 2014 to 2023 through 13 projects by eight international research organizations.[198] Barriers to

[195] PDHC II, Dom Távora, Paulo Freire, PROCASE, PSA and PVSA projects.
[196] The IFAD Innovation Network is open to IFAD staff, representatives of IFAD's members, fellow United Nations and Development Finance Institutions colleagues, representatives of academia, research centres, think tanks and the private sector, and those who wish to contribute to advancing innovation for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (https://ifad.dgroups.io/g/IFADInnovation).
[197] IFAD Innovation Talks are a series of public learning and knowledge sharing sessions, lasting one hour. They feature innovative approaches, tools, products and services developed by IFAD, its partners and the members of the IFAD Innovation Network.
[198] IFAD (2023). Catalogue of Innovations: Putting Research into Use for Nutrition, Sustainable Agriculture and Resilience programme (PRUNSAR).

innovation scale-up include weak knowledge management strategies, capacity issues, as well as language barriers. More recently, in April 2024 IFAD presented to the Executive Board a strategic paper[199] on how innovation can maximize impact. The paper is one of the very few exceptions of IFAD's efforts to systematise innovations that have contributed to nutrition results across different countries.[200]

Key points:

- There is limited evidence of efforts to systematically document, systematize and support scaling up of innovations in nutrition, in spite of CCS evidence of highlight efforts at innovation in IFAD's nutrition portfolio.
- Innovation is also absent from the NAP narrative, and IFAD's corporate commitment to innovation insufficiently recognizes innovation in nutrition, although positive examples were found at country level and a recent global paper provides evidence of nutrition results across a range of countries.

E. Synergies with other IFAD's mainstreaming themes and areas of work

152. This section of the report considers evidence of the extent to which IFAD mainstreaming themes and priorities are complementary to efforts in nutrition and contributing to results.

153. **Empowerment of women emerges as a central priority in IFAD supported nutrition interventions.** Nutrition and gender are inextricably linked - women and girls suffer disproportionately from poor nutrition and are subject to social-cultural norms related to how food is produced, accessed and consumed. Empowerment of women and youth (especially adolescent girls) is one of the envisioned project level outcomes in IFAD's NAP (2019-2025) and the use of a life-cycle approach is one of four key principles of engagement and seeks to ensure that interventions are tailored to the specific needs of women, including adolescent girls, together with other vulnerable groups. In addition, the NAP emphasizes the need to "*optimize the opportunities presented by IFAD's decentralization for closer support to operations, partnership-building and policy engagement, and for systematically analysing and addressing in an integrated manner the mainstreaming themes (namely environment and climate, gender, youth and nutrition).*" The evaluation found that in general IFAD's investments give priority to women, not only identifying them as key beneficiaries, but also defining minimum percentages for their inclusion. Evidence of inclusion of gender and women empowerment in nutrition-sensitive activities were already presented in section IV.B above.

154. **Very little evidence was found of efforts to address and include youth in nutrition interventions.** IFAD acknowledges that investing in young people is critical to food security, poverty reduction, employment, peace and political stability. Young people are also important because they can transform food systems through their capacity to innovate and adopt new technology.[201] Corporately youth are considered a key target group for tackling nutrition. However, CCS did not corroborate this as these sub-groups have not been sufficiently prioritised in the design and as a consequence in implementation. Significative evidence of inclusion of youth in nutrition interventions was only found in the Brazil and Egypt CCS. In the case of Brazil, young people have been

[199] IFAD (2024). Strategic discussion paper – Innovating to maximize development impact: How innovation enhances IFAD's delivery effectiveness. Executive Board, 141st Session. Rome, 24 April 2024.
[200] Namely: i) the use of the Gender Action Learning System in several countries as a community-led empowerment methodology that uses principles of inclusion to improve income, food and nutrition security of vulnerable people in a gender-equitable way; ii) the incorporation of micronutrient-rich small fish into aquaculture in Asian countries; iii) The "Nutri-fish ponds" in Angola that have enhanced access to nutritious diets by promoting regional fish farming for consumption in inland rural populations.
[201] See IFAD Action Plan on Rural Youth, available at https://www.ifad.org/en/w/corporate-documents/policies/ifad-action-plan-rural-youth.

systematically included as a priority target group in investments with specific strategies aimed at including young people in productive and income-generating activities, with consequent benefits for families' food security or strengthening technical skills in agriculture to increase and diversify production, particularly organic farming, which led to increases in family incomes and diversification of food consumption. In Egypt, some investments focus on youth SMEs and on enterprises developing youth centres, facilities and social infrastructure, ensuring access to finance and providing opportunities for literacy, vocational and enterprise training to increase young people's opportunities to set up their own productive agricultural businesses, with an expected impact on agricultural production contributing to the increase in nutritious food in markets, as well as food and nutrition security at household level.[202] In Zimbabwe, youth have been incorporated into the targeting strategies, but the 30 per cent target for youth was not achieved; furthermore, activities targeting youth focused on training programs to build life skills capacities, but no links to nutrition were found. In Indonesia, whilst youth were identified as a target group, site visits suggests that their engagement in nutrition-sensitive activities was not fully achieved reflecting insufficient attention to youth as a priority group.

155. **Overall, interconnections between nutrition and environment and climate change have not been prioritized as was envisioned by the NAP.** The natural environment and climate change influence the lives of poor rural people in critical ways. Sustained agricultural productivity and economic success depend on reliable access to environmental goods and services, as well as the assets and capacities to withstand environmental and climate hazards and shocks.[203] The IFAD11 agreement specifically calls for a new environment and climate change strategy and action plan to "underpin the strengthened approach to mainstreaming climate change and environmental sustainability."[204] Supporting beneficiaries to adapt to climate change is a priority for IFAD's investments and has been mainstreamed in IFAD operations. The Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP) has been instrumental in driving the ambitious climate mainstreaming in IFAD's portfolio as well as in determining the current modus operandi.[205] However, the evaluation's assessment found that the nexus between climate and nutrition was not clearly spelt out in NS projects (i.e. Benin, Burundi, Mozambique Indonesia and Laos).

156. **Positive examples on nutrition and climate change integration exist and represent experience which IFAD can build on.** On a positive note, projects in Burkina Faso have benefited from the close link between nutrition and climate change: in terms of adaptation, projects have invested in the promotion of water-saving techniques (e.g. development of rice-growing areas, wells, solar wells, etc.), techniques that help to mobilise water for production and diversification (particularly in the case of vegetable gardens). In Zimbabwe (SIRP) a climate change adaptation strategy has been applied through promotion of key-hole gardens in the arid districts. The project also promoted drought-resistant crop varieties along with conservation agriculture practices. In Egypt, interventions to address climate change were integrated in project strategies particularly with a view to address water and land scarcity (e.g. with the promotion of climate-smart farming systems and modernised on-farm irrigation).[206] In Brazil, adaptation to climate change has been tackled in the following ways: efficient, low-cost systems for capturing and storing rainwater (for human consumption and agriculture); the use of drought-resistant varieties; the recovery of traditional ecosystems in semi-

[202] PRIDE and STAR projects
[203] IFAD (2018). IFAD Strategy and Action Plan on Environment and Climate Change 2019-2025.
[204] IFAD, Report on the Consultation on the 11th Replenishment of IFAD's Resources: Leaving No One Behind, IFAD's Role in the 2030 Agenda (2018) p. 28.
[205] Further info available at https://www.ifad.org/en/initiatives/adaptation-smallholder-agriculture-programme
[206] PRIDE and STAR projects

arid areas; encouraging the preservation of Creole seeds, which are better adapted to the semi-arid context of the intervention areas. Regarding environmental concerns, a positive example is the support from the ASAP fund to the organic sector in Benin (PADMAR), including the production of organic compost and the processing of organic tomatoes, which meets a strong social demand for the production of healthy food. Also, in Indonesia (IPDMIP), the Ministry of Agriculture focuses on transitioning towards organic farming which was reflected in the technical approach of the implemented Farmer Field Schools. In Laos water-related infrastructure (for WASH and irrigation) was mainly related to climate change adaptation, or argued to be climate change adaptive, but if there was a corollary on positive nutrition impacts, it was not explicit.

Key points:

- There has been an increase in the percentage of project beneficiaries targeted with nutrition interventions in NS-projects. However, IFAD has not reached its targets on nutrition.
- Across countries there is evidence of IFAD contribution to nutrition results reflected in anecdotal evidence of changes in diets through household food consumption and increased dietary diversity as well as changes in women's' participation and workload.
- The contribution to dietary outcomes is not being adequately measured, reflecting underlying issues of quality of results measurement.
- There has been solid progress in addressing women empowerment, with selected gains in terms of women's capacity over food production and consumption options, and women's self-esteem and control over productive resources.
- Access to water for both climate resilience and environmental health remains to be consistently translated into practice in investments
- Progress in assuring that investments apply a nutrition lens - ensuring a nutrition sensitive approach across all the relevant components - is still limited.
- School-based interventions have mainly focused on school gardens. Few projects have succeeded in linking producers to school feeding programmes.
- Empowerment of women emerges as a central priority in IFAD supported nutrition interventions. There is evidence of good synergies between IFAD's objectives in nutrition and gender and this is reflected in the priority accorded in country interventions, although with missed opportunities in some CCS projects.
- Very little evidence was found of efforts to address and include youth in nutrition interventions. Some projects consider youth in design, but implementation often fails to comprehensively engage with and ensure inclusion of youth and their specific needs.
- Synergies between nutrition and environment and climate change are not very prominent in IFAD strategies and investments.

V. IFAD's internal enabling environment for delivering on nutrition (EQ4)

157. The final evaluation question considers whether appropriate institutional arrangements in support of nutrition interventions are in place at the corporate level. The discussion covers: a) capacity on nutrition within IFAD and at project level, support to implementation and financial resources; and b) monitoring and reporting.

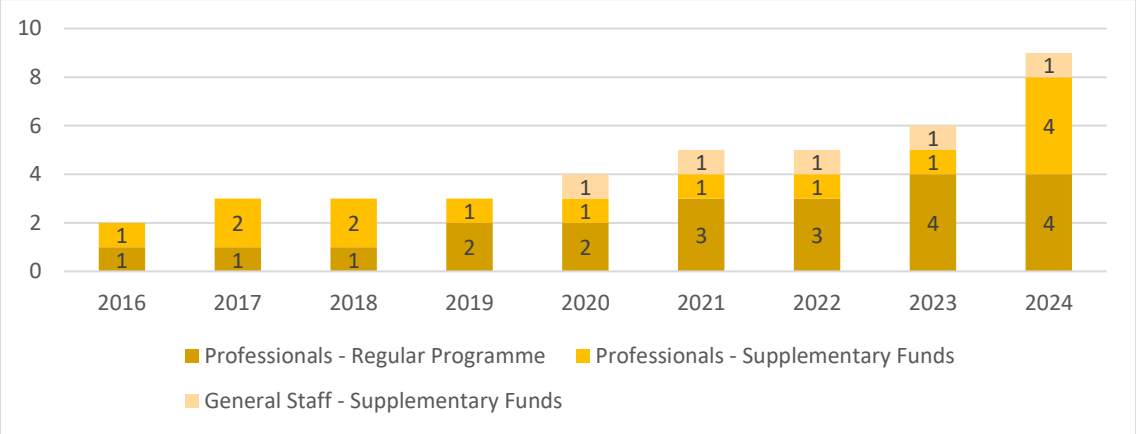
A. Institutional arrangements, human and financial resources

158. This section considers whether human resources for nutrition are being effectively, efficiently and appropriately deployed at different levels of the organization (global, regional and country) to support design and implementation and to contribute to IFAD's positioning in nutrition.

Capacity on nutrition within IFAD

159. **There has been a positive evolution in the size of the IFAD nutrition team at headquarters, and in putting in place nutrition expertise at regional level.** The technical capacity of the nutrition team is well-regarded[207] and has been enhanced with specific technical expertise. As shown in Figure 16, in 2014 there were only two posts within the nutrition team, whereas in 2024 this had increased to nine.[208] Supplementary funds (by Canada and Norway) have provided key resources for strengthening staff positions, reflecting alignment with the ambitions of the NAP.[209] Regional nutrition expert positions have been established in ESA (2021) and WCA (2023), two of the regions with the highest number of NS projects. These are both funded by IFAD's regular budget thus expanding the number of positions supported by IFAD's own funds over the evaluation period. A similar position for the APR region was part of the ambitions of the nutrition team but did not materialise because of funding constraints. The nutrition team has also developed a roster of nutrition consultants.

Figure 15
Expansion of human resources (HR) dedicated to nutrition over time



Source: IOE based on information from ECG and People and Culture Division (PCD) former Human Resource Division (HRD).

160. **Capacity remains limited considering the number of NS investments and the needs for involvement in design and support to implementation.** The

[207] Key informant interviews.
[208] To give a sense of IFAD staff size, at the time of the evaluation ECG counted 56 professional staff and PMI, the division comprising experts on IFAD different technical areas, 55 (these numbers include both positions funded by the Regular Programme and staff funded by Supplementary Funds).
[209] The Canada funds provided initial resources for the Nutrition Lead Technical Specialist (P5) before it became a position funded through the Regular Programme.

regional positions have enhanced capacity although still insufficient in light of the number of NS projects in these regions (38 in ESA and 35 in WCA). The other regions fund their own nutrition technical assistance through consultants or supplementary fund positions on a temporary need-based basis but do not benefit from a dedicated permanent technical position. The temporary nature of these positions reduces continuity, institutional knowledge, and strategic engagement. The NEN region, for example, relies on a temporary professional officer for technical support on nutrition.[210] While there has been progress in integrating nutrition staff positions in IFAD's regular budget, the continued reliance on supplementary funds poses challenges for sustainability of positions. Out of the nine current posts, five are still funded through supplementary funds from Norway, with funding ending in December 2024 which means further funding for these positions will be needed to maintain the current capacity. Finally, a knowledge management consultant has been added to the nutrition team in Rome, which is a valuable change since the Knowledge Flows study[211] notes the need for strengthening capacity within the nutrition team in this domain.

161. **With the exception of staff exclusively dedicated to nutrition, capacity in nutrition is insufficient with particular gaps in onboarding of staff.** Currently, there is no on-boarding for nutrition for IFAD program and technical staff, which misses an opportunity to ensure a solid understanding across the organisation of how IFAD contributes to nutrition and its results. An e-learning course has been developed and is available as part of the Operation Academy but remains an introduction to NSA and is not mandatory. IFAD managerial staff – in particular Country Directors, Technical and Project Team Leads - play a pivotal role in influencing nutrition prioritization and ensuring the technical quality of the nutrition portfolio. Staff at these levels, as well as experts in charge of nutrition in design teams, are not always equipped to frame nutrition in an appropriate way and frequently face challenges in securing engagement from governments. Documentary review and interview evidence highlight gaps in terms of: capacity related to advocacy and communication; presenting nutrition through a food systems transformation lens; outlining the economic case for nutrition; demonstrating how human capital will improve as a result of nutrition actions; understanding what applying a nutrition lens to investments entails; being up to date on evidence on linkages between food systems, agriculture, diets and nutrition; and, being able to speak knowledgeably on the effectiveness of different pathways.[212]

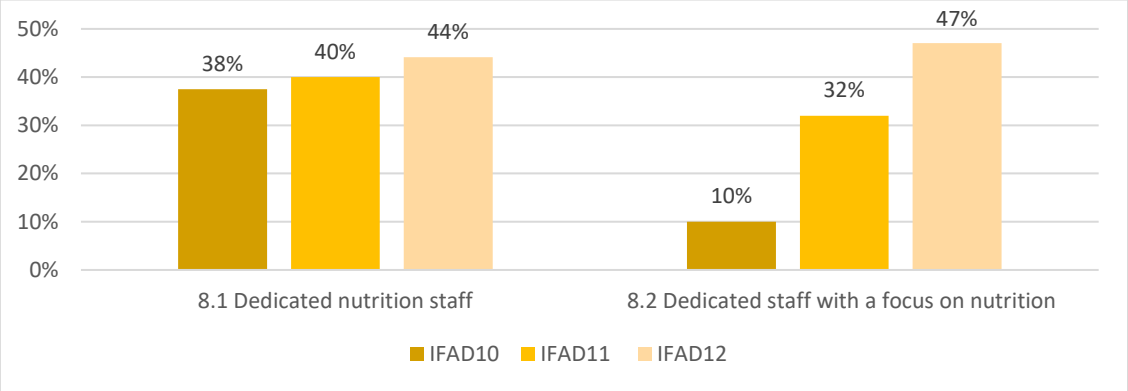
Capacity of PMU staff for nutrition and support to implementation

162. **Across different projects, resources allocated at project design for staff dedicated to nutrition has improved, but capacity is still constrained at implementation**. The criteria for defining nutrition-sensitive projects at design introduced during IFAD11 states there must be dedicated human and financial resources to nutrition and or a partnerships/consultant to support implementation. The analysis of project design presented in Figure 17 shows that there has been an improvement in the number of projects allocating resources for staff either fully dedicated to nutrition or with a focus on nutrition during the last three replenishment cycles.[213] However, information on actual recruitment is not tracked

[210] As a consequence, in NEN, support provided to frame the regional strategy on nutrition has experienced some delays and it is only in 2024 that a regional nutrition workshop was organised to assess the needs and collect feedback from NS projects and take stock of the progress made in the region.
[211] McLachlan, M. Garrett, J. Grigoletto, R. Kennedy, A. Portelli, S., Translation and Use of Knowledge In Nutrition-Sensitive Projects at IFAD p.34.
[212] McLachlan, M. Garrett, J. Grigoletto, R. Kennedy, A. Portelli, S., Translation and Use of Knowledge In Nutrition-Sensitive Projects at IFAD p74-80
[213] The analysis is based on project design reports and includes also a third option 8.3 indicating if partnerships with United Nations and/or specialised NGOs will be contracted to provide support and the necessary nutrition expertise

and this limits opportunities to maintain reliable information on nutrition capacity in PMUs.

Figure 16
Nutrition staff in PMUs based on Project Design Reports



Source: Database of nutrition activities ECG IFAD10, IFAD11 and IOE IFAD12

163. **Most of the case studies found a lack of nutrition expertise in the PMUs and also highlighted challenges in recruitment of nutritionists with an agriculture background.** In most PMUs of projects visited (which primarily covered projects approved during IFAD10 and some from IFAD11), the focal point for nutrition has to deal with many themes, frequently lacks sufficient nutrition expertise and is often recruited sometime after the project has started.[214] Difficulties were indicated in identifying nutrition experts with experience in agriculture who can apply a nutrition sensitive approach to investments as the pool of experts to draw on is quite limited. This finding is in line with the results from the e-survey where forty-four percent of respondents were of the view that PMUs and other project implementers lack skills in nutrition sensitive agriculture and this was also a common perception amongst interviewees. An expectation were Brazil and Laos.[215] In some cases, there is still lack of clarity on what IFAD's approach to nutrition is, as highlighted by a project coordinator interviewed "*To date, I'm not sure what is expected of a project that is said to be sensitive to nutrition.*"

164. **Regional events have been of particular importance to lesson learning and capacity strengthening efforts for PMUs.** Regional events have brought together IFAD staff and PMUs at regional level (a total of eight events have been organized since 2016 with details provided in Annex III.C), and this is an area where supplementary funds have been particularly useful. The regional events concentrated on experience sharing. Feedback to the evaluation team suggests such events are highly appreciated and had a significant outreach. They allowed PMU staff to better understand IFAD's approach to nutrition and have enhanced attention to the theme. The nutrition Lab in the LAC region have also been mentioned as an interesting and good practice. Other online opportunities for sharing and learning have also been organised, but with more limited outreach.

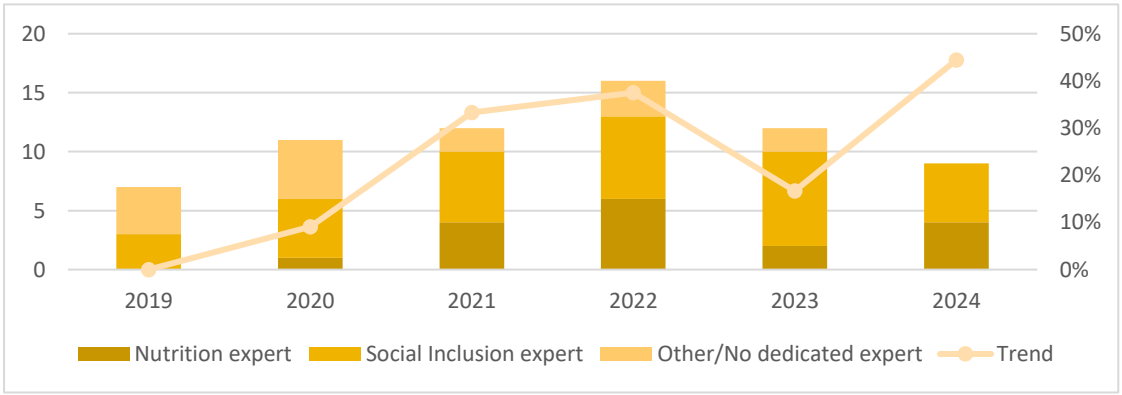
during implementation. This information was available for the different replenishment cycles but varied significantly depending if the analysis considered (or not) whether specific resources were made available at design to fund the implementation arrangement. Therefore it was decided not to include this dimension in the figure.

[214] In Burkina Faso, once the Norway fund was allocated, the agronomist was designated as the nutrition focal, accommodating responsibility in addition to the already existing workload. Positively, a new project which was just starting at the time of the evaluation recruited a nutrition expert at the onset of activities. In Benin, the expert in charge of nutrition at coordination level is also in charge of gender, youth, social inclusion and targeting. In Indonesia, for one project a part-time nutrition consultant was hired between 2018 and 2022, two years after the project began in 2016. In another project in Indonesia, a nutrition consultant was hired only after the mid-term review. In Zimbabwe, the project only had one nutrition specialist who joined at the time the Norway funded grant was added in the fourth year of implementation.

[215] For instance, in Lao PDR, the AFN II project had a well-formed team with nutrition expertise, with technical assistance from WFP.

165. **Supervision missions are an important tool for course corrections, but do not always meet expectations and address needs due to time and staffing constraints.** Supervision missions are a key tool for project support and course correction, and IFAD country and PMU teams have high expectations on the technical support through those supervision mission.[216] However, supervision teams do not always include nutrition expertise due to restrictions on the number of team members or availability of a nutrition expert, although the trend has evolved positively (see Figure 18). Overall, since 2019 only one third of supervision missions included dedicated nutrition expertise. When dedicated nutrition expertise is not present on supervision teams this task may be assigned to the social inclusion expert, with reported implications for the utility of recommendations.[217] The percentage of missions including a nutrition expert has increased as shown by the figure below. CCS highlighted that the short duration of supervision missions combined with the number of priorities in some cases leaves insufficient time for guidance and support to nutrition. Turnover of nutrition experts between supervision missions has also had consequences for the continuity of approaches to implementation.[218]

Figure 17
Nutrition experts in supervision missions since 2019 for the 10 country case studies[219,220]



Source: IOE based on Supervision Mission Reports

166. **ICOs remain stretched in terms of expertise and time to support project implementation, affecting the extent to which nutrition receives attention.** The ICOs do not have enough staff to devote time to supporting implementation, lack resources for recruiting consultants and as a consequence cannot offer the wide range of technical expertise needed, in domains such as agriculture, fisheries, nutrition, value chains, and gender. Staff need to cover many projects and themes with daily demands at technical, administrative, organizational and policy levels.[221] There are positive examples of other organisations being contracted to provide technical assistance to the PMU, such as the contracting of FAO by the Bangladesh ICO. In other cases, projects have hired national consultants to provide technical support on demand (case of Burkina Faso through NORAD funds, or Indonesia on the basis of short part-time contracts). Still, finding experts with the right profile for NSA is challenging. Training of national consultants on NSA was suggested as a way to have a pool of consultants to drawn upon in case of need. Even with the presence of personnel in charge of nutrition in PMUs, support remains very much needed especially in the initial phase of the project to translate design into implementation. NS projects are now required to develop a nutrition strategy that should help in clarifying how the investment will contribute to nutrition. Particular

[216] Key information interviews from Country Case Studies.
[217] Key informant interviews.
[218] Key informant interviews from Country Case Studies.
[219] Other/no refers to missions for which there are no nutrition or social expert covering nutrition.
[220] Data for each project are available in Annex V.M
[221] Evidence from Country Case Studies.

support will be required by PMUs during the development of the strategy and for its initial implementation.

167. **The majority of NS projects, score a 'moderately satisfactory' performance, but there is confusion on the rating requirements.** The nutrition rating was introduced in 2017 and is used in supervision missions to monitor progress. There is some confusion among staff on the requirement to rate all projects or only NS projects. The Guidance for performance scores descriptors on Rating Nutrition at page 5 indicates "*Consistent with the corporate mainstreaming priority, the Performance ratings will be applied to all nutrition-sensitive projects; and projects that, despite not meeting the criteria to be classified as nutrition sensitive, request support on nutrition or refer to nutrition in at least one of these elements: a) objectives, b) indicators or c) activities. If project is nutrition-sensitive, the rating is mandatory on an annual basis. The rating is mandatory for all projects at MTR.*" As shown by the table below non-NS projects are often rated and the rates are not significantly different from the NS ones, which raises issues on the quality of ratings or the correctness of the classification of NS and Non-NS. Currently, nutrition project completion reports do not include nutrition ratings (as nutrition is discussed under the impact section of reports) which is a missed opportunity to gather useful information and learning on nutrition.

Figure 18
Distribution of nutrition ratings in IFAD11 and IFAD12 NS and non-NS projects

Source: IOE based on data in ORMS

Financing

168. **Budget allocation to nutrition in NS projects has been increasing but remains a small percentage of total project budgets.** USD 5.5 billion was dedicated to NS projects in IFAD11 and USD 3.6 billion in IFAD12.[222] An effort to estimate budget allocation to nutrition was made by ECG for IFAD11 and by IOE for IFAD12.[223] For IFAD11, the budget allocation varies between USD 46,5 million to USD 173,7 million considering respectively only the stand-alone nutrition budget or the integrated budget (equivalent to 0.8 percent and 3.1 percent of total costs of NS projects). For IFAD12, the estimation was only on standalone budget corresponding to USD 166,0 million (4.6 percent of the total costs of NS projects). Comparison between the two replenishment cycles is not straightforward as project design reports have improved over time with a clearer correspondence between nutrition activities and related budget lines. Comparing the figures and considering the improvement in the way budgets reflect nutrition costs, the increase in nutrition allocation is clear, but the overall figure remains low. On average projects allocated 5.9 percent of project funds to nutrition under IFAD 12, up from one percent in IFAD 11, however the variation among projects is high (see Figure 20).

[222] Figures for IFAD12 do not include four projects approved toward the end of IFAD12 AGROSUSTENTAR/Bolivia, PROCASE II/Brazil, SFLP/Eritrea and A2R2 Somalia as the analysis was already completed and two projects in Brazil as the budget did not allow to separate out the nutrition standalone budget (Parceiros da Mata and Piaui Project – PSI).
[223] The methodology applied by IOE is available in annex VII while it was not possible to access the one used for IFAD11.

Table 6
Financing for Nutrition (USD million)[224]

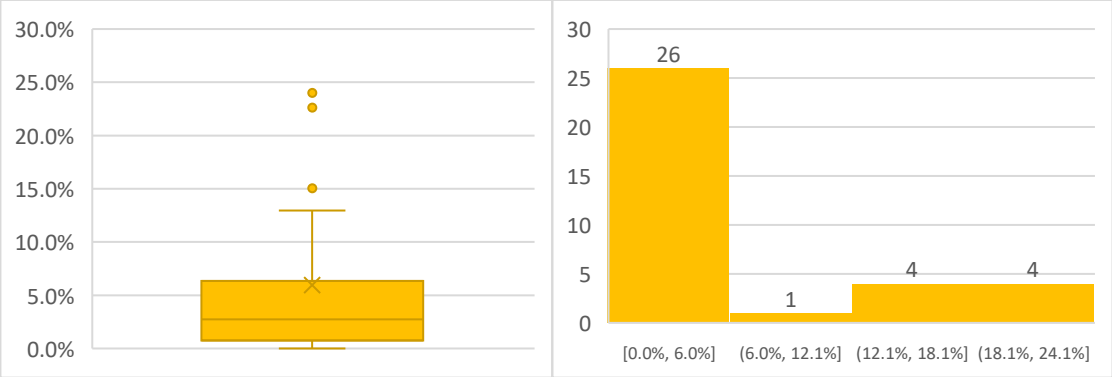
	IFAD11	IFAD12
Total cost of nutrition sensitive projects	5 555.3	3 579.0
Number of projects	49	35
Total budget for nutrition activities (USD)	*173.7 **46.5	166.0
Percentage of total allocation to nutrition on total budget cost	*3.1% **0.8%	4.6%
Average project allocation of budget to nutrition on total cost (in percentages)	*5% **1%	5.9%

*Integrated nutrition budget **standalone nutrition budget

Source: ECG IFAD11 and IOE IFAD12

169. **While the standalone budget allocation does not give a complete picture of the resources allocated to nutrition as other activities might contribute to nutrition results, it is an important figure.** Indeed, informants stressed that having a budget line on nutrition remains critical as it ensures that PMUs have dedicated activities and limits the risk of funds being used for other objectives.[225] The analysis of IFAD12 projects confirms that there is a clearer allocation of resources related to nutrition activities in the budget. For PMU staff this provides a guaranteed budget as is reflected in the following quote: "*For projects that had already started, it was always necessary to negotiate on budget lines for other activities in order to carry out nutritional activities (before the Norway fund). Today, with the new projects, there is an improvement, the budget for nutrition activities is secured without the Norway fund.*"

Figure 19
Standalone allocation to nutrition on total project cost and project distribution



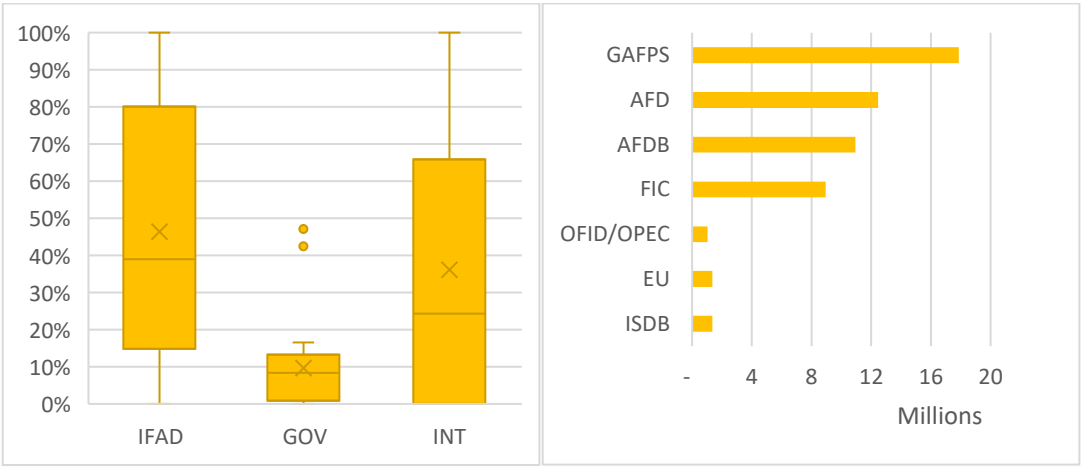
Source: IOE

170. **The top three co-financers for nutrition activities have been GAFSP, the Africa Development Bank (AfDB) and the French Development Agency (AFD).** For IFAD12, the team had access to 34 detailed budgets out of 42 for which it was possible to identify the source of funding.[226] Forty-one percent of the total standalone nutrition budget was funded by IFAD, 35 percent through

[224] The table does not include four projects approved toward the end of IFAD12 AGROSUSTENTAR/Bolivia, PROCASE II/Brazil, SFLP/Eritrea and A2R2 Somalia as the analysis was already completed and two projects in Brazil as the budget did not allow to separate out the nutrition standalone budget.
[225] Key information interviews and country case studies.
[226] The analysis does not include 6 projects: 1) the cost table was not available (PDEA/Cameroon), 2) the cost tables of different format did not show detailed standalone budget for nutrition activities (Parceiros da Mata/Brazil and Piaui Project – PSI/Brazil) or 3) the projects were approved after the review was conducted (AGROSUSTENTAR/Bolivia, PROCASE II/Brazil, SFLP/Eritrea and A2R2 Somalia).

international co-financing and 18 percent by national Governments. However, this last figure is only partially reflective of the reality as two projects in India and Brazil constitute alone 82 percent of government co-financing for nutrition activities.[227] The average contribution is 46 percent IFAD, 10 percent Government and 36 percent international co-financing. The main international co-financiers are GAFSP, the AfDB and AFD. The analysis shows that except for the Italian Climate Fund (FIC) the amount of climate finance funding nutrition activities has been limited. Considering the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Green Fund all together they represent 2.7 percent of the total international co-financing for nutrition (equivalent to 1.6 USD million).

Figure 20
Co-financing for nutrition activities



Source: IOE based on COSTAB available

171. **National governments contribute only a small percentage to nutrition sensitive programming.** As shown in Figure 21, for the IFAD12 nutrition-sensitive portfolio analysed, on average 10 percent of the budget allocated to nutrition was funded by government. Some interviews suggested that limited investment in nutrition activities from governments in part reflects the view that nutrition is not the role of the project's primary government partner (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock, etc.).[228] Thus, twenty six percent of survey respondents chose the response option that *Government's lack of understanding of the importance of nutrition-sensitive agriculture* as one of the three most important challenges encountered in mainstreaming nutrition in IFAD's operations and that have impacted nutrition performance, with little difference between IFAD staff (29 percent) and project staff (22 percent).

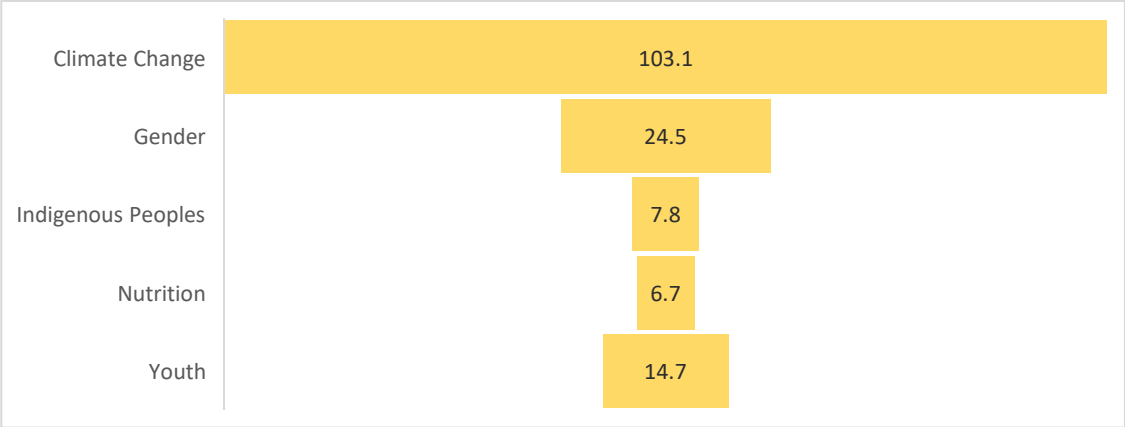
172. **Inadequate nutrition budgets reduce the extent to which projects can meet their nutrition objectives.** Thirty-eight per cent of survey respondents included 'insufficient budget to meet nutrition objectives as set-out in the project design' among the top three challenges for mainstreaming nutrition.[229] In Benin, the financial resources dedicated to nutrition in the initial projects such as PADMAR (0.6 percent of the budget) and PADAAM (1.6 percent) were far from sufficient to ensure the effective deployment of nutrition activities and reallocation of budgets from other activities had to take place in order to carry out nutrition initiatives. In Zimbabwe and Burkina Faso, nutrition activities foreseen at design could only be implemented thanks to Norway funded grants and continued to represent a very small investment compared to the overall budget. Budget constraints result in projects having to limit the scope of their work, for example by restricting nutrition

[227] Without these two projects the share of the total standalone nutrition budget funded by Governments is 5 percent.
[228] See Nutrition Stock-take report and corroborated by the evaluation electronic survey.
[229] Survey respondents were asked to select the three most important challenges that they encountered in mainstreaming nutrition in IFAD's operations and that have impacted nutrition performance.

activities to specific geographical areas or a subgroup of beneficiaries.[230] Setting a minimal budget for nutrition could address this issue, provided that it includes flexibility to take account of different contexts.

173. **Supplementary funds have been critical for IFAD's work on nutrition compensating for the limited allocation of regular budget resources.** During the last two replenishment cycles, IFAD has allocated on average USD 169 thousand per year from its regular budget to the nutrition team for activities (around USD 1 million over six years). At corporate level, supplementary funds initially provided by Canada, Germany and later by Norway, made a significant contribution for ensuring a dedicated budget available for nutrition. The funds have enabled the mobilization of nutrition expertise including professionals and long-term consultants but also administrative staff.[231] Many of the trainings conducted have also relied on the supplementary funding, for example the Regional Knowledge and Experience Sharing Workshops on Nutrition are funded by Norway while the previous cycle was funded by Canada. Supplementary funds have been critical for delivering nutrition-sensitive actions (see section III.E), and yet, the amount mobilised for nutrition is small compared to other thematic areas. An additional challenge is that current supplementary funding sources are ending, while no new opportunities are envisaged. Figure 22 shows that 65 percent of thematic supplementary funds have been mobilised for climate finance and only five percent for nutrition.

Figure 21
ECG Thematic Supplementary Funds by Theme since 2016 (Donor agreement amount - USD million)[232]



Source: OBI

174. **While IFAD is currently overly reliant on supplementary funds to support key areas of its nutrition portfolio, it does not have a proactive resource mobilisation strategy for nutrition.** There is an enormous demand and need to ensure continued grant assistance to build on the achievements and continue providing technical assistance to investments. Mobilizing such funds was also a key priority for the NAP. Nonetheless, IFAD is not proactively approaching donors to advocate, to demonstrate the need, and IFAD's potential and options to improve the food and nutrition situation. Access to supplementary funds and grant resources for nutrition is limited, in a context where the overall volume of supplementary funds is increasing. As explained by resource partners interviewed this also reflects the emergence of competing priorities which is affecting the level

[230] For example, in Djibouti only 10 project sites are benefiting from nutrition activities against a total of XY sites or in Burkina Faso where nutrition activities funded by NORAD have been limited to only one of the regions of intervention).
[231] The post of the only GS staff supporting the nutrition team is funded by Norway.
[232] These figures present thematic supplementary funds for ECG only, they do not include nutrition-relevant SF allocations to other IFAD Departments or co-financing. IFAD corporate annual SF reports, 2016 to 2023, show that 26 to 28% of the total SF allocations are to food security and nutrition. The report does, however, not disaggregate for nutrition-sensitive allocation, hence more detailed analysis is not possible.

of priority accorded to nutrition. In parallel, the need for this type of funding continues to exist given their critical role, and the absence of an alternative risks making it impossible for IFAD to capitalize on the growing awareness on the importance of NSA.

175. **The lack of evidence generation on IFAD's work on climate-smart nutrition results limits its capacity to raise funds for nutrition.** Evidence on climate and nutrition interventions has not been systematically collected to demonstrate how IFAD can deliver climate-smart nutrition actions. This constrains access to climate financing for nutrition which is a logical channel to explore.[233] IFAD has also not extensively explored other financial instruments for nutrition, and selected informants were of the view that as a financial institution IFAD should be pursuing this. Suggestions for different models includes 'debt for nutrition Sector Wide Approaches (SWAP)'[234] or results-based lending. The latter could be used for making nutrition target achievements a condition for disbursements.

176. **IFAD's budget for administration costs (including staff) has not kept pace with the increasing needs.** Beyond implications for nutrition staff positions which were mentioned above, budget constraints have implications for IFAD's capacity to fund complementary roles such as monitoring and evaluation (M&E) experts and knowledge management experts.[235] Whilst there is a push from certain donors for nutrition and for IFAD to demonstrate how to sustain its efforts without relying on grants there is also the reality that achieving nutrition results requires consistent and substantial levels of investment.

177. **An approach for tracking nutrition resources has not been established and, hence, tracking is not happening.** Lack of tracking of resources going to nutrition negatively impacts the assessment of progress that IFAD is making in meeting the Nutrition for Growth commitments and the SDG Targets 2.1 and 2.2. While there has been an effort to estimate budget allocated at design for IFAD11, there is no systematic tracking mechanisms established. CCS interviews highlighted that tracking resources going to nutrition during implementation is difficult and expensive to do, and there are mixed views within IFAD on the success of such efforts. Not having insight through tracking makes it difficult to ensure a strategic use of resources and also stands in the way of making IFAD's involvement in nutrition more visible. Furthermore, it affects the extent to which the organization can analyse the achieved impact against resources, such as cost effectiveness.

178. There has also been a discussion on the desirability of adopting the OECD DAC Nutrition Policy Marker,[236] a qualitative reporting tool, also supported by SUN, that identifies commitments to nutrition by simply distinguishing investments between, having no relevance, a significant relevance or highly relevant, where nutrition is the principle objective (score 0, 1, 2 respectively).[237] Screening is done at the design and the disbursement stage, hence, allows reporting and track of commitments. OECD maintains a database for uploading, hence, progress can be tracked globally. This would ease IFAD's work to also report against global N4G

[233] Although evidence on climate and nutrition interventions is not systematically collected, IFAD recently published a deep-dive case study on nutrition-sensitive interventions in the Pacific region, highlighting these outcomes. To support project development, IFAD, in collaboration with the Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, also published a literature review in 2021 that examines climate-related food system interventions with co-benefits for both climate change and nutrition. Furthermore, the Kiribati OIFWP project in partnership with the Australian Center for International Agricultural Research, in cooperation with the University of Tasmania and the University of Adelaide, conducted a research on nutritious leafy vegetables for atolls that shows the nutrient value and the climate resilience of several local vegetables, which were adopted by the project.
[234] Debt swaps for nutrition are financial agreements in which a country's debt is reduced or restructured in exchange for a commitment to invest in nutrition programmes.
[235] Key Informant interviews.
[236] The OECD-DAC Nutrition policy marker, Handbook for data reporters and users, Version 1.0 December 2020 available at: OECD_PolicyMarkerNutrition.pdf
[237] EU 2024 NUTRITION POLICY MARKER, REPORTING TO OECD DAC (update 1/2024), NUTRITION QUICK TIPS SERIES, Nutrition Policy Marker Reporting to OECD DAC | Capacity4dev

commitments and on SDG2. It is assumed that the marker also informs how nutrition objectives are mainstreamed within an organisation. It should be assessed whether this provides an opportunity for IFAD to start a tracking and make nutrition allocations more visible outside the organisation, it might, however, not be thorough or specific enough to support internal planning and management decisions.[238]

B. Monitoring and Reporting system

179. This section considers whether the monitoring and reporting system in place for nutrition is supportive of delivery against nutrition ambitions.

180. **The adoption of the MDD-W as indicator for IFAD work on nutrition is a relevant shift; however, methodological shortcomings and ambiguities in target definitions limit its practical value and clarity.** In 2018, IFAD's use of the stunting indicator to measure progress on nutrition was replaced by the introduction of the MDD-W in IFAD's Results Management and Information System (RIMS) and later together with the KAP among the Core Outcome Indicators (COI). This shift ensured stronger alignment of IFADs monitoring with its actual contribution to nutrition which is through improving quality of diets and dietary diversity. However, methodological shortcomings in IFAD's MDD-W definition and measurement have reduced the practical value, including inconsistencies between its definition and methodology, unclear targets, and data quality issues in project surveys.[239]

181. **IFAD's current set of nutrition-related indicators are not sufficient to capture the changes achieved by the projects. This is partially due to a mismatch between objectives and indicators, and partially due to the time gap between activities and the expected impact.** Case studies from Benin and Indonesia highlight the mismatch between nutrition objectives and the indicators tracked. Thus, while the projects are working on school-based interventions the MDD-W is tracked but there is no indicator for dietary quality of targeted school-going children. The misconception that only COI nutrition indicators can be adopted partially explains these issues. The lack of alignment between nutrition objectives and indicators limits the learning potential and the capacity for informed decision-making at the project level. Projects primarily focus on using MDD-W and KAP to measure changes achieved, those changes, however, require time. More immediate and short-term indicators, such as improvements in local food production and access to diverse and nutritious foods, are often not being tracked. The elaboration of an accurate nutrition strategy could be a good opportunity for nutrition sensitive projects to define specific indicators based on the project impact pathways to nutrition and activities. Having these indicators in the project monitoring and evaluation system is important to measure the progress in terms of nutrition

[238] IFAD and the World Bank have developed a methodology for measuring financial flows to food systems, known as the 3FS. This is a broader methodology for measuring financial flows to food systems as a whole. The 3FS methodology supports tracking of domestic public spending and international development finance flows to food systems at the country and global levels. In its next phase, the 3FS methodology will include the tracking of private sector financing flows the food systems.

[239] The definition of COI 1.2.8 MDD-W used by OPR and outlined in the IFAD13 Replenishment Report (2024) refers to the "percent of women surveyed reporting that the quality and diversity of their diet have improved compared to the previous year." This definition diverges from the MDD-W's standard methodology presented in the COI guideline, which measures dietary diversity over a 24-hour recall period. Furthermore, the value reported by OPR in annual RIDE reports is the average of MDD-W scores from project-level surveys, not the percentage improvement over time suggested by the replenishment report's definition. This inconsistency between the indicator's definition and the data reported undermines the credibility of the global figure and complicates its interpretation. Additionally, the values used to calculate this average are validated by OPR, yet their reliability is questionable. Among the 22 surveys included in the RIDE 2024 report, four (PAPFA, PADAAM, PADMAR, PIPARV-B) were analyzed as part of this evaluation and demonstrated data quality concerns. Previous RIDE reports (2023 and 2022) included multiple zero values (five in 2023, thirteen in 2022) without clarifying whether they represent non-collected, invalid, or truly zero data, which is unlikely. It is also unclear whether the 25 percent target for MDD-W set under IFAD12 refers to an absolute increase in the proportion of women achieving the MDD-W threshold or to the average score itself.

related investments and IFAD could use globally available literature (e.g. FAO) and tailor for the specificities of IFAD NS investments.

182. **Current IFAD nutrition-sensitive project reporting does not yet capture its contribution to sustainable food systems transformation.** The MDD-W and KAP alone do not allow to measure more systematic impacts on food system transformation. In countries like Bangladesh (with a focus on gender and diversification of production pathways), Burundi (milk value-chain) and Indonesia, where there is potential for transformative impacts on local food systems, longer-term changes of these interventions are not effectively measured. Additionally, countries report difficulties incorporating IFAD's indicators within broader government monitoring frameworks, which limits the reporting system's utility for understanding sustainable food systems impacts. These gaps underscore the need for a more comprehensive approach to data collection that includes both immediate and systemic nutritional outcomes.

183. **Variations in the timing of data collection affect the accuracy of MDD-W and KAP indicators, complicating the assessment of project effects and impact**. In multiple projects, data collection timing issues arose, with some baseline data gathered well after projects had begun. For example, in Laos, not all indicators were measured at baseline; in Indonesia, the inclusion of MDD-W was inconsistent across surveys, limiting nutritional analysis; and in Zimbabwe, changes in indicators between baseline and endline prevented outcome analysis. Delays in baseline data collection, which sometimes extend to the mid-term, restrict the ability to attribute observed changes directly to project activities underscoring the need for adherence to timely data collection protocols.[240] Moreover, MDD-W data is not collected at the same time of the year in different surveys for the same project limiting the comparability of estimates, as MDD-W is highly sensitive to food availability, which is itself influenced by seasonality.[241]

184. **There are significant quality issues in data collection reflecting a lack of capacity among PMUs and gaps in IFAD oversight and support to data collection.** Insufficient capacity among data collection service providers adversely affects the quality of nutrition data collected in IFAD projects. Data collection is generally outsourced to service providers who often lack the necessary technical expertise for rigorous nutrition assessments.[242] For example, in different surveys in Burundi and Benin, this resulted in use of the wrong sampling method, unclear recall periods, confusion with other diversification indicators collected at the same time, wrong numbers of food groups considered, and confusion in the analysis between MDD-W and diversification scores. Similar biases have been found in a number of surveys in other countries. In Zimbabwe, the modules selected for the KAP, did not match with the objective of the nutrition education sessions. This issue was echoed in IFAD's staff survey, with almost half of respondents (43 percent) reporting difficulty in sourcing the required technical expertise to measure nutrition indicators in their countries. These capacity gaps suggest a need for improved technical oversight and capacity building. The absence of consistent data verification mechanisms contributes to frequent inaccuracies in reported nutrition-related indicators, undermining data reliability. Only a few projects are implementing systematic checks,[243] with 38 percent of survey respondents noting that there was no system to ensure data quality for nutrition-related indicators. The lack of a standardized verification mechanism weakens data reliability, diminishing the data's utility for informed decision-making at both the project and organizational levels.

[240] Evidence from interviews and CCS
[241] Based on the evaluation analysis of a sample of 19 surveys conducted for NS projects available in annex V.H..
[242] Evidence from interviews and CCS
[243] Key informant interviews.

185. **Limited training of project M&E teams on dietary indicators affects the quality and utility of data collected.** While IFAD has provided guidance materials, such as the Core Outcome Indicators Measurement Guidelines,[244] these have proven insufficient in bridging capacity gaps, particularly when baseline, midline, and endline data require methodological consistency. In Mozambique, internal PMU capacities and inadequate guidance from the ICO contributed to an overemphasis on output-level data collection, with outcome indicators, such as those related to nutrition, often being neglected. Similarly, in Benin, M&E staff struggled to interpret changes between baseline and endline measurements due to insufficient training on dietary indicators which were compounded by changes in data collection methodology. Zimbabwe's case study also demonstrated issues with data accuracy, where MDD-W was misreported as a mean value, and inappropriate terminology (e.g., labelling MDD-W as "food secure") further complicated interpretation. These weaknesses stem from the lack of specialized nutrition training for M&E personnel, availability of service providers in-country with the required technical capacities and also from the need to enhance training for ICO staff, who are responsible for overseeing, guide and provide support across projects on technical aspects for project management, financial management, procurement, and crosscutting issues. Without robust training and support, M&E teams face challenges in ensuring data precision and robust interpretation, reducing the efficacy of the monitoring system as a foundation for informed decision-making.

186. **Methodological inconsistencies across surveys limit the comparability of nutrition data, thereby weakening the capacity for longitudinal analysis.** There is evidence of notable methodological variations, such as sampling procedures for MDD-W, recall period, and questionnaire design (see Annex V.H for the analysis).[245] In several surveys (e.g. PIPARV-B), the analysis of the food groups consumed is not clearly presented or is confused with other dietary diversity scores (e.g. confusion between the diversification score and the MDD-W). Furthermore, comparisons of MDD-W and KAP estimates of control groups or previous surveys are rarely based on statistical tests of significance which leads to hazardous conclusions about the results obtained. Project teams frequently reported discrepancies between baseline and midline values due to non-standardized methods.[246] In Benin, for example, changes in service providers from one survey to the next for the Norway-funded activities led to methodological shifts that complicated comparisons over time. Methodological variations also prevent accurate longitudinal analysis.

187. **There is a commitment to robust data collection, but quality issues affect the extent to which the resulting information can generate meaningful insights and inform strategic decision making.** More surveys report MDD-W or KAP since 2023.[247] However, in spite of substantial investments in baseline and endline surveys—estimated between USD 20,000 and USD 70,000 per survey - many projects encountered issues with methodological accuracy, leading to limited reliability and comparability of the collected data. Additionally, many projects allocate considerable time and personnel to annual outcome surveys, yet the data quality often remains inconsistent, partly due to insufficient verification and variation in indicator definitions across survey stages.[248] While data on MDD-W and KAP indicators is collected across many projects, it is infrequently applied to inform programmatic decisions.[249] In Burundi, for example, project teams collected detailed information on dietary indicators, yet reported minimal use of this data in

[244] IFAD, 2021a.
[245] Based on the evaluation analysis of a sample of 19 surveys conducted for NS projects available in annex V.H.
[246] Key informant interviews from country case studies.
[247] Based on the evaluation analysis of a sample of 19 surveys conducted for NS projects available in annex V.H..
[248] Key informant interviews.
[249] Key informant interviews and country case studies.

guiding activities or adjusting interventions. The M&E officers in the PMU are expected to work with component leads and specialists but in reality, they often work in isolation.[250] PMUs are focused on activity delivery and associated output indicators rather than thematic outcome indicators, because output indicators seem to be an important managerial evaluation criterion. Nutrition data are often seen as primarily serving corporate reporting needs rather than local decision-making, with 38 percent of survey respondents noting a lack of integration between collected data and adaptive project management. Only one of the CCS provides an example on the use of baseline MDD-W data to refine activities: the UPLANDs project in Indonesia.

188. An example of GIZ programme which has introduced a systematic approach for assessing dietary indicators is provided in Annex V.K. This example highlights best practices, including systematic follow-up surveys with harmonized methodologies, comprehensive monitoring frameworks, and the integration of survey results into programmatic adjustments.

Key points

- There has been progress in integrating nutrition staff positions in IFAD's regular budget but the continued reliance on supplementary funds poses challenges for sustainability of positions while IFAD budget limitations make it difficult to integrate significantly more positions.
- Nutrition capacity remains a serious constraint for the organization and reflects challenges with securing the funding and human resources/expertise.
- There is a gap at the level of senior management capacity in making the case for nutrition which affects take up of nutrition priorities.
- Efforts at nutrition capacity development have been commensurate to the capacity of the evaluation team but modest in comparison with needs. Regional events have been much appreciated and are perceived as having added value.
- Nutrition remains under-represented in supplementary funding mobilised by IFAD. A solid resource mobilization strategy for nutrition remains lacking in a context where government funding to nutrition is low.
- IFAD's impact on diets is unclear, with IFAD11 showing results far below targets due to a lack of representation of nutrition-sensitive projects and insufficient time for mainstreaming efforts to demonstrate significant effects.
- The adoption of MDD-W as a nutrition indicator is relevant, aligning better with IFAD's capacity to influence dietary diversity. However, challenges remain in aligning objectives and indicators and setting indicators to measure outcomes of projects over a shorter period of time realistically (diversifying food production requires time to translate into improved MDD-W). Furthermore, reporting systems and indicators are still insufficient to capture IFAD's contribution to food system transformation.
- Methodological inconsistencies undermine data accuracy, with variations in timing, sampling, recall periods, and food group definitions, complicating longitudinal analyses and reducing data reliability.
- Capacity gaps in data collection and analysis persist, as service providers and M&E teams often lack the expertise to measure MDD-W and KAP indicators accurately, resulting in errors and misinterpretations.

[250] Key informant interviews.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

189. **IFAD's corporate commitments to nutrition are strong and have kept pace with major global commitments and policy developments.** IFAD's commitment to nutrition pre-dates the evaluation period and has evolved over time. IFAD's commitment to nutrition in the NAP (2019-2025) reflects SDG2 prioritization, recognizes global malnutrition challenges and aligns with the global agenda on sustainable healthy diets and food systems to which the organisation has been actively participating and contributing, in addition to the global consensus on the importance of school feeding. Additionally, most of IFAD's corporate policies and plans evolved over time providing support to IFAD's nutrition agenda. Overall, given the limited financial and human resources that were dedicated to nutrition, IFAD's progress in working on nutrition is a notable achievement.

190. **COSOPs and project designs have progressively included IFAD's nutrition priorities and corporate targets, but nutrition activities have often resulted in an add-on to projects with limited contextualization of the proposed approaches.** Progress has been made in ensuring the IFAD investments include nutrition priorities. Targeting and coverage of nutrition sensitive projects is adequately based on vulnerabilities to nutrition, in accordance with IFAD's nutrition guidance focussing on food insecurity, poverty and climate disaster prone areas and addressing the most vulnerable groups, with a strong focus on women. However, while the evaluation found an improvement over time, context analysis and design has not been consistently solid, and nutrition-sensitive activities have in too many cases been an add-on to investments. The 60 percent corporate target at design for nutrition sensitive projects has not been complemented by regional target setting reflecting nutrition needs of the context. This has spin-off effects on making solid financial commitments, but also limiting the establishment of successful partnerships, ensuring policy engagement and an inclusive sectoral coordination in implementation.

191. **IFAD has missed opportunities to frame its contribution to nutrition through sustainable healthy diets and food systems transformation.** Since the development of IFAD's most recent NAP and Strategic Framework, the food system-based approach has further evolved and gained in importance, but it is not yet sufficiently central to IFAD's approach to nutrition. Although the main problems underpinning the triple burden of malnutrition are identified in the NAP, it falls short in explaining the causal linkages in promoting sustainable healthy diets through a food systems approach and to provide guidance on IFAD's contribution in addressing overweight and obesity. As a result, the NAP does not support and guide the organization sufficiently in being able to move from commitments to more effective actions. In line with global developments food systems should now become more central to IFAD's approach to nutrition.

192. **At global level IFAD is recognised as a key player in nutrition. At country level there are opportunities to significantly enhance IFAD's contribution to sustainable healthy diets.** At global level, IFAD policy engagement and partnerships in the food systems dialogue and priority setting have evolved positively. External partners value the consistency of IFAD's work with smallholder farmers and farmer organisations, the direct entry point with governments, and the ability to mobilise resources to support the agriculture sector to contribute to improve diets. However, at country level, the unique position that IFAD has of combining long term funding with its relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture and role as a technical agency for the government has not been sufficiently explored in support of its objectives, and to raise the organisation profile towards sustainable healthy diets. Furthermore, while there is evidence of complementary partnerships at country level, these are not systematically identified at design

phase and then pursued as intended. There are opportunities for stronger collaboration with United Nations agencies and with the private sector. This requires a proactive approach to encourage Governments, as key decision makers in the design of IFAD's investments, for strengthening such linkages.

193. **IFAD's work and results in nutrition have converged around a number of critical pathways, but progress in mainstreaming nutrition in project investments remains modest.** The most frequent pathways to improving nutrition relate to increasing and diversifying food production and to nutrition education to promote behaviour change. Access to markets (through value chain approach) and women's empowerment have also been relatively prominent as critical entry points. School-based interventions have been increasingly important but remain small scale and mostly focussed on supporting school gardens, whilst there is potential to better link small holder farmers to institutional markets through school feeding. There has been little attention to water and sanitation. The NAP envisioned approach of applying a nutrition lens to investments has not been widely achieved. Indeed, overall, across the portfolio, nutrition has been addressed mostly through stand-alone activities (i.e. food production, nutrition education, marketing, gender, etc.) with little connections to each other and insufficiently integrated with broader activities supported by IFAD's loans.

194. **IFAD's internal enabling environment for delivering on nutrition has evolved positively but has not kept pace with the needs of an ambitious nutrition agenda.** The regular programme financial allocation by IFAD to nutrition is low. Financial resources for nutrition-related activities in investments also remain a small percentage of total budgets reducing the extent to which projects can deliver results. There is still a lack of national government financial commitments and buy-in to nutrition. Country Directors and Project Team Leads play a critical role in raising the profile of nutrition and securing commitment, but their skills and capacities have not been sufficiently developed and supported. The growth of the IFAD nutrition team at headquarters and regional level is positive, but remains insufficient. At country level ICO's lack staff, nutrition expertise and understanding of the NAP, which coupled with lack of nutrition skills in supervision missions and PMUs results in limited capacity to mainstream and monitor nutrition across investments.

195. **Supplementary funds and grants have been critical to progress on nutrition, but limited in scale, and there has been insufficient focus on raising additional supplementary funding.** Supplementary funds have provided critical resources for the design and implementation of nutrition-sensitive activities and have played a key role in complementing and enhancing IFAD's country level investments. Supplementary funds have also been used - and shown important value - in enhancing IFAD's capacity, supporting partnership building, and strengthening the documentation of results and guidance. However, evidence-based knowledge generated has not systematically been shared or applied in designing new investments. Though the allocations of supplementary funds made a big difference, amounts were lower compared to other thematic areas, and other funding sources are not being proactively pursued, posing challenges to ensure continue support for design and implementation.

196. **In spite of the early adoption of globally-validated nutrition indicators, IFAD faces challenges in capturing the outcomes and impact of its interventions on dietary diversity reflecting gaps in monitoring of nutrition outcomes.** The MDD-W is appropriate for IFAD corporate reporting given the potential for IFAD funded interventions to improve diets. However, at project level, IFAD's current set of nutrition indicators (MDD-W and KAP) remains insufficiently comprehensive to capture the complexity of nutrition-sensitive projects. This is because they are not always aligned to the objective of the intervention (e.g. school feeding), but also because they do not capture progress along the nutrition

impact pathways and the contribution to food systems transformation. Critical gaps were identified in monitoring and reporting these indicators. The evaluation surfaced methodological inconsistencies across surveys and absence of consistent data verification mechanisms, which contributes to frequent reporting inaccuracies. These weaknesses also stem from weak capacities of project M&E teams and service providers on nutrition indicators. This makes it difficult to use data to make adjustments during implementation and to demonstrate the actual contribution of investments to improved diets.

197. **Learning and knowledge management about sustainable healthy diets and nutrition from IFAD funded investments remain a critical weakness.** Worthwhile innovative practices to promote sustainable healthy diets are being developed, but the lack of a consistent knowledge management strategy reduces the extent to which IFAD is capitalizing on, and sharing, the work that it does, including its contributions to improving diets, food systems transformation and broader cross-cutting corporate priorities. Despite the growing corporate efforts on knowledge management for nutrition reflected in increased diversity and quantity of knowledge products and actions from the global level, there is limited aggregation of lesson learning from countries, beyond reporting against indicators. Furthermore, the system for managing knowledge products and their application is functioning sub-optimally and materials developed are not easily available to use in project design and implementation. Grants have been instrumental in widening IFAD's network with nutrition global research and academic institutions, but results have been insufficiently shared to turn recommendations and lessons into actions.

198. **Women's empowerment has been central to IFAD's nutrition interventions and there has been an increased attention to Indigenous Peoples. Attention to youth and to interconnections between nutrition and climate change have been insufficient.** Overall, IFAD's nutrition-sensitive projects give priority to women and girls, by identifying them as key beneficiaries and applying approaches towards reducing women's workload and promoting income generation. Linkages with Indigenous Peoples have been consistently strengthened, in particular through the Indigenous Peoples Policy 2022, which added food security, sovereignty and nutrition as a new principle. More efforts are needed at design and implementation levels to better integrate and address youth as a target group in nutrition-sensitive investments. The linkages between climate change actions and nutrition have not been clearly spelled out in IFAD's NS-investments, something that would be important giving the pressing climate challenges.

B. Recommendations

199. Based on the key findings and conclusions, the evaluation suggests the following recommendations:

200. **Recommendation 1 – In the next Nutrition Action Plan (NAP), IFAD should frame its nutrition work within the sustainable food system approach with the ultimate goal of achieving sustainable healthy diets and define a more flexible approach to reflect context specificities.**

a) The new NAP should clearly communicate IFAD's role in nutrition, including in terms of the rising problem of overweight and obesity through a robust theory of change and narrative which adequately explains how a nutrition lens to investments can be applied to contribute to sustainable healthy diets and the causal linkages between the different nutrition pathways and their integration into sustainable food systems. This approach should actively engage women, youth, and other target groups as important actors. Further, school-based interventions should be refined ensuring a primary focus on the link between small holder farmers and institutional markets through school feeding programmes. Nutrition, as part of sustainable food systems to deliver healthy diets, should be well embedded and addressed in the new IFAD strategic framework. Furthermore, IFAD guidance tools supporting investment design and implementation should be updated to align with the new Nutrition Action Plan.

b) Regions and country teams should be fully involved in the development of the NAP, ensuring nutrition approaches and targets reflect regional and context specificities. The new NAP should further elaborate on essential partnerships, coordination and advocacy for sustainable healthy diets, including with the private sector informed by a clear analysis of where these relationships can add value to IFAD and country nutrition priorities. In the design of COSOPs and project investments, IFAD should prioritize the nutrition agenda in the dialogue with Government especially in countries facing severe nutrition challenges.

201. **Recommendation 2 – IFAD should prioritize and scale up its efforts to ensure human resources and capacities at different levels (global, regional and country) are commensurate with its nutrition ambitions and commitments.**

a) IFAD should significantly reinforce and scale up its capacity and expertise at global and regional levels to support its nutrition portfolio at different stages from design to implementation, in line with IFAD's corporate ambitions and with the priorities that will be set in the new NAP. Staff in key positions of influence with the government and country teams should be provided with adequate technical capacity and support to be able to advocate for increased buy-in and engagement by governments to nutrition. Project management units of nutrition-sensitive investments should be required to have nutrition expertise from the outset and adequate resources for technical support to investments should be ensured.

b) IFAD should enhance efforts on strengthening technical and functional capacity of national counterparts, in particular the Ministry of Agriculture, and encourage Government and the Ministry of Agriculture to contribute to policy dialogue and mainstream nutrition in agriculture sector development plans and investments.

c) Partnerships for nutrition (including with United Nations agencies, research and academia, and the private sector) should be explicitly and systematically identified in the COSOP and project design. These partnerships should prioritize capacity development and policy dialogue related to food systems and sustainable healthy diets. IFAD should monitor their materialisation in implementation (e.g. by including specific indicators).

202. **Recommendations 3 – IFAD should strengthen its nutrition related knowledge management and its monitoring system of nutrition sensitive**

interventions and use this knowledge to improve the accountability for, and delivery against, its nutrition agenda.

a) In support to the implementation of the next NAP, MDD-W and KAP corporate indicators should be complemented by additional project level indicators that can capture immediate and medium-term progress towards nutrition objectives and longer-term goals of the investment and contributions to sustainable food systems transformation. Guidance, technical oversight and capacity development should be provided to staff (IFAD, project staff and service providers of NS investments) to ensure consistency and robustness of methodology across surveys and data verification mechanisms should be established to enhance overall data reliability. The use of data should be promoted for adaptive management during implementation and for ensuring that lessons learned feed into the development of NS investments.

b) IFAD should prioritize establishing a structured follow-up mechanism and periodic assessments to ensure that nutrition remains an integral part of IFAD's agenda, with clear accountability for progress.

c) IFAD should have a more deliberate and strengthened approach to its nutrition related knowledge management. IFAD's knowledge resources should be made more visible and accessible, internally and externally, and IFAD should pay stronger attention to documenting, systematizing and scaling up innovations. These efforts should be supported by a dedicated corporate budget. Knowledge management efforts should include cooperation with partners, especially academia and research institutions, and prioritizing demonstrating results and using evidence to advocate for attracting investments and to inform programming. Guidance for IFAD staff on key messages or evidence to advocate for increased resources for nutrition in project budgets should also be developed.

203. **Recommendation 4 – To advance its nutrition agenda effectively, IFAD should adopt a more strategic and sustainable approach to resource mobilization by leveraging both internal and complementary external resources.**

a) IFAD should allocate proportionate budget to nutrition, in line with its ambitions and commitments, as well as IFAD-financed grants. NS-projects should be adequately resourced for nutrition, taking into account different contexts and priorities (in particular where malnutrition rates are high) and IFAD's financial system should ensure the tracking of resources for nutrition.

b) IFAD should advocate with national governments to ensure nutrition is incorporated in investments and adequately resourced and explore ways to facilitate this (e.g. matching grants and results-based lending).

c) A strategy to mobilise donor funding for nutrition (including nutrition sensitive agriculture and nutrition sensitive food systems) should be developed adopting a more proactive stance to advocate for additional resources by showcasing IFAD's experience and results towards sustainable healthy diets. The strategy should consider leveraging climate funds by focusing on the linkages between nutrition and climate change. IFAD should deepen the existing strategic partnerships with other IFIs, particularly the World Bank, to complement resources and extend investments to nutrition with mutual benefits. Given the critical role that grants have played, thematic supplementary funds should be mobilised, and grants should be used strategically to leverage loan investments for contributing to nutrition sensitive agriculture and sustainable healthy diets.

d) IFAD management should put in place core additional nutrition contributions similar to the additional climate change contributions.

Evaluation matrix

Evaluation sub-questions	Main lines of investigation	Data collection/data sources
EQ 1 – Relevance and continued relevance - To what extent are IFAD's current nutrition priorities and approaches relevant and sufficiently tailored to national priorities and IFAD's target group needs, the global context and IFAD's corporate commitments and priorities?		
1.1. To what extent and in what ways are IFAD's nutrition priorities and approaches aligned with the evolving global nutrition and food security context and with IFAD's priorities as an organization? **(Assumption 7, Assumption 12)**	• Evidence of alignment of the narrative in the action plan with global nutrition priorities and IFAD's priorities as an organisation • Evidence that IFAD's action plan priorities and approaches continue to be relevant with the evolving global nutrition challenges • Evidence that IFAD's nutrition priorities and approaches are complementary to broader nutrition agendas	Secondary sources (Block 1)
1.2. How well designed and tailored are nutrition sensitive activities and approaches (applied in IFAD's investments) to needs in specific contexts (regions or countries) and in particular to the needs of IFAD's target group? **(Assumption 1)**	• Evidence that the design of COSOPs and interventions is consistent with country and IFAD's nutrition-priorities and is tailored to different contexts and existing needs • Evidence that investments address the identified country nutritional problems • Evidence that IFAD approaches and targeting mechanisms are effective and functional to reach the poor and nutritionally vulnerable rural people • Evidence that IFAD targeting related to nutrition has taken account of special categories of most vulnerable persons, including women and children, rural youth, and persons with disability • Evidence that IFAD's approaches value and promote indigenous and Indigenous Peoples' knowledge on nutrition, including diverse food sources, cultural and social practices linked to gathering and production of nutritious food • Extent to which nutrition pathways and approaches applied in IFAD's investments are in line with the most updated knowledge at country and global levels on nutrition/NSA	Secondary sources (Block 1) Country studies (Block 5)
1.3. Is IFAD using the design phase to its maximum advantage to ensure project success for nutrition?	• Extent to which the design is based on in-depth context and problem analysis which is cognisant of the broader	Secondary sources (Block 1) Country studies (Block 4)

Evaluation sub-questions	Main lines of investigation	Data collection/data sources
(Assumption 1)	nutrition environment and the opportunities and challenges • Extent to which the quality of design is up to standard in particular in relation to the choice of entry points, nutrition pathways (and if these are included in the TOC), partners and population needs • Extent to which design maximizes opportunities for advancing IFAD's nutrition priorities and prepares the ground for strong implementation • Extent to which the design phase builds understanding and explores/strengthens the partnerships that are needed for ensuring attention to nutrition in implementation, capacity development and policy engagement • Extent to which the current criteria for validating nutrition sensitive projects at design are relevant including how and if they should be improved	
EQ 2 – Coherence - To what extent are IFAD's nutrition efforts maximizing IFAD's unique comparative advantage and how have been partnerships, policy engagement and knowledge management instrumental to achieve nutrition-results?		
2.1. How clear is IFAD comparative advantage in nutrition to internal and external stakeholders, and how well adapted is it in different contexts? **(Assumption 6)**	• Degree of clarity internally of IFAD's role and positioning in nutrition • Extent to which IFAD's comparative advantage in nutrition has evolved over time • Identification of specific areas of comparative advantage, including potentially in school-based interventions • Analysis of partners' perceptions of IFAD's placement and perceived specific role in the international and national spectrum in terms of nutrition • Extent to which globally and at the country level IFAD is recognized (by governments and other partners) for its comparative advantage in nutrition-sensitive agriculture	Regional FGD (Block 3) Thematic and Country studies (Block 4)
2.2. How effective has IFAD been in identifying, pursuing and nurturing the partnerships at different levels (global and country) to ensure delivery of results? **(Assumption 9)**	• Extent to which partnerships have worked well or not and why in relation to specific issues (with a focus on capacity strengthening, evidence-based policy influence and dialogue) and contexts	Global staff and partners survey (Block 2) Regional FGD (Block 3) Thematic and Country studies (Block 4)

Evaluation sub-questions	Main lines of investigation	Data collection/data sources
	• Nature and significance of global level nutrition partnerships and evidence of the influence these have had • Analysis of the specific character and strength of IFAD's engagement with governments on nutrition in different phases of the project/programme cycle • Extent to which IFAD was able to forge relationships with relevant government ministries to promote synergies and cooperation necessary to produce successful nutrition-sensitive agriculture interventions • Analysis of the specific character and evolution of IFAD's relationship and co-financing arrangements with IFIs (including WB-GASFP) and other resource partners on nutrition, unexplored opportunities, and the (further potential) contribution of this relationship to nutrition priorities • Analysis of the specific character and relationship with NGOs and research organisations, and opportunities (for enhanced) contribution to IFAD's nutrition priorities • Evidence of IFAD's work and role in nutrition being complementary to that of other UN agencies, in particular RBAs, at country and global levels • Analysis of the extent to which IFAD has played a unique influencing role or engagement role vis-à-vis specific partners such as the private sector	
2.3. In what ways has IFAD's policy engagement globally and at country levels sought to advance the nutrition agenda, been complementary to the work of other partners, and appropriately evolved over time? **(Assumption 1 and Assumption 7)**	• Extent to which IFAD's policy engagement at national and international level reflects shared priorities with that of other key partners • Extent to which IFAD's policy engagement in nutrition nationally and internationally is demonstrating attention to evolving priorities (including links between nutrition and gender, climate change, youth and Indigenous Peoples) • Evidence that in policy engagement IFAD is using (and seeking to maximize) its specific position and its comparative advantage in nutrition	Thematic and Country studies (Block 4)
2.4. Are IFAD's efforts at knowledge management in nutrition commensurate to	• Evidence that nutrition knowledge is being used internally for decision making	Secondary sources including impact assessments (Block 1)

Evaluation sub-questions	Main lines of investigation	Data collection/data sources
the needs of the organization and its partners and effectively supporting its work? **(Assumption 8)**	• Extent to which IFAD has drawn lessons from its nutrition experience in countries • Evidence that lesson learning from IFAD and partner programmes are being taken on board and implications used to inform IFAD's operations, and changes in approaches and strategies. • Evidence that IFAD nutrition knowledge/products are relevant to internal and external stakeholders – at country and global levels • Views on the utility and comprehensiveness of IFAD's nutrition indicators in providing a view of IFAD's work • Extent to which knowledge generation is focussing on innovative practices and advancing the understanding of barriers to achieving shared nutrition goals. • Extent to which adequate human resources are assigned to nutrition focused knowledge management activities	Country studies (Block 4) Virtual round tables (Block 5)
2.5. To what extent and how have supplementary funds and grants been instrumental to mainstream nutrition in the organization and have been appropriately used for specific investments? **(Assumption 9)**	• Extent to which grants and supplementary funds (including the Indigenous Peoples' Assistance Facility (IPAF)) have contributed to build capacities, develop knowledge and tools and helped to mainstream nutrition in the organisation • Extent to which grants and supplementary funds have contributed to integrate nutrition in IFAD funded investments at country level	Secondary sources (Block 1) Regional FGD (Block 3) Country studies (Block 4)
EQ 3 – Effectiveness - Are IFAD's nutrition-sensitive interventions (operations and COSOPs) and in particular nutrition pathways and approaches effective for delivering against nutrition objectives and what progress have been made in achieving and contributing to nutrition-results?		
3.1. What are the main pathways and approaches implemented in IFAD-funded operations to support the nutrition agenda?	• Description of main nutrition approaches and pathways and clustering	Secondary sources (Block 1) Country Studies (Block 4)
3.2. How and in what ways is IFAD contributing to nutrition results at country level and what is the contribution to improved dietary diversity? **(Assumption 8, Assumption 12)**	• Evidence of nutrition results at country level against different pathways used, strengths and weaknesses • Evidence of contribution to availability and affordability of diverse, nutritious, healthy and safe food and of changing nutrition KAP • Likelihood and emerging evidence of contribution to dietary diversity	Secondary sources (Block 1) Country studies (Block 5)

Evaluation sub-questions	Main lines of investigation	Data collection/data sources
	• Evidence that results are bringing quality benefits to the groups that are priorities for IFAD • Extent and type of interventions that have proven to be more effective in delivering the nutrition results that IFAD has set out to achieve, with due regard for different contexts and different IFAD target groups • Identification of good practices and poor practices (what did not work) and challenges, understanding of obstacles and possible solutions • Extent and type of interventions that amplify impact and outreach • Extent to which interventions have been scaled up and what have been the contributing factors • Identification of examples of IFAD promoted approaches that have resulted in strong engagement by MoA in nutrition (e.g. through particular partnerships) and factors that have facilitated this • Extent to which IFAD's overall country investments adheres to good principles and 'do no harm' to nutrition or household food security • Existence of negative and unintended outcomes and extent to which IFAD has sought to learn from these and attenuate their effects	
3.3. What evidence is there that IFAD support is generating innovative nutrition approaches and solutions? **(Assumption 8)**	• Evidence of innovations introduced having an impact on nutrition • Evidence of adoption and scale up of innovative nutrition approaches by other stakeholders	Secondary sources (Block 1) Country studies (Block 5)
3.4. How and to what extent are synergies with other IFAD priorities (in particular gender, climate resilience, youth and indigenous people) and different types of activities contributing to results? **(Assumption 9)**	• Extent to which other parts of IFAD's work (IFAD's portfolio) are contributing to nutrition-results and existence of trade-offs • Existing complementarities among different parts of IFAD's portfolio and identification of opportunities not currently pursued for synergies	Secondary sources (Block 1) Virtual round tables (Block 5)
EQ 4 – Organisational set-up - To what extent has IFAD put in place an appropriate and effective enabling environment for the delivery of nutrition objectives?		
4.1. Are there appropriate institutional arrangements for relevant and effective	• Evidence of senior-management commitment to nutrition	Staff and partner perception survey (Block 2)

Evaluation sub-questions	Main lines of investigation	Data collection/data sources
nutrition interventions in place at the corporate level? To what extent has internal nutrition leadership been conducive to achieving nutrition objectives? **(Assumption 2)**	• Existence and adequacy of an enabling organisational set-up and how the global set-up links to and support the regional and the country levels	Country studies (Block 4) Virtual round tables (Block 5)
4.2. Are human resources for nutrition being effectively, efficiently and appropriately deployed at different levels of the organization at critical moments in the project cycle to provide support to implementation and to contribute to IFAD's positioning in nutrition? **(Assumption 3)**	• Evolution of staffing numbers and profiles over the evaluation period • Extent to which the current staffing pathways is appropriate to IFAD's ambitions on mainstreaming nutrition in investments including extent to which there are sufficient capacities to support design and implementation of nutrition-related activities • Extent to which IFAD has the right capacities and allocates sufficient resources to build staff capacities • Extent to which capacity strengthening has focused on the critical entry points	Secondary sources (Block 1) Staff and partner perception survey (Block 2) Country studies (Block 4) Virtual round tables (Block 5) Analysis of evolution of human resources
4.3. Extent to which appropriate institutional arrangements and partnerships for delivering on nutrition are in place at country programme and project level? **(Assumption 4)**	• Extent to which the right institutions and partners have been involved in the implementation of IFAD funded investments (mandate, nutrition expertise, context knowledge …) at country level • Extent to which IFAD has contributed to ensuring capacities in nutrition are available to the implementing partners (e.g. ministries of agriculture) to implement, monitor and assess results, and draw on evidence	Secondary sources (Block 1) Country studies (Block 4) Virtual round tables (Block 5)
4.4. To what extent have the right levels and kinds of financial resources been allocated at different moments in the project cycle and been fully supportive of achieving project objectives? **(Assumption 5)**	• Extent to which adequate resources are allocated at design and implementation stage	Secondary sources (Block 1) Staff and partner perception survey (Block 2) Country studies (Block 4) Analysis of financial resources allocated to nutrition in projects
4.5. To what extent tools introduced for mainstreaming nutrition are appropriate and effectively support delivery on nutrition results? **(Assumption 2)**	• Extent to which IFAD guidelines in place are supporting design, monitoring and implementation of nutrition activities (ex. operation manual, supervision guidance …) • Extent to which nutrition is adequately addressed in the SECAP and this latter is used as a tool for adaptive management for nutrition-related work	Secondary sources (Block 1) Staff and partner perception survey (Block 2) Country studies (Block 4)

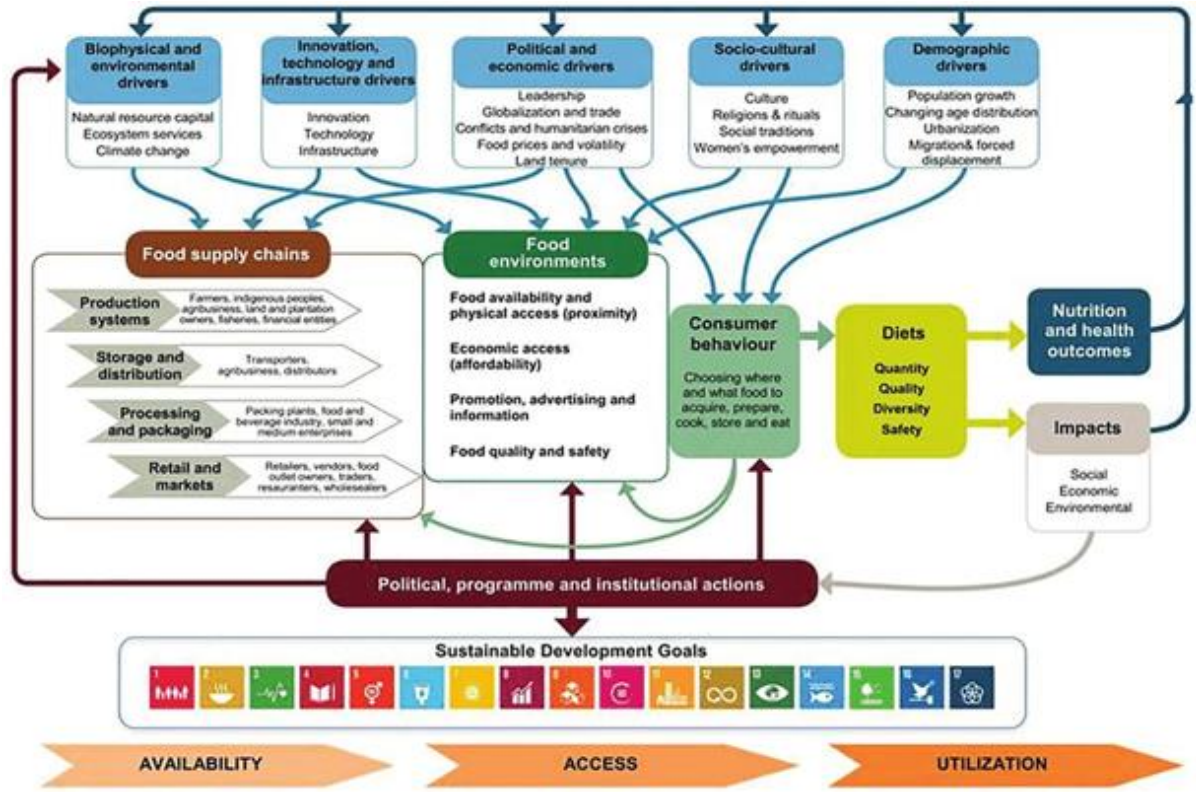
Evaluation sub-questions	Main lines of investigation	Data collection/data sources
	• Extent to which capacity development resources and trainings are supporting IFAD, government project staff and partners staff in delivering nutrition-results • Extent to which there is evidence that IFAD approach for labelling projects as nutrition sensitive (including criteria and indicators) is adequate • Extent to which projects having been labelled as NS increase the likelihood to achieve better nutrition results	
4.6. To what extent are the monitoring and reporting systems collecting the right information to inform decision making? Are efforts at collecting data against nutrition indicators efficient and effective? **(Assumption 2, Assumption 11)**	• Evolution of malnutrition indicators over time • Extent to which IFAD has the right nutrition indicators • To what extent the current reporting system is covering different types of impacts on nutrition (including both improvement of beneficiaries' nutritional status as well as contributions to food systems transformation) • Coherence between nutrition objectives, indicators and reporting system • Quality of data collected • Feasibility of indicators given existing capacities • Extent to which efforts invested is commeasured to information generated • Extent to which information is used for programming and implementation • Comparison of IFAD's approach to measure results on nutrition with other agencies	Secondary sources (Block 1) Staff and partner perception survey (Block 2) Country studies (Block 4)
4.7. What are other factors explaining project success or failure? **(Assumption 10, Assumption 12)**	• Identification of other factors internal or external to IFAD that explain the success or failure of projects	Country studies (Block 4) Virtual round tables (Block 5)

Elements of the evaluation framework

A. Conceptual framework of food systems for diets and nutrition and IFAD's reconstructed theory of change

The figure below presents the conceptual framework of food systems for diets and nutrition introduced in the report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the CFS in 2017 on nutrition and food systems.

Figure A1
Conceptual framework of food systems for diets and nutrition



Source: HLPE. 2017. Nutrition and food systems. A report by the High level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security. Page 26. Rome.

As described in the report, the constituent elements of food systems are the following (adapted from HLPE, 2017):

- **Food supply chains** – consisting of the activities and actors that take food from production to consumption and to the disposal of its waste. The steps of the food supply chain include: production, storage and distribution; processing; packaging; retail and markets.
- **Food environment** which refers to the physical, economic, political and socio-cultural context in which consumers engage with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food. It consists of: food entry points or the physical space where food is purchased or obtained; features and infrastructures of the built environment that allow consumers to access these spaces; personal determinants of consumer food choices (including income, education, values, skills etc. – these can also be seen as separate from the food environment and in the evaluation were grouped under consumer behaviour as directly influencing it); and surrounding political, social and cultural norms that underlie these interactions.
- **Consumer behaviour** reflects all the choices and decisions made by consumers, at the household or individual level, on what food to acquire, store, prepare, cook

and eat, and on the allocation of food within the household (including gender repartition and feeding of children).

These elements which are influenced by the drivers shape diets and determine the final nutrition, health, economic and social outcomes of food systems.

This framework was used to reconstruct a Theory of Change with possible outcomes for IFAD's work under the three food system dimensions (see figure 7). First the list of nutrition activities identified in IFAD projects have been classified under the three components of the food system and then transformed into potential outcomes. Project-level outcomes proposed in the Nutrition Action Plan TOC were also added. The final result (reported in the figure below) and the evaluation assumptions were discussed and commented by the nutrition team during a meeting organised for this purpose.

The TOC is organised around three levels, as follow:

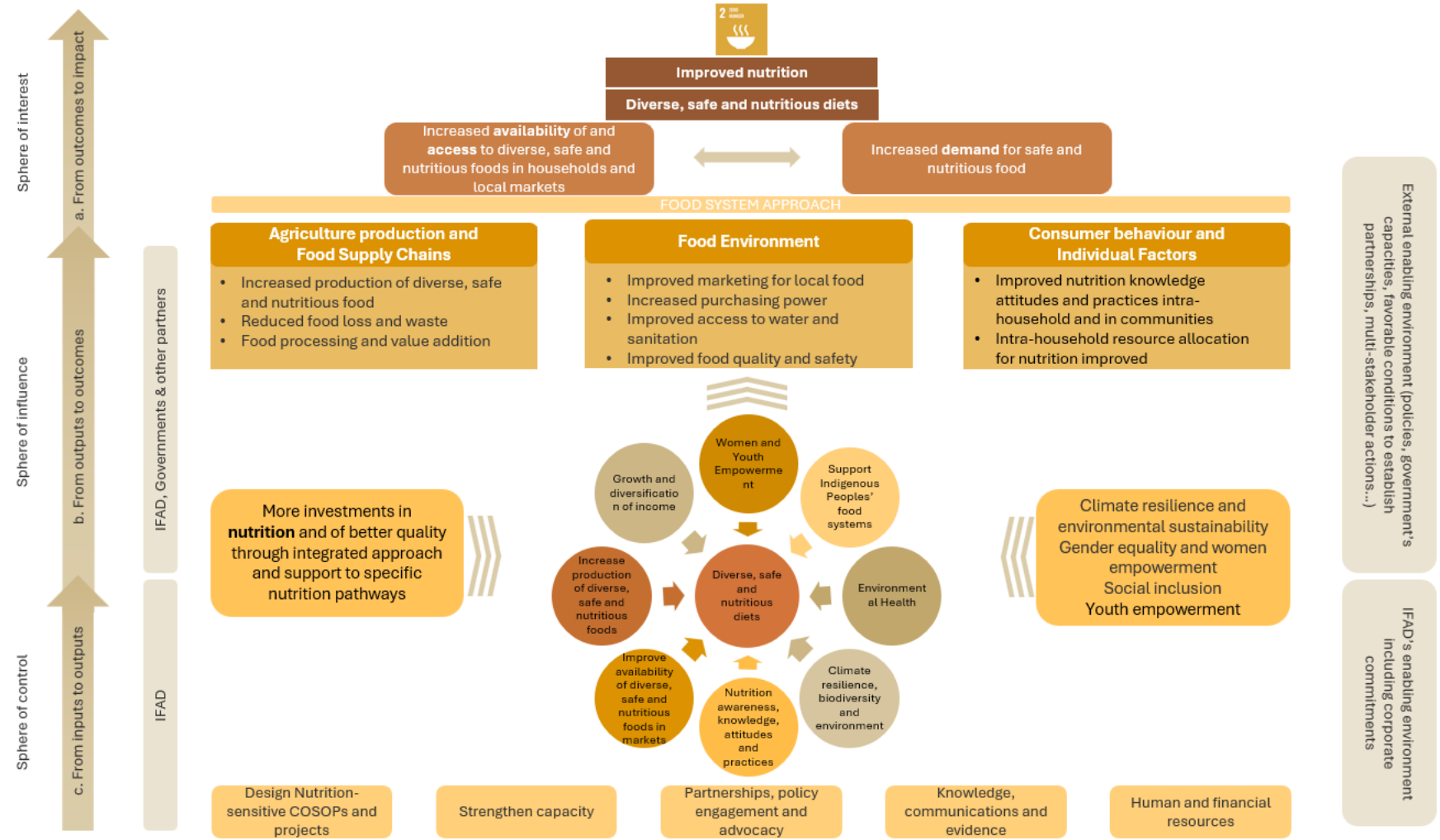
a) IFAD's main goal for nutrition (as stated in the Action Plan) is to contribute to diverse, nutritious and safe diets which will allow IFAD to address all forms of malnutrition, hence lead to improve nutrition and health of beneficiary populations.

b) To achieve this goal IFAD applies a nutrition lens to investments in agriculture, food systems and rural development so as to optimize their contribution to nutrition outcomes. Through different pathways, IFAD's projects play a role in shaping food systems to make them more nutrition sensitive. This will contribute to improving the availability and affordability of diverse, nutritious and safe foods for a healthy diet at all times. At the same time IFAD develops capacities to influence consumer behaviours, improve attitudes and practices and increase demand and use of safe and nutritious food.

c) As reflected in the ToC, nutrition outcomes at country level will be a reflection of the quality of project design, the capacity of government and partners to implement and IFAD's support provided as well as of the strength of partnerships and the existence of an enabling environment in-country. Indeed, the TOC highlights the collaborative nature of IFAD's work and the role that Governments and Partners play as directly involved in the implementation, but also due to the multi-sectorial nature of the approach required to improve nutrition in which many other partners are contributing. Knowledge management, policy engagement, advocacy at country, regional and global level and an adequate allocation of financial and human resources are all important factors of an enabling environment needed to mainstreaming nutrition effectively, and hence, essential conditions to achieve the expected results.

In addition to making explicit these three levels of intervention, the ToC highlights the importance of the internal and external environment to influence likeliness of achieving results. Finally, climate change, gender, youth and social inclusion appear as cross-cutting themes given that these are all linked and interacting with nutrition. The TOC reports reconstructed potential IFAD's outcomes for the different food system dimensions that can be considered examples.

Figure A2
IFAD's theory of change for the evaluation including reconstructed potential outcomes



Source: IOE

The drafting of the ToC, and its discussion with the nutrition team informed the fine-tuning of the evaluation questions and of sub-questions. Key assumptions (see table below) were identified from a review of documentation and inception interviews and set against a general understanding of the organizational and institutional character of IFAD. The assumptions have been reflected as specific lines of inquiry in the evaluation matrix (see annex I). The table below shows in the right-hand column which evaluation sub-question interrogated each of the identified assumptions. The evaluation assessed the extent to which these assumptions have held true and remained valid over time.

Table A1
Evaluation assumptions and their link to evaluation sub-questions

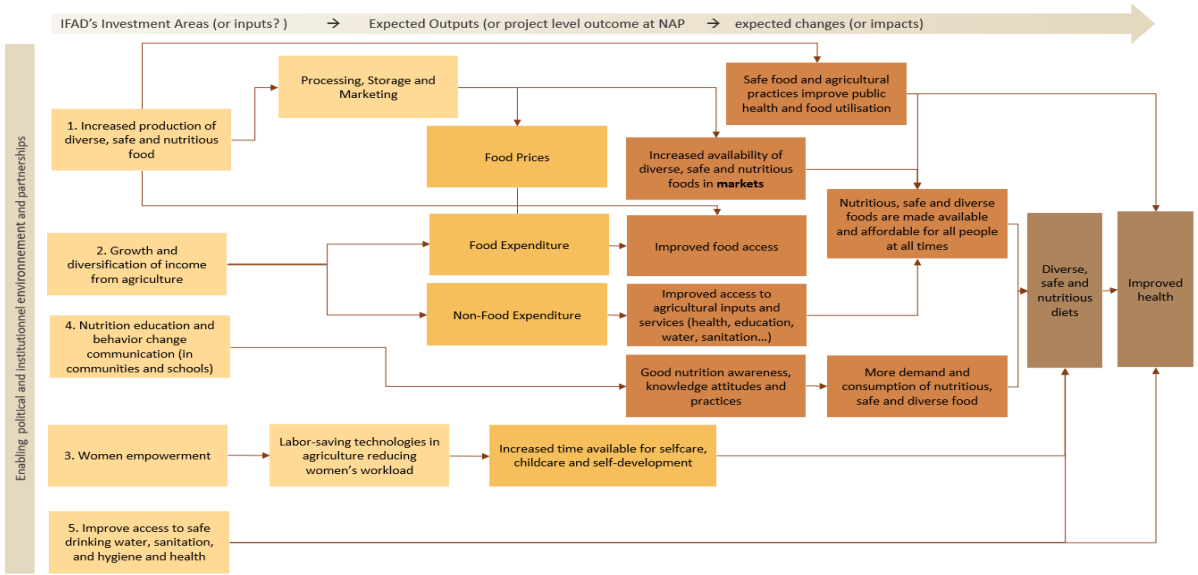
Assumptions from inputs to outputs	**Evaluation sub-question**
1. IFAD's investment projects are effectively designed and supported to address the nutritional issues identified.	1.2, 1.3, 2.3
2. IFAD's organizational culture, systems, processes, and organizational incentives are supportive of nutrition mainstreaming.	4.1, 4.5, 4.6
3. IFAD staff skills / competencies across different levels and parts of the organization are aligned to needs of the Nutrition Action Plan.	4.2
4. IFAD's systems and incentives encourage partnership pursual in ways which reflect IFAD's comparative advantage, advance the implementation of the NAP and are conducive to achieving its objectives.	4.3
5. Sufficient resources are dedicated to nutrition at the design and implementation phase.	4.4
Assumptions from outputs to outcomes	**Evaluation sub-question**
6. Governments, and in particular Ministries of Agriculture, (increasingly) prioritize nutrition and are willing to use IFAD loans to address nutrition priorities.	2.1
7. The external environment is favourable to establish partnerships (Government's openness to partnerships, existing partners with expertise on nutrition, existing multi-stakeholder actions…).	1.1, 2.3
8. IFAD uses quality evidence and learning that allows for nutrition programme design, adaptation and learning across its portfolio and different contexts.	2.4, 3.2, 3.3
9. IFAD's projects operate in a complementary manner internally, and to other actor's interventions, reflecting IFAD's comparative advantage and ensuring adequate mainstreaming of gender and other priorities.	2.2, 2.5
10. Commitment to nutrition is ensured for long enough to allow results to be successful and sustained.	4.7
11. IFAD indicators are able to demonstrate outcome achievement at beneficiary level across different areas of the nutrition portfolio.	4.6
Assumptions from outcomes to impact	**Evaluation sub-question**
12. Contextual political, economic, social, drivers of needs do not undermine the nutrition gains	1.1, 3.2, 4.7

Source: IOE

B. Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture pathways

The nutrition sensitive agriculture approach recognises three main conceptual pathways leading from agriculture to nutrition, which are: (i) production; ii) agricultural income and iii) women empowerment (in particular how decision-making power over households' resources is allocated and how women's time and energy are spent).[251,252] Based on the conceptual pathways between agriculture and nutrition, as described by Herforth, A. and Harris, J. (2014)[253], and desk review of IFAD's main nutrition documents, an attempt was made by the evaluation team to represent IFAD's main nutrition pathways through which investments are expected to result in improved nutritional outcomes. These are shown in figure 8 below and should be considered an example. Additional pathways were added during the evaluation based on project-nutrition outcomes included in the NAP. The nutrition pathways were used to map nutrition interventions assessed as part of the country case studies and as entry points for the analysis and the presentation of results.

Figure A3
NSA pathways in IFAD



Source: IOE based on NSA pathways, IFAD Guidance on mainstreaming nutrition and IFAD Nutrition Action Plan. [254,255,256]

[251] Herforth, Anna, and Jody Harris, 2014.
[252] Suneetha Kadiyala, Jody Harris, Derek Headey, Sivan Yosef and Stuart Gillespie, 2014.
[253] In particular see figure "Conceptual pathways between agriculture and nutrition" at page 3 in Herforth, Anne, and Jody Harris, 2014.
[254] Herforth, Anna, and Jody Harris, 2014.
[255] IFAD, 2019b.
[256] IFAD, 2019c.

Nutrition in IFAD

A. Evolution of nutrition in IFAD

1. Addressing malnutrition has been part of IFAD's mandate since it was established in 1977. The **1977 Founding Agreement** states that in allocating its resources the Fund shall be guided by the following priorities: i) *the need to increase food production and to improve the nutritional level of the poorest populations in the poorest food deficit countries; ii) the potential for increasing food production in other developing countries. Likewise, emphasis shall be placed on improving the nutritional level of the poorest populations in these countries and the conditions of their lives*[257].

2. Documentary evidence shows that IFAD has made efforts to pursue these priorities. For example, the 1994 document '**Towards a Strategy for Improving Nutrition Through Rural Investment Projects**' describes what IFAD is well-placed to achieve and the boundaries of its role. The strategy was formulated as a follow up on the International Nutrition Conference I (ICN I, held in 1992 in Rome). It presents a framework for promoting nutritional objectives through IFAD's investments. The 1994 reflects current thinking in many ways: it calls nutrition a socio-economic and human development goal; puts improved nutrition as central to alleviating poverty; it includes 'food systems perspectives'; it differentiates between "household food security" and "nutrition security"; includes a focus on diets; recognises the importance of building on the experience of the international community; it also talks about the importance of building technical capacity around nutrition and the importance of partnerships with United Nations agencies and donors such as NORAD to achieve nutrition goals. It also lists some examples of projects that have nutrition strongly embedded (e.g. India and Sri Lanka).

Extracts from "Towards a Strategy for Improving Nutrition Through Rural Investment Projects" (1994)

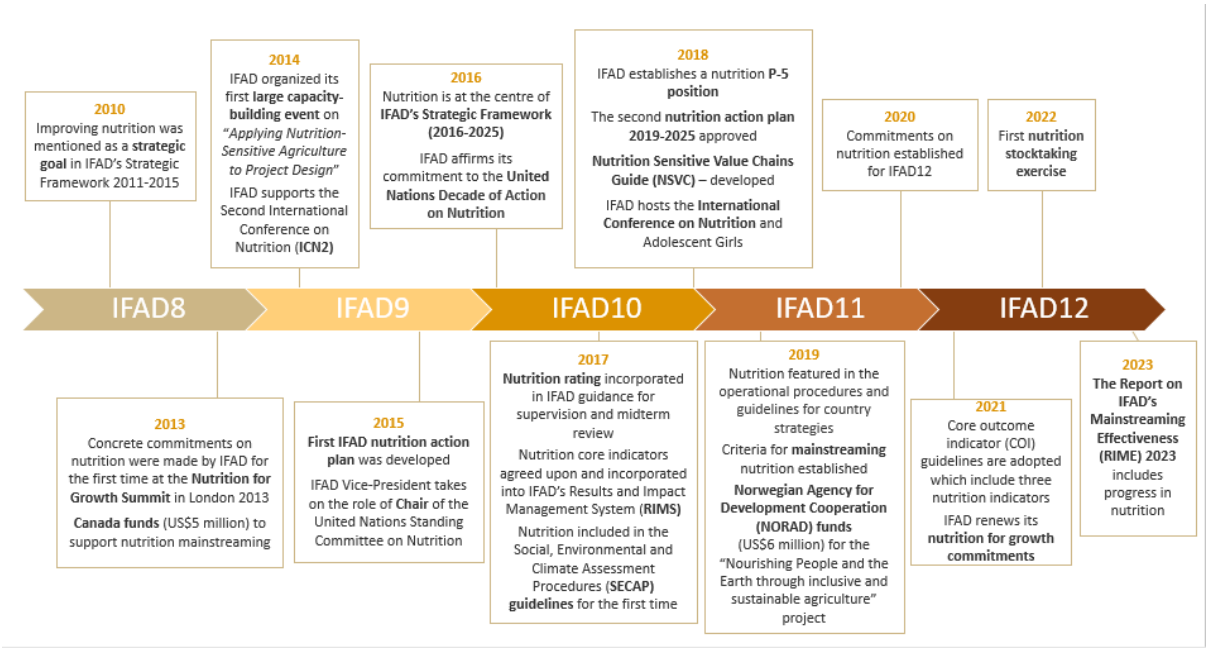
'The challenge facing IFAD is that of designing investment projects for poverty alleviation which give due attention to improve nutrition. This requires the promotion of **synergistic linkages** between agricultural production/productivity, income generation, consumption and human nutrition in **an integrated process**, so that increased project-generated production/income can lead to discernible nutrition improvement for project beneficiaries. ……The choice of appropriate methodologies to promote relevant agriculture-nutrition linkages must be based on the recognition that an individual's nutritional status is the result of a range of inter-acting economic, socio-cultural and bio-medical processes. **As a single-sector lending institution, IFAD cannot relate to all these processes through its lending operations**…..It must therefore complement its operational focus……through **collaboration and co-financing** arrangements with appropriate development partners….. **If delivered uni-laterally and in isolation of other project activities**, may have a limited effect on people's eating and feeding behaviour".

3. While IFAD has always cognisant of the importance of nutrition for human development and poverty alleviation and its role, it was only in the last decade that commitments were made and IFAD's work on nutrition and diets was operationalised (see figure below). In 2016, "nutrition" first appears in the strategic framework as a distinct thematic area under one of the strategic objectives.[258] This is also the first time that IFAD developed an action plan on Mainstreaming Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture[259] (2016–2018), which guided IFAD's commitments during IFAD10. A second action plan

[257] Adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Establishment of an International Fund for Agricultural Development on 13 June 1976, in Rome. Available at https://www.ifad.org/documents/48415603/49486707/agree_e.pdf/3f2a68f9-d839-7072-e5e2-20c72202b095?t=1726605787253
[258] IFAD, 2016a.
[259] IFAD, 2015b.

followed – the Mainstreaming Nutrition in IFAD Action Plan (2019–2025) – guiding the implementation of IFAD11 and IFAD12.[260] An overview of milestone for IFAD on its nutrition journey since 2010 is provided in the figure below.

Figure A4
Recent key nutrition milestones at IFAD



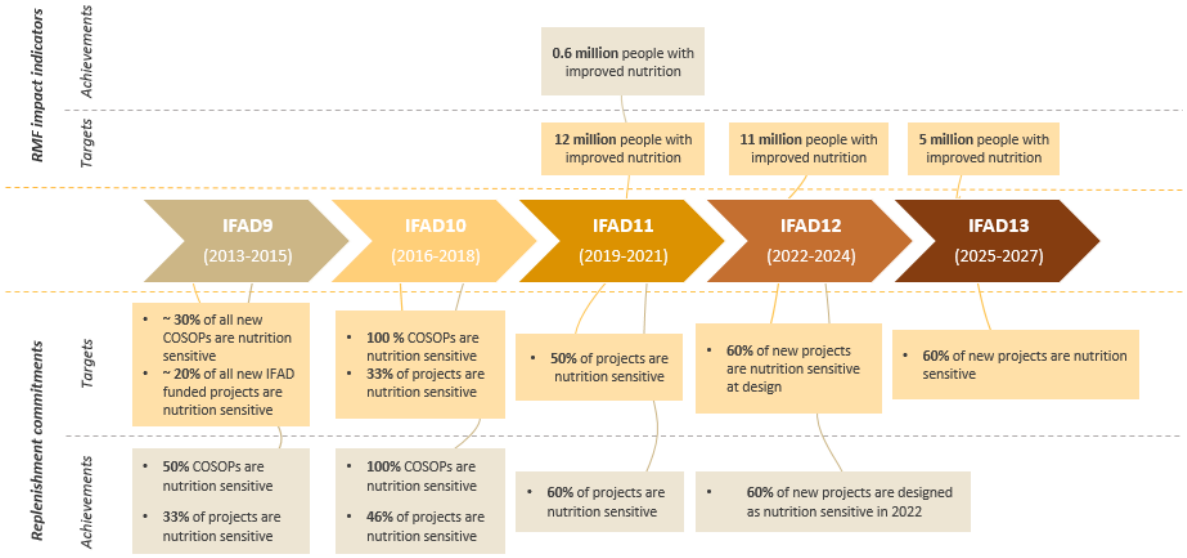
Source: Nutrition stocktaking exercise[261] adapted by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE).

4. **Replenishment commitments** were made starting from IFAD10 onwards to accelerate mainstreaming of nutrition across IFAD's portfolio. IFAD10 set the operational target that 100 percent of country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) and 33 percent of projects should be nutrition-sensitive; the latter target was increased to 50 percent for IFAD11 and 60 percent for IFAD12.

5. **RMF impact targets** were also defined, with the goal of reaching 12 million people with improved nutrition under IFAD11 and 11 million people for IFAD12. While the operational targets were all achieved and even surpassed, corporate commitments to nutrition were found to lag behind[262]. As a result, for the upcoming IFAD13, targets have been adjusted downwards to 5 million people.[263] Further details on the evolution of IFAD's commitments are shown in the figure below.

[260] IFAD, 2019c.
[261] IFAD, 2022b.
[262] IFAD, 2022. IFAD11 Impact Assessment Report, available at https://www.ifad.org/ifad-impact-assessment-report-2021/assets/pdf/IFAD11-Impact-Assessment-Report.pdf
[263] Management proposed reducing the nutrition target from 11 million people to 5 million people based on projections from latest impact assessment data and the proportion of nutrition-sensitive projects closing in IFAD13.

Figure A5
Evolution of nutrition commitments in IFAD[264]



Source: IOE.

6. Increased attention and commitments to nutrition by IFAD have been accompanied by the **introduction of mechanisms to support nutrition mainstreaming and monitoring of results**. For instance, nutrition performance ratings were introduced into IFAD's guidance for supervision and midterm reviews; nutrition has been integrated into IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP); nutrition core indicators have been included in IFAD's monitoring system; and guidelines for mainstreaming nutrition were issued which include clear criteria for COSOPs and projects to be nutrition sensitive.[265] In 2019, IFAD also introduced a framework for mainstreaming environment and climate, gender, nutrition and youth into programmes in a comprehensive, transformational and integrated way.[266]

[264] Sources of information include Nutrition for Growth (2013), replenishment consultation reports and Reports on IFAD's Development Effectiveness.
[265] IFAD, 2019b.
[266] IFAD, 2019a.

B. Elements of IFAD Nutrition Action Plans and guidance

Mainstreaming Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture at IFAD Action Plan 2016-2018	Mainstreaming Nutrition in IFAD Nutrition Action Plan 2019-2025
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. 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.	**First level of results:** IFAD's investments in nutrition contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, directly through the second SDG ("Ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture"). **Second level of results:** In relation to IFAD's Strategic Framework, nutrition investments contribute to IFAD's Strategic Objective 1: "Increase poor rural people's productive capacities". **Third level of results:** In relation to development results, IFAD has committed to improving the nutrition of 12 million people by 2021.
Nutrition **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; i. 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.	**Project-level results**. IFAD's investments contribute to: i. Diverse, nutritious and safe diets: IFAD projects play a central role in shaping food systems and food environments to be nutrition-sensitive, and in ensuring that diverse, nutritious and safe foods for a healthy diet are available and affordable at all times. ii. Improved health: Although IFAD is primarily concerned with the food determinants of malnutrition, within its scope and mandate IFAD's investments aim to contribute to improving the health of beneficiary populations, for example through providing safe drinking water. The action plan in the TOC section emphasises that project-level outcomes are context specific and provide a list of nine project-level outcomes that can be considered IFAD's nutrition entry points, these are: growth and diversification of production; increased availability in markets; growth and diversification of income; nutrition knowledge and practices; empowerment of women and youth (especially adolescent girls); environmental health; Climate resilience and environmental sustainability, indigenous people; and enabling.
Operational objectives: Included as indicators of Action Area 1 on Operations: • All new COSOPs include a nutrition situation assessment, including noting how the COSOP's strategic objectives relate to nutrition.	The **fourth level of the results** framework corresponds to the **overall objective** of this Action Plan: to improve the contribution to nutrition by IFAD's investments. This objective will be measured through the following three key performance indicators:

• One-third of new project design reports are nutrition sensitive, with explicit nutrition objectives, actions and indicators.	• One hundred per cent of COSOPs are nutrition-sensitive. A nutrition-sensitive COSOP includes a nutrition situation assessment and specifies how the COSOP's strategic objectives relate to nutrition. • Fifty per cent of new projects are nutrition-sensitive by 2021. A nutrition-sensitive project has explicit nutrition objectives, activities and indicators. This target will be raised to 60 per cent by 2025. The 2025 target is tentative, to be revised and adjusted based on the results achieved by 2021. • By 2025, 50 per cent of ongoing projects obtain a performance score of 4 (moderately satisfactory) or above on nutrition at the project's mid-term review.
Action Areas: 1. Operations. Design and implement nutrition-sensitive projects, country strategies and grant; 2. Capacity strengthening. Develop and strengthen the technical, analytical and managerial capacities of implementing partners, including communities and government institutions; 3. Policy influence, engagement and partnerships (at national, regional and global level); 4. Knowledge and evidence; 5. Organizational capacities at IFAD.	**Action Areas:** 1. Designing nutrition-sensitive COSOPs and projects; 2. Implementation capacity; 3. Policy influence, engagement and partnerships; 4. Knowledge, communications and evidence; and 5. Human and financial resources.

C. Main capacity development events organised since 2014[267]

Year	Title	Place and Date	Audience	No. participants	Purpose	Source of funding
Pilot Initiatives						
2014	Applying Concepts of Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture and Rural Development to Project Design	Rome, 15-18 July	IFAD Staff, FAO Staff and Consultants.	24	A prototype training and sensitization initiative by IFAD designed to introduce/familiarize program professionals with project design work involving nutrition-sensitive agriculture.	Canada
2015	Integrating gender and nutrition-sensitive approaches into IFAD operations	Madhya Pradesh (India), 23 - 27 Nov	Project Staff from India, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka		Develop capacities on practices and methodologies to ensure integrating gender and nutrition sensitive approaches into IFAD operations.	
2016	How to integrate gender and nutrition sensitive approaches into IFAD operations	Rome, 21 November 2016	IFAD, FAO and WFP Staff, and Consultants	25	Pilot session directed to divisional gender focal points, gender and targeting consultants who are regularly involved in IFAD's design and supervision missions, and staff and experts from FAO and WFP.	
Regional Knowledge and Experience Sharing						
2018	Workshop on nutrition mainstreaming for project focal points in ESA	Maun, 5-7 March 2018	PMU Staff, Botswana SUN focal point, Governmen t Partners, RBA country offices colleagues, other relevant partners.	87	Follow-up capacity building and learning event for project staff in the ESA region on mainstreaming nutrition, focusing on challenges at implementation (for on-going nutrition sensitive projects) as well as entry points for mainstreaming nutrition (for projects not nutrition sensitive).	Canada
2018	Capacity Strengthening workshop - Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture and Rural Development - LAC	Panama, 5-7 November 2018	PMUs staff, local consultants and government, IFAD staff (LAC and ECG)	46	Develop the capacity of participants in design and implementation of nutrition-sensitive interventions in agriculture and rural development projects.	Canada
2019	West and Central Africa Regional Capacity building workshop on nutrition-sensitive agriculture and rural development	Abidjan, 5-7 March 2019	PMUs staff	70	Explore linkages between nutrition and other cross-cutting issues specifically women's empowerment and climate change. While analyzing pathways for nutrition outcomes.	Canada
2023	WCA Regional Knowledge and Experience Sharing Workshop on Nutrition	Abidjan, 28-30 November 2023	PMUs staff, Governmen t partners, IFAD staff	60	Share experience and dialogue on how to optimise the contribution of agriculture to nutrition within the context of food systems in WCA region	Norway
2024	ESA Regional Knowledge and Experience Sharing Workshop on Nutrition	Nairobi, 11-13 June 2024	PMUs staff, Governmen t partners, IFAD staff	41	Share experience and dialogue on how to optimise the contribution of agriculture to nutrition within the context of food systems in ESA region	Norway
2024	NEN Regional Knowledge and Experience Sharing Workshop on Nutrition	Rome, 8-10 July 2024	PMUs staff, Governmen t partners, IFAD staff	70	Share experience and dialogue on how to optimise the contribution of agriculture to nutrition within the context of food systems in NEN region	Norway

[267] The table does not include country level events and technical experts exchanges.

Year	Title	Place and Date	Audience	No. participants	Purpose	Source of funding
2024	APR Regional Knowledge and Experience Sharing Workshop on Nutrition	Cambodia, 6-8 November 2024	PMUs staff, Government partners, IFAD staff	60	Share experience and dialogue on how to optimise the contribution of agriculture to nutrition within the context of food systems in APR region	Norway
Online Regional Labs						
2021	Nutrition Learning Labs: WCA	Online, 17 Mar	PMU and IFAD Staff	75	Equipping participants with the knowledge and skills to improve the effectiveness of the nutrition sensitive investments in the region.	
2021	Nutrition Learning Labs: APR	Online, 12 Oct	PMU and IFAD Staff	56	Equipping participants with the knowledge and skills to improve the effectiveness of the nutrition sensitive investments in the region.	
2021	Nutrition Learning Labs: ESA	Online, 3 Nov	PMU and IFAD Staff	78	Equipping participants with the knowledge and skills to improve the effectiveness of the nutrition sensitive investments in the region.	
2021	Nutrition Learning Labs: NEN	Online, 15 Dec	PMU and IFAD Staff	16	Equipping participants with the knowledge and skills to improve the effectiveness of the nutrition sensitive investments in the region.	
2023	Nutrition Learning Labs: LAC	Online, Oct - Dec	PMU	66	Training targeting single PMUs organised to equipe participants with the knowledge and skills to integrate nutrition pathways into the gender and social inclusion strategies of the different projects. Trainings involved PMUs of the following projects: Rural Adelante, El Salvador; Avanzar Rural, Perú; PRODECAFE, Cuba; PROSAF, Argentina; PROCAMELIDOS, Bolvia.	
E-learning Courses						
2022	Operations Academy - Pillar II - Mainstreaming Priorities in IFAD Operations	Self-pace online course	IFAD Staff		Introductory course on mainstreaming priorities in IFAD	
2022	Operations Academy - Pillar III - Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture	Self-pace online course	IFAD Staff		Introductory course on NSA	

D. List of IFAD's project level nutrition outcomes

1. **Growth and diversification of production.** To achieve improvements in diet quality, nutrition-sensitive projects should invest in a range of nutrient-rich foods that contribute to enhancing dietary quality for all, such as: fruits and vegetables; animal-sourced foods, including livestock and fish; neglected and underutilized species; bio-fortified crops; and staples such as grains, roots and tubers.
2. **Increased availability in markets.** Since food is not only produced – but also processed, distributed, marketed and consumed – projects should mainstream nutrition at all stages of agricultural value chains, leveraging the nutrition potential of markets and the private sector, with a special focus on ensuring food safety and reducing food loss and waste.
3. **Growth and diversification of income.** It is now widely accepted that raising incomes and production alone does not automatically lead to improvements in nutrition. However, when accompanied by additional investments, nutrition knowledge and awareness – along with the empowerment of women and youth – income can be an important pathway to the achievement of improved diets and health. Projects should therefore accompany efforts to increase and diversify income with essential complementary investments that ensure that the incomes are used in ways that improve nutrition.
4. **Nutrition knowledge and practices.** Projects should also aim to raise nutrition awareness as a key means for optimizing nutrition outcomes for rural people, by promoting behaviour change communication and related nutrition education activities to improve: food choices (in production, purchase and consumption); food preparation, processing and conservation; hygiene; and good nutritional practices.
5. **Empowerment of women and youth (especially adolescent girls).** Women's education, empowerment and control over resources are crucial factors for improving nutrition outcomes – not only for themselves, but for their entire families. Women's engagement in agriculture can also have potential negative effects on nutrition. Nutrition-sensitive projects should promote the equality and empowerment of women in ways that help improve nutrition – for example, through: investments in women's access to productive resources, time and labour-saving technologies; income-generating activities; and support to women's voice in decision-making. This also means that boys and men have to be involved, in order to create a conducive environment for change.
6. **Young people** are recognized as agents of change, with a critical role to play in transforming food systems and rural livelihoods and in changing behaviours that are harmful for nutrition. Adolescent girls are a nutritionally vulnerable group, especially given the large number of early pregnancies (which represent 11 per cent of births globally). Pregnant girls are more likely to die during childbirth, be left nutritionally depleted, and give birth to undernourished children who will grow up to be stunted adults, perpetuating the inter-generational cycle of malnutrition. Nutrition-sensitive projects should invest in adolescent girls' nutrition via a number of multisectoral interventions, such as education, behaviour change communication (for example on early pregnancies), water, sanitation and hygiene, and access to resources and jobs to help delay marriage and pregnancy.
7. **Environmental health.** Unsafe water, along with sanitation and health risks introduced by agricultural production (e.g. agrochemicals and zoonoses), are causes of malnutrition, since they affect the body's ability to absorb nutrients and weaken the immune system. To avoid these negative impacts, projects should ensure good management practices that protect natural resources and safeguard against health risks. Projects should also promote the incorporation of water, sanitation and hygiene investments – either directly funded by IFAD, or in partnership with other institutions.
8. **Climate resilience and environmental sustainability.** Projects should aim to strengthen the climate resilience of smallholder producers, and environmental sustainability, in order to improve the diets of the rural poor. Dietary patterns drive

production systems, and their associated environmental impacts in terms for example of emissions and resource footprints. Diets must therefore be assessed not only on their contribution to health and nutrition, but also on their potential to mitigate climate change and reduce the environmental impact of food production. Thus projects should adopt climate-smart and diversified food systems to ensure sustainable livelihoods and improved diets for rural families.

9. In **indigenous peoples'** communities, the nutrition transition characterized by a rapid modernization of diet and lifestyle is associated with a rising prevalence of chronic diseases. The effects of climate change are leading to rapid dietary changes, loss of traditional food systems, dependency on imported and industrial food, malnutrition and severe health problems. In spite of the high nutritional value of indigenous foods, and the undeniable contribution of indigenous livelihoods to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, their livelihoods are still not well understood and appreciated. Projects need to adopt a multifaceted, interdisciplinary and holistic approach. Key recommendations by indigenous peoples on how IFAD should support their food systems include the following: "(i) take a holistic approach to support and strengthen indigenous peoples' food systems, sustainable livelihood practices, governance systems, and cultural and spiritual values; (ii) raise awareness of the values of indigenous peoples' food systems, including through consumer awareness campaigns, food fairs and educational curricula; and (iii) facilitate dialogue with the private sector to respect indigenous peoples' food systems and sustainable livelihoods".*
10. **Enabling environment.** Projects should seek to ensure appropriate nutrition governance, strengthened policy frameworks, and multisectoral action, commitments and partnerships, which are essential for creating an enabling environment for nutrition.

E. IFAD's selection of Nutrition knowledge products[268]

Typology	Year	Title
Guide	2018	Nutrition-sensitive value chains: A guide for project design - Volume I
Guide	2018	Nutrition-sensitive value chains: A guide for project design – Volume II
Guide	2019	Supporting nutrition-sensitive agriculture through neglected and underutilized species: Operational framework
Guide	2022	Sustainable and resilient Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems for improved nutrition
Guide	2022	Guide to formulating gendered social norms indicators in the context of food security and nutrition
Guide	2024	Guidelines for measuring gender transformative change in the context of food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture
How To Do Note	2019	How to do note: Mainstreaming nutrition into COSOPs and investment projects
How To Do Note	2021	How to do note: Mainstreaming NUS in national policy for nutrition outcomes
How To Do Note	2021	How to do note: Interventions in support of NUS export markets
How To Do Note	2021	How to do note: Promote neglected and underutilized species for domestic markets
How To Do Note	2021	How to do note: Market needs and emerging opportunities assessment in NUS value chains
How To Do Note	2021	How to do note: Crop selection for diet quality and resilience

[268] The list includes all guides, how to do notes, policy briefs, position papers, literature reviews, reports and studies carried out.

Typology	Year	Title
Literature review	2021	Food system interventions with climate change and nutrition co-benefits: A literature review
Literature review	2023	Addressing overweight and obesity in LMICs in rural development and food systems: A comprehensive literature review
Policy Brief	2019	Policy brief: Investing in nutrition
Position paper	2024	Investing in Livestock for Improved and Resilient Livelihoods, Nutrition and Climate Action
Report	2017	The Nutrition Advantage: Harnessing nutrition co-benefits of climate-resilient agriculture
Report	2019	The Food Loss Reduction Advantage: Building sustainable food systems
Report	2019	The Fisheries and Aquaculture Advantage: Fostering food security and nutrition, increasing
Report	2019	The West and Central Africa Advantage: Fighting fragility for smallholder resilience
Report	2019	The Latin America and Caribbean Advantage: Family farming – a critical success factor for resilient food security and nutrition
Report	2020	Resilient Food Systems 2018-2019 Annual Report
Report	2021	Climate adaptation and mitigation measures for nutrition co-benefits in IFAD investments in Zimbabwe
Report	2021	Climate adaptation and mitigation measures for nutrition co-benefits in IFAD investments in Lesotho
Report	2021	Climate adaptation and mitigation measures for nutrition co-benefits in IFAD investments in Ghana
Report	2021	IFAD's Rural Development Report 2021 - Transforming food systems for rural prosperity
Report	2022	Reinforcing Pacific Food Systems for COVID-19 recovery – key impacts, responses and opportunities to build back better
Report	2023	Addressing overweight and obesity in LMICs in rural development and food systems: A country mapping
Report	2023	2022 Year in Review: Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security and Nutrition
Report	2023	The IFAD-GEF Advantage III: An integrated approach for food systems, climate and nature
Study	2016	Research Series Issue 6: Why food and nutrition security matters for inclusive structural and rural transformation
Study	2018	Research Series Issue 24: Influence of nutrition-sensitive interventions on dietary profiles of smallholder farming households in East and Southern Africa
Study	2018	Research Series Issue 30: Nutrition-sensitive value chains from a smallholder perspective: A framework for project design
Study	2019	Research Series Issue 50: Rural transformation and the double burden of malnutrition among rural youth in developing countries
Study	2022	Research Series 67: Towards food systems transformation – five paradigm shifts for healthy, inclusive and sustainable food systems
Study	2022	Research Series 68: Exploring a food system index for understanding food system transformation processes

Typology	Year	Title
Study	2022	Research Series Issue 72: Climate change and food system activities - a review of emission trends, climate impacts and the effects of dietary change
Study	2022	Research Series 73: Food systems and rural wellbeing: challenges and opportunities
Study	2022	Research Series Issue 74: Women's empowerment, food systems, and nutrition
Study	2022	Research Series Issue 75: Reverse thinking: taking a healthy diet perspective towards food systems transformation
Study	2022	Research Series Issue 77: The role of trade and policies in improving food security
Study	2023	Research Series Issue 91: Addressing overweight and obesity in LMICs in the realm of rural development and food systems

Descriptive analysis of IFAD's nutrition-sensitive project portfolio

A. Nutrition-Sensitive projects database

Criteria for nutrition-sensitive projects were introduced only in 2019 and were used to classify the projects at design. For previous years, the evaluation is relying on a database of Nutrition-Sensitive projects provided by the Nutrition Unit. The database was developed to monitor and track the progress of nutrition mainstreaming activities over time and is based on an effort to categorize projects approved since 2010. The criteria used for the categorization were nutrition objectives, activities, and related nutrition indicators. Based on these criteria, projects were classified under four categories as detailed in Table A2. On total considering projects identified as NS at design and project classified retrospectively the number of NS-projects is 165 (74 reclassified and 91 NS at design).

Table A2
Categories for classifying Nutrition-Sensitive Projects approved since 2010 before 2019

	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	NS
A	**No Nutrition**	The project has no consideration of nutrition, either because it is not relevant given the type of project or the context, or because nutrition was not addressed in any way during project design. It is unlikely that the project will have a significant impact on nutrition. Specifically, projects in this category: - Do not incorporate any nutrition goal/PDO/outcome/output or associated indicators in the logical framework and/or only incorporate the child malnutrition anchor indicator at impact level. And - Do not include activities that address nutrition concerns in any relevant way and/or only include activities remotely related to nutrition without channeling them towards achieving nutrition outcomes	NO
B	**Minimal consideration of nutrition**	The project has an implicit consideration of aspects that are relevant for nutrition but lacks a clear and coordinated effort that would justify its consideration as nutrition-sensitive. Impact on nutrition is expected to be limited or marginal, and in any case, would not respond to a systematic effort to mainstream nutrition into the project. Specifically, projects in this category: - Only refer to nutrition at the goal/PDO level of the logical framework (for example, through incorporation of the child malnutrition anchor indicator at impact level and an objective focused on food security) And/or - Incorporate some activities implicitly related to nutrition, but without tracing a clear impact pathway, or demonstrating an intentionality of shaping the intervention towards achieving nutrition outcomes	NO
C	**Nutrition - sensitive**	The project addresses a range of nutrition-relevant aspects through a systematic strategy that reflects a significant effort to mainstream nutrition. Although nutrition may not be the primary goal of the project, it is reasonable to expect a plausible impact on nutrition as a result of the intervention. Specifically, projects in this category: - Include nutrition at different levels of the logical framework: aside from the child malnutrition indicator, nutrition is reflected in the PDO, outcome or outputs, and/or its indicators. And - Incorporate a range of activities related to nutrition that can have a plausible impact on nutrition, with an explicit intentionality of contributing to nutrition outcomes	YES
D	**Integrated approach to mainstreaming nutrition**	The project provides an integrated response to a number of nutrition concerns including coordination with sectors outside agriculture, constituting what can be considered 'best practice' in terms of nutrition mainstreaming and programmatic	YES

convergence. It is highly likely that the project will make a significant contribution to nutrition.
Specifically, projects in this category:

- Include nutrition at different levels of the logical framework: aside from the child malnutrition indicator, nutrition is reflected in the PDO, outcome or outputs, and/or its indicators.

And

- Incorporate a range of activities related to nutrition that can have a plausible impact on nutrition, with an explicit intentionality of contributing to nutrition outcomes.

And

- Include policy dialogue / coordination with sectors and institutions outside agriculture to enhance nutritional impact

Source: Programme Management Department (PMD). 2016. Mainstreaming Nutrition-sensitive Agriculture and Rural Development. Nutrition Portfolio Review. IFAD's internal document.

The table below reports criteria defined for Nutrition-Sensitive projects at design introduced in 2019.

Table A3
Requirements for Nutrition-Sensitive projects at design since IFAD11

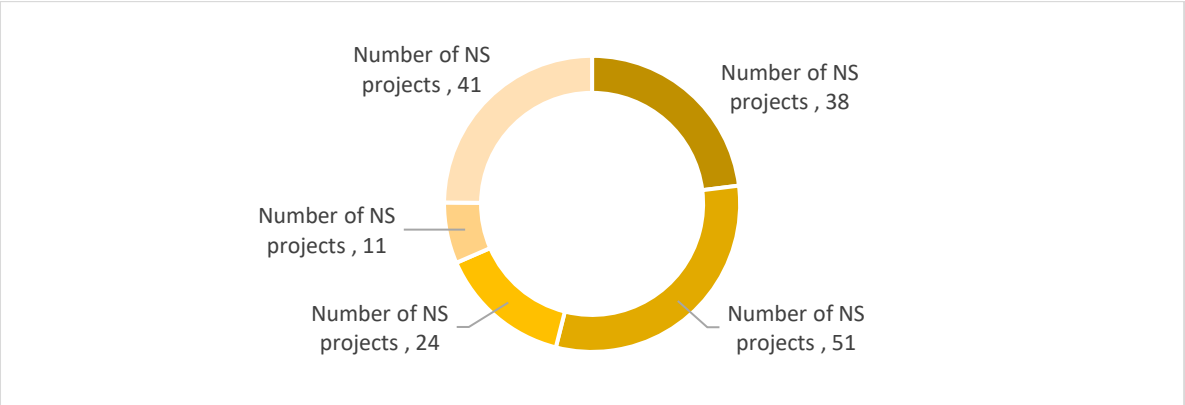
Situation Analysis	✓	Description of national policies, strategies and actors addressing nutrition, analysis of main nutrition problems and underlying causes of malnutrition of affected groups in the project area.
	✓	Identifies nutritionally vulnerable beneficiaries by group.
Theory of Change	✓	The PDR includes nutrition impact pathways, and presents linkage between nutrition related problems, outcomes and impacts.
Mandatory Logframe indicators	✓	Disaggregate Outreach indicator (C.I.1) by sex, youth and (if relevant) indigenous peoples.
	✓	Specify Households provided with targeted support to improve their nutrition (C.I.1.1.8 on Output). Disaggregate by households, household members, sex, youth, and (if relevant) indigenous peoples.
	✓	Include one of these outcome level nutrition indicators: 1.2.8 (MDDW); 1.2.9 (KAP).
HR & Budget	✓	There is dedicated human and financial resources to nutrition and or a partnerships/consultant to support implementation.
	✓	Allocate funds to deliver nutrition-related activities.

Source: IFAD, 2020a.

B. Portfolio analysis

The portfolio analysis focused on the last three replenishment cycles which are the ones covered by the evaluation (IFAD10, IFAD11 and IFAD12). The number of NS-projects identified is 133. The geographical distribution of projects shows a concertation in three regions, ESA, APR and WCA, corresponding to the regions were malnutrition challenges are higher (figure A6).

Figure A6
Distribution of NS-projects by region



Source: Evaluation Team.

Nutrition-sensitive activities overview

The types of investments made by IFAD in nutrition have been aggregated into 8 types of activities and 34 sub-activities, as listed in the Table below.

Table A4
Types of activities supporting nutrition

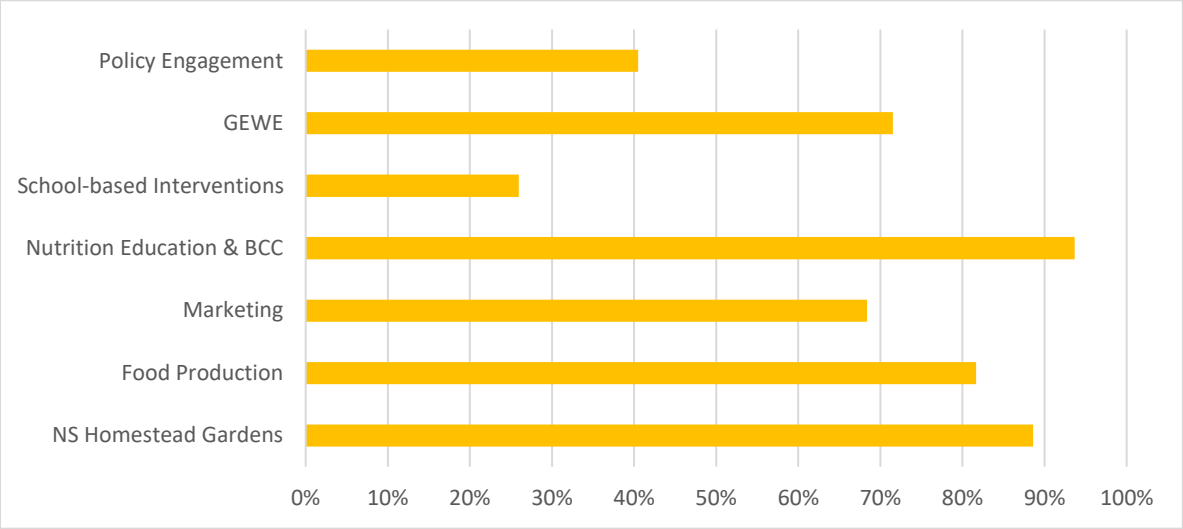
	Intervention type	Description
1	**Nutrition-sensitive home-gardens**	Production of varied and nutritious home-grown foods to supplement and diversify diets, facilitate adequate food consumption at household level, and contribute to increased household income.
2	**Food production**	Support to production of nutrient-rich and safe foods for enhancing dietary quality, such as fruits and vegetables; animal-sourced foods; neglected and underutilized species; bio-fortified crops; and staples such as grains, roots and tubers.
3	**Marketing**	Mainstream nutrition at all stages of agricultural value chains (including processing, distribution and marketing), leveraging the nutrition potential of markets and the private sector, with a special focus on ensuring food safety and reducing food loss and waste.
4	**Nutrition education and behaviour change communication**	Promote behaviour change communication and nutrition education activities to improve food choices (in production, purchase and consumption); food preparation, processing and conservation; hygiene; and good nutritional practices.
5	**School-based interventions**	Improve children's nutritional education and practices through activities such as school gardens, training workshops and school meals.
6	**Gender equality and women's empowerment**	Promote gender equality and women's empowerment in ways that help improve nutrition through investments in women's access to productive resources, time and labour-saving technologies and income-generating activities. Promote water, sanitation and hygiene investments.
7	**Policy engagement**	Contribute to nutrition governance, strengthen policy frameworks, and multisectoral action, commitments and partnerships for creating an enabling environment for nutrition.

Source: IOE, based on IFAD's guidance note on mainstreaming nutrition[269] and a review of the project portfolio.

The categories of activities and sub-activities were designed by IFAD's nutrition team, who also clustered the investments in IFAD11 under each activity and sub-activity. For IFAD10 and IFAD12 projects, categorization was conducted by IOE, drawing on the database developed by the nutrition team to identify nutrition-sensitive projects, and project design reports.[270]

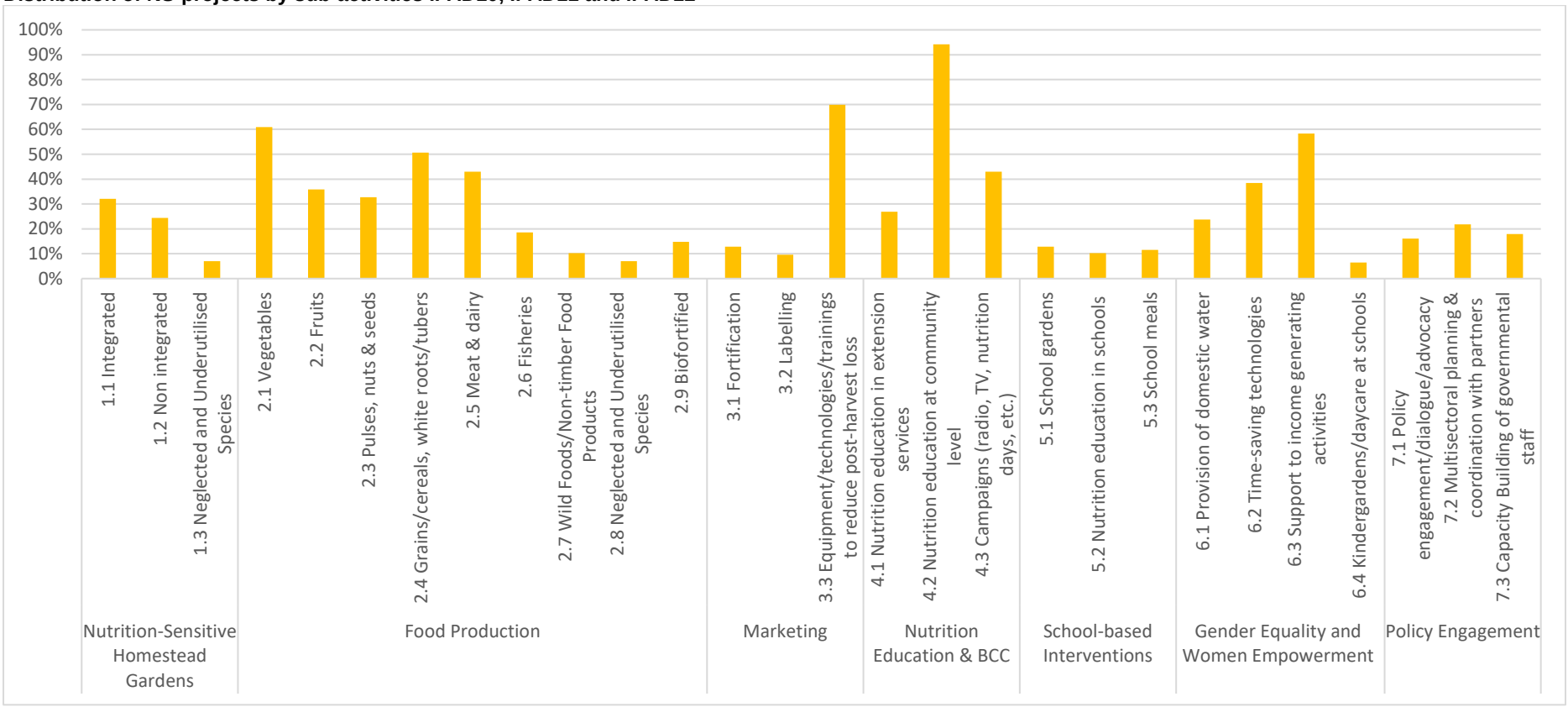
[270]Some projects included nutrition-related activities at implementation (e.g., after receiving suppl. funding). In the cases of VCDP, PADEE, SAPP, S3P, ProPesca, FARMSE, DEFIS, PAPFA, PADAAM, and SIRP, project reports such as Mid Term Reviews or Supervision Missions have also been consulted.

Figure A7
Distribution of activities in IFAD-funded projects IFAD10, IFAD11 and IFAD12



Source: IOE.

Figure A8
Distribution of NS-projects by sub-activities IFAD10, IFAD11 and IFAD12



Source: IOE.

Evidence supporting evaluation findings from CCS

A. Approaches to nutrition of different UN agencies

	IFAD	FAO	WFP	UNICEF	World Bank
Vision	IFAD aims to improve the quality of the diet of its beneficiary rural populations.	FAO's vision for nutrition is a world where all people are eating healthy diets from sustainable, inclusive and resilient agri-food systems.	WFP's vision for nutrition is to support national programmes and capacities to ensure the availability of, access to, demand for, and consumption of healthy, nutritious diets for all, including during complex emergencies.	UNICEF's vision for nutrition is "a world where all children, adolescents and women realize their right to nutrition".	The World Bank Group is committed to supporting countries by building the knowledge base, providing technical assistance for policy/program design and prioritization, and financing the scale-up of evidence-based nutrition interventions.
Mission	IFAD's intends to ensure that acceptable, diverse, nutritious and safe foods, adequate to meet the dietary needs of people of all ages, are available and affordable at all times.	FAO's mission in nutrition is to tackle malnutrition in all its forms by accelerating impactful policies and actions across agri-food systems to enable healthy diets for all	WFP's mission in nutrition is to provide immediate assistance in emergencies, and to address the root causes of hunger so the most vulnerable communities can access the foods they need to be healthy, productive and resilient.	UNICEF's mission in nutrition is to support a global response to the challenge of maternal and child nutrition	The World Bank Group works with partners to build food systems that can feed everyone, everywhere, every day by tackling food insecurity, promoting 'nutrition-sensitive agriculture' and improving food safety. The Bank is a leading financier of food systems.
Approach	IFAD's approach to nutrition mainstreaming primarily entails promoting investments in nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems targeting smallholder producers, who are crucial to the world's food security and nutrition. Beyond agriculture, IFAD also optimizes the	FAO's global contribution to nutrition should be to define and advocate for improvements in all forms of malnutrition through integrated and food based approaches, agri-food systems and healthy diets.	WFP will focus on nutrition considering its broader work in emergency response, social protection, school meals, climate adaptation, resilient food systems, and inclusion.	UNICEF's systems approach to nutrition acknowledges the central role of five systems – food, health, water and sanitation, education, and social protection – in providing nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable diets for children, adolescents and	By supporting the transformation of food systems, the World Bank will improve global food and nutrition security while simultaneously reducing greenhouse gas emissions and bolstering climate resilience for the poorest.

	IFAD	FAO	WFP	UNICEF	World Bank
	contribution of rural development to nutrition outcomes.			women, while ensuring adequate nutrition services and positive nutrition practices across the life cycle.	
Pathways / Entry Points to nutrition	• Growth and diversification of production • Increased availability in markets • Growth and diversification of income • Nutrition knowledge and practices • Women empowerment • Young people • Environmental health • Climate resilience • Indigenous peoples • Enabling Environment	• To generate, collate and share data on healthy diets and agri-food systems • To generate, collate and share evidence on the options for policies and actions across agri-food systems (food supply chains, food environments and consumer behaviour) that enable healthy diets • To convene and participate in dialogues to catalyse policy coherence and collective action across agri-food systems for healthy diets • To build the technical and policy capacity needed to design, implement and scale-up impactful policies and actions • To advocate for and secure commitment to healthy diets as a priority goal for governance of nutrition and agri-food systems	• Reduce the frequency and severity of malnutrition in countries at highest risk of shocks and crises. • Increase the consumption of healthy, nutritious diets among populations at highest risk of malnutrition. • Strengthen national systems and capacities to mitigate the impact of shocks and crises on nutrition, and to sustain long-term improvements in diets. • Influence social norms and practices that impede equitable, inclusive access to healthy nutritious diets.	• Early childhood nutrition • Nutrition in middle childhood and adolescence • Maternal nutrition • Nutrition and care for children with wasting • Maternal and child nutrition in humanitarian action • Partnerships and governance for nutrition	• Food and nutrition security crisis prevention, preparedness, and response • High impact cross-sectoral nutrition and healthy diets solutions • More productive, low-emissions and climate-resilient food system.

	IFAD	FAO	WFP	UNICEF	World Bank
Nutrition Corporate Policies / Strategies	Nutrition Action Plan (2019-2024)	Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition (2021)[271]	WFP Nutrition Policy WFP 2017-2021)[272] Strategy to improve diets and address malnutrition (2024-2030)[273]	UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030[274]	Investment Framework for Nutrition 2024[275]
Presence	• Presence in >90 countries • 50 Country Offices • 4 Regional Offices	• Presence in >180 countries • 135 Country Offices + 6 Liaison Offices • 5 Regional Offices	• Presence in >120 countries • 86 Country Offices • 6 Regional Offices	• Presence in >190 countries • 150 Country Offices • 7 Regional Offices	• Presence in >190 countries • 130 Country Offices
Staff	• Total Staff: >700	• Total Staff: >3.200	• Total Staff: >11.600 • Nutrition staff: As of March 2021, there were 307 dedicated employees working on nutrition, 61 based at headquarters, 30 in regional bureaux and 216 across 59 country offices – mostly in large operations and emergency settings[276].	• Total Staff: 15.600 • In 2022, with the support of 750 staff members and more than 1,500 consultants, UNICEF implemented nutrition programmes in 141 countries, in development and humanitarian settings and in fragile contexts[277]	• Total Staff: >12.000
Budget			The total amount of the Programme Support and Administration budget	In 2022, UNICEF spent US$797.2 million to support nutrition	World Bank Group investments in nutrition have grown dramatically

[271] https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/a76ef638-92fe-45d2-b452-35f8e0f13f76/content
[272] https://executiveboard.wfp.org/document_download/WFP-0000018945
[273] https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000162425/download/?_ga=2.36253472.1845453124.1733128511-1780363571.1733128510&_gac=1.145016192.1733136313.EAIaIQobChMI66rC8POIigMVVKloCR2RczrbEAAYASAAEgLsiPD_BwE
[274] https://www.unicef.org/media/106511/file/%20Nutrition%20Strategy%202020-2030%20(Document)%20-%202021%20Edition..pdf
[275] https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/nutrition/publication/investment-framework-nutrition
[276] WFP (2023). Strategic Evaluation of WFP's work on Nutrition and HIV/AIDS
[277] UNICEF (2022). Nutrtion for Every Child: Global Annual Results Report 2022

IFAD	FAO	WFP	UNICEF	World Bank
		allocated to the Nutrition Division for 2021 was 1.2 percent (US$2.8 million) of the total, while nutrition activities account for 13 percent of WFP's global budget[278]	programmes across seven regions[279].	since 2012, from about US$12 million to over US$2 billion in 2023

[278] WFP (2023). Strategic Evaluation of WFP's work on Nutrition and HIV/AIDS
[279] UNICEF (2022). Nutrtion for Every Child: Global Annual Results Report 2022

B. Main Pathways to nutrition identified found in the 10 country case studies

	Main Pathways	Type of Activities
Benin	Growth and diversification of production	• Increasing food production (maize, cassava, rice) including nutritious rich foods (e.g. yellow cassava or purple maize flour) (T2) • Home gardens and school gardens to support school canteens (T1)
	Increase availability in markets	• Promotion of access to markets and support for rural entrepreneurship; Reducing post-harvest losses (T3)
	Growth and diversification of income	• Income generating activities, e.g. compost production and the processing of products such as tomato purée
	Climate Resilience	• Support to organic fertilizer production, increased water efficiency (T8)
Burundi	Growth and diversification of production	• Increasing agricultural production; Distribution of dairy cows (T2) • Vegetable gardens[280] (T1)
	Growth and diversification of income	• Strengthening rural finance and supporting rural employment (T3) • Distribution of small livestock (e.g. pigs) and dairy production (T2)
	Increase availability in markets	• Support to dairy cooperatives, storage infrastructures for beans and cereals, rural roads (T3)
	Indigenous Peoples	• Projects took into account Indigenous peoples including marginalised communities in productive activities
Burkina Faso	Women empowerment	• Reducing women's workload and women empowerment through the GALS approach (T6)
	Nutrition knowledge and practices	• Nutrition education, SBCC and cooking demonstrations (T4) • School gardens (T5)
	Growth and diversification of production	• Diversifying production (agriculture, poultry, cowpeas, NTFPs) (T2) • Vegetable gardens (T1)
	Climate resilience	• Water saving techniques in vegetable gardens (T8)
Mozambique	Growth and diversification of production	• Family vegetable gardens (T1) • Production of diverse and nutritious foods (cassava, horticulture, beans and potato); Support to research for development an release of improved seeds (T2)
	Increase availability in markets	• Markets rehabilitation, establishing agri-dealer networks; feeder roads and market information systems; fish preservation; technology for processing, preserving and storing products, processing equipment and training - Nutrition sensitive technology transfer (T3)

[280] Only few households have sometimes been accompanied by support for the establishment of vegetable gardens and micro-projects, such as Income Generating Activities (IGAs), Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), as well as the distribution of small livestock. When this multisectoral approach was implemented, it made it possible to address several determinants of malnutrition beyond simple food security by including awareness-raising on hygiene, sanitation and health care practices in addition to dietary diversification.

	Main Pathways	Type of Activities
	Nutrition knowledge and practices	• Nutrition education and SBCC activities (T4)
	Climate resilience	• Multifunctional water systems and water saving techniques in vegetable gardens; Multifunction water systems include water for families' consumption, irrigation and animal consumption. (T8)
	Women empowerment	• Women empowerment - through GALS methodology (T6)
Zimbabwe	Growth and diversification of production	• Increased production of diverse, safe and nutritious foods (T2) • Promotion of key-hole gardens and community gardens (T1)
	Increase availability in markets	• Increased availability of diverse, safe and nutritious foods in markets pathway through promotion of nutrient dense, indigenous and bio-fortified crops (iron fortified beans, vitamin A fortified maize, orange fleshed sweet potatoes) (T3)
	Nutrition knowledge and practices	• Good nutrition knowledge and norms pathway through use of an SBCC strategy (T4) • School nutrition gardens (T5)
	Women empowerment	• Women empowerment, through labour saving technologies and income generation initiatives (T6)
	Climate resilience	• Climate change adaptation strategy through promotion of key-hole gardens in the arid districts
Egypt	Nutrition knowledge and practices	• Nutrition education and SBCC (T4)
	Growth and diversification of production	• Production of diverse, safe and nutritious foods (T2)
	Women empowerment	• Women empowerment (T6)
	Increase availability in markets	• Promotion of marketing associations and organic / quality certification for key products; Rehabilitation/construction of rural roads (T3)
	Climate Resilience	• Promotion of climate-smart farming systems and modernised on-farm irrigation
Laos	Growth and diversification of production	• Increased production of diverse, safe and nutritious foods (T2)
	Increase availability in markets	• Market related infrastructure, storage, private or public-private agro-processing facilities (T3)
	Nutrition knowledge and practices	• Nutrition trainings and SBCC (T4)
	Indigenous Peoples	• Beneficiaries typically included a high degree of upland, non-Lao speaking ethnic groups, so there was some consideration of indigenous peoples by default

	Main Pathways	Type of Activities
Indonesia	Growth and diversification of production	• Increasing production through Farmer Field Schools (T2) • Home vegetable gardens (T1)
	Increase availability in markets	• Improving access to markets, support to cooperatives (T3)
	Nutrition knowledge and practices	• Nutrition education and cooking demonstrations (T4)
Bangladesh	Growth and diversification of production	• Homestead gardens (T1)
	Growth and diversification of income	• Income generation through value chains (T3)
	Women empowerment	• Women empowerment (T6)
	Nutrition knowledge and practices	• Nutrition education and SBCC (T4)
	Climate resilience	• Climate-sensitive activities towards better water management
Brazil	Growth and diversification of production	• Increase and diversification of agricultural and livestock production; improvement of livestock practices (goats and chickens); Creole seeds (T2) • Increasing the availability of nutritious food: through agroecological backyards; increasing self-consumption (T1);
	Increase availability in markets	• Increasing availability of food in markets (e.g. agroecological fairs, school meals); small processing units (T3)
	Women empowerment	• Empowerment of women: through valuing the role of women in production; strengthening women in the leadership of organisations (T6)
	Growth and diversification of income	• Income generation through selling food produce to institutional markets (i.e. school meals) • New opportunities for generating direct and non-monetary income through diversification of products with added value
	Climate resilience	• Access to water: through rainwater harvesting and storage; water reuse systems (T8) • Natural resource management: Creole seeds; recovery of native vegetation; • Mapping of traditional agricultural systems
	Nutrition knowledge and practices	• Knowledge of nutrition: training of school cooks; community training; community kitchens (T4)
	Indigenous peoples	• Indigenous communities are part of the target group and the portfolio includes activities focused on their ways of life and culture (e.g. indigenous food systems and valorisation of food culture, indigenous heritage).
	Enabling environment	• Policy engagement and institutional support, through access to public policies and networking in the territory (T7)

C. Evidence on comparative advantage, partnerships and policy engagement found in the CCS

	Comparative Advantage	Partnerships	Policy Engagement for nutrition and Food Systems agenda
Benin	IFAD's advantage lies in the duration and scale of its funding in support of small-scale producers, which should help to bring about changes in behaviour. However, IFAD is not a visible player in the nutrition sector.	IFAD has been able to create fruitful partnerships with DANA for the development of its nutrition awareness strategy and the monitoring of its activities, and with the WFP for support to school canteens. In terms of UN agencies, IFAD has created an effective partnership with the WFP for school canteens, but links with other agencies have not been sufficiently developed despite the obvious complementarities.	Low level of participation (due to the absence of a country office) in national platforms dedicated to nutrition despite its comparative advantage in supporting the transformation of food systems
Burundi	IFAD has a comparative advantage thanks to its wide geographical coverage, large financial amounts and long project duration. IFAD also has a unique comparative advantage in nutrition through its intervention along agricultural value chains, but this role is perceived as segmented (siloed approach).	Collaborations with other UN agencies have been sporadic and opportunistic rather than strategic since IFAD has shown difficulties in fully integrating into joint programmes of UN agencies. One short-term partnership with WFP was mentioned for the supply of school canteens with milk. In addition, the scattering of nutrition interventions in IFAD projects, due in part to limited resources to this area, has not been complemented by collaborations with other agencies. Difficulty to bring other international partners into IFAD-funded programmes, which has been a major obstacle.	IFAD does not participate in the policy dialogue on nutrition at the national level Multisectoral collaboration remains under-exploited
Burkina Faso	The duration of projects (long lasting continuity) IFAD is recognised as having added value in its work on value chains and nutrition-sensitive agriculture	The projects involved a number of national partners during their implementation: government technical services (agriculture, environment, animal resources), NGOs and a research centre. In the past, partnerships with FAO and WFP had been established for implementation, but these were not based on the added value of these agencies and as a result did not continue.	IFAD's involvement in nutrition governance is limited, mainly because IFAD country office has just opened and has a limited staff, which does not allow regular participation in the nutrition platforms and meetings.

	Comparative Advantage	Partnerships	Policy Engagement for nutrition and Food Systems agenda
		More recently a collaboration between IFAD, FAO and WFP has been established to support the PISANS (Programme Intégré de Soutien à l'Alimentation et à la Nutrition Scolaire) presidential initiative and the joint United Nations food system initiative, co-leaded by WFP, FAO and IFAD for which nutrition is a strategic focus. At the time of the CCS this was not yet operational.	
Mozambique	Comparing to other UN agencies, IFAD's comparative advantages are: strong capacity to mobilise resources (including for nutrition), the long duration of projects (including addressing nutrition issues) and the fact that implementation is rooted in government structures (departments) - advantage is that IFAD is perceived by Government's institutions as "following the Government's mechanisms, procedures and norms, unlike other UN and international organizations". However, its role as a 'specialised agency' has not been taken advantage of, and in the eyes of the government it is considered a 'bank'.	IFAD has managed to establish some nutrition-related partnerships within the scope of its projects. For example, PROCAVA has established a key partnership with CIP (International Potato Centre) which focused on the promotion of Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potatoes (bio fortified). Under PRODAPE, partnerships with WFP's Emergency Response Program and School Feeding program were established on promoting "institutional markets" for the aquaculture fish through the e-voucher scheme, i.e., public purchases from small producers to supply the school feeding programme. Partnerships with NGOs that act as service providers have also been established within the framework of nutrition promotion activities (campaigns, awareness-raising actions, trainings, and SBCC). Collaboration/Partnerships with UN agencies has been sporadic and mainly at a strategic level[281], rather than operational (with the exception of the EU funded MDG1) project.	IFAD is part of different multi-stakeholder dialogue spaces for nutrition (including the Nutrition Partners Forum), but its effective participation in influencing policies is very limited due to a very limited staff for too many demands, which limits more effective dialogue and coordination with this agency. There is potential for IFAD to take on a more relevant role in the dimension of policy influence, including for nutrition. IFAD and WB are seen by other UN partners as having a role in policy dialogue with the government in the area of agriculture and nutrition. Given the strong resource mobilisation capacity of these two IFIs, they have great potential to influence the nutrition policy agenda. IFAD is not actively participating in the national discussion on the Agenda and Road Map for Sustainable Food Systems led by the Ministry of Agriculture which has seen the active participation of the FAO, WFP, GAIN and AGRA.
Zimbabwe	IFAD's comparative advantage is being the only multilateral investment lender in the country, being close to the	SIRP fostered formal and informal partnerships with relevant non-governmental stakeholders to promote the NSA agenda and implementation of its activities.	It is worth noting that SIRP program contributed to the bio-fortification policy dialogue which ultimately resulted in the government passing the Zimbabwe National Food

[281] For example, IFAD actively participated in the preparation of the "UN Agenda for the Reduction of Chronic Undernutrition", a process developed within the UN system itself in order to generate consensus and a common action plan to improve policy and programming around chronic undernutrition.

	Comparative Advantage	Partnerships	Policy Engagement for nutrition and Food Systems agenda
	government and its focus on the most vulnerable. IFAD is working through the government and within the government systems, thus contributing to capacity strengthening of government staff, and allowing for skills transfer and sustainability of human capital post project.	SIRPs partnership with Cluster Agricultural Development Services (CADS) was hampered by non-performance issues and delays in funds disbursements. SIRP also partnered with Harvest Plus, a technical partner with extensive expertise in promoting the production and consumption of bio-fortified crops. Nutrition Action Zimbabwe contributed to the baseline study. Additionally, IFAD worked with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, and the multi sectoral Food and Nutrition Security Committees at the district level on training on nutrition and policy dialogue, and a number of seed houses for seed fairs.	Fortification Strategy (Industrial Food Fortification, Bio-fortification and Home Fortification 2022 – 2026). IFAD organised in the framework of Zimbabwe- SIRP, a nutrition policy dialogue workshop with Ministry of Agriculture and other stakeholders including FAO, UNICEF and WFP. IFAD was also part of the Food Systems Summit and has been engaged by the Ministry of Agriculture to partner in the development of Food Systems Transformation Strategy 2025-2030. The SIRP Nutrition Specialist participated in the WFP platform for the home grown school feeding program and the UN SUN initiative. The lack of IFAD's in country presence in Zimbabwe presented a missed opportunity for IFAD to take full advantage of its potential to influence policies and strategic directions towards nutrition.
Egypt	While partners widely recognize IFAD's added value of targeting smallholder farmers and the poorest people in marginal and vulnerable areas, its comparative advantage on nutrition is not emphasized.	Project design reports identified a number of partnerships to be promoted with key stakeholders engaged in nutrition. The evaluation found that limited partnerships were implemented on the ground and that an untapped potential for synergies between IFAD and development partners exists.	While the 2018 COSOP places strong attention to the policy dimension and nutrition appears among key areas for policy engagement no evidence was found in relation to any result in that area. Limited achievements appear to be linked to the lack of a policy engagement strategy and dedicated resources (financial and human), effective partnership with development partners, limited availability and use of knowledge from projects.
Laos	Partners saw IFAD as contributing to nutrition to some extent, but the organisation was mostly viewed positively with regard to its ability to reach smallholders farmers	WFP was the main partner for the implementation of nutrition activities and developing the approach in the portfolio. Few examples of coordination with other partners were found. UNICEF, the SUN networks, and the EU have all been important players in Nutrition in Laos, but IFAD has not maintained functional partnerships with them, despite some intention to either in COSOP or project design.	IFAD in partnership with WFP supported the implementation of the National Nutrition Strategy (through GAFSP funding). IFAD is not able to participate in High-level meetings of the UN country team but has contributed to nutrition relevant documents through the RBAs. The main recent contribution was on the dialogue for Pathways to Sustainable Food Systems

	Comparative Advantage	Partnerships	Policy Engagement for nutrition and Food Systems agenda
Indonesia	IFAD is not identified as a key nutrition stakeholder by partners, including some central ministries. While IFAD's role in rural development and agriculture – especially on the production side - is well-known, its involvement in nutrition-specific interventions is limited.	The programme did not established partnerships on nutrition. IFAD's funding model in Indonesia, where all funds are channelled exclusively to the government, limited the possibility of establishing direct partnerships with external agencies.	IFAD is not engaged in nutrition policy dialogue platforms, such as the SUN platform, where good practices are shared among stakeholders to shape nutrition interventions. IFAD's approach in Indonesia has focused on working through government-led projects, with a perception that policy engagement should happen internally within project implementation rather than through broader policy dialogue. This has contributed to its absence from key policy discussions on nutrition, particularly in comparison to the active roles played by other agencies.
Bangladesh	A clear comparative advantage is the strong partnership with the Ministry of agriculture which allows IFAD to have a large reach out to the farming communities. IFAD is able to mobilize additional resources for nontraditional investments area such as NSA and bring together various partners.	There are several actors working on food and nutrition security and IFAD plays a role in bringing them together. IFAD was able to establish important partnerships for technical support to PMUs (FAO and GAIN), policy dialogue (Foresight Initiative, Oxford and Wageningen) and innovation (GAIN). Partnerships could be expanded with departments beyond agriculture in particular involving the health sector.	IFAD's engagement at the policy level is limited by the number of staff in the country team. IFAD is not participating in the discussions on the UNSDCF, where other UN agencies are leading.
Brazil	Comparative advantages identified include: the duration and scale of interventions and focus on the same region; flexibility in implementation, i.e. adjustment or inclusion of new activities; strong commitment to capacity building; and the fact that partnering with IFAD adds credibility to government programmes. In the eyes of the government and partners, IFAD is more than a "bank".	There are partnerships with different actors (e.g. CSOs and social movements, universities, public institutions, etc.). Specific partnerships have been set up with FAO (e.g. EFA study) and the World Bank has adopted IFAD's approach to projects in Bahia (e.g. Bahia Produtiva). IFAD projects include a strong strategy to engage beneficiaries in public policies related to nutrition, especially the PAA, PNAE, Access to Water (cisterns), the National Agroecology Policy and the National Technical Assistance Policy.	Engagement in policy dialogue through projects, particularly at Provincial and Municipal level.

D. Further elements regarding project design found in the CCS

	Design based on in-depth context and nutrition situation analysis	Quality of design to address nutrition	Criteria for validating NS projects
Benin	Yes. Nutrition activities selected based on a situational analysis, although without a strategic vision	Low. Only after NORAD funding in 2019 nutritional approaches were strengthened and refined by integrating family gardens, school gardens, capacity-building in processing and added value; agribusiness; awareness-raising for a change in social behaviour, promotion of technologies to reduce women's workload.	Additional NORAD funding (FS-NORAD) from 2019 onwards has enabled the nutrition approach to be strengthened and refined.
Burundi	No. The factors contributing to chronic malnutrition are poorly identified despite the conduct of an analysis of the integration of nutrition in the IFAD portfolio in Burundi in 2021 and the recommendations resulting from the Evaluation of the 2020 Country Strategy and Programme	Low. The reach of nutrition interventions is limited by a focus on children with MAM and a lack of gender inclusivity. Design not address chronic malnutrition (Burundi has the highest rate in the world).	The design of IFAD's projects in Burundi suffers from a lack of in-depth understanding of the causes of malnutrition and a fragmentation of actions
Burkina Faso	Yes. Identified based on lessons learned from previous projects. A specific study on nutrition was conducted	Good. Adoption of an integrated approach which is relevant to address different causes of malnutrition at different levels, however limited to geographical areas covered by the Norway funds.	Projects not NS at design (designed before IFAD11). Only with NORAD NS activities were strengthened
Mozambique	Yes. IFAD projects include an in-depth analysis of the nutrition context and its causes	Weak. Although the focus on nutrition is strong, by design nutrition has been addressed in a segmented way with a focus exclusively on the consumption side, which limits a comprehensive and holistic connection with food production, food supply, food market dynamics, including the linkage of nutrition with the sustainable food systems approach.	Projects not NS at design (designed before IFAD11).
Zimbabwe	Yes. Design was based on available data with regard to prevalence of stunting across the country	Weak. Initial activities were centred on just nutrition education and some material development. Nutrition activities could only be up scaled through a supplementary grant (NORAD).	Projects not NS at design (designed before IFAD11). Only with NORAD NS activities were strengthened
Egypt	No. Design (COSOP and projects) lacks a deep and comprehensive poverty and nutrition analysis.	Good. Recent projects introduced explicit nutrition-focused approaches centred on the development of	Nutrition-focused approach has only just started to be included

	Design based on in-depth context and nutrition situation analysis	Quality of design to address nutrition	Criteria for validating NS projects
		social infrastructure, drinking water supply, nutrition education and women's empowerment.	
Laos	Not clear. The programme has suffered from a high degree of institutional memory loss and more information around the process for identifying nutrition activities through specific studies or analyses appears to have been lost.	Good. There was an alignment with the Nutrition convergence approach.	Projects adopt a convergence approach to nutrition and are therefore NS-driven.
Indonesia	No. At project design stage, no substantial nutrition activities were identified	Weak. There is a narrow focus on stunting via food availability, without addressing broader dietary quality or behavior change, which thus hindering impact of nutrition-sensitive activities in IFAD projects.	Uncertainty was expressed regarding the expectations of IFAD for projects labelled as "nutrition-sensitive", highlighting a lack of clarity on what constitutes a nutrition-sensitive project. The absence of clear guidelines – for NS project design and implementation as well as stakeholder engagement - limited the involvement of relevant stakeholders, such as health offices, in the design and implementation of nutrition activities.
Bangladesh	No. Projects were not NS at design.	Weak. Nutrition education, awareness raising and home stead gardens were only introduced later in implementation.	Projects not NS at design. Nutrition was an added-up activity. For NS it is needed to report how much is spent for nutrition, which is considered challenging.
Brazil	Yes. In-depth analysis of the nutritional situation and its root causes are included in the COSOP and projects.	High. There is a comprehensive and in-depth approach to address nutrition, which is not just considered a component or cross-cutting issue, but rather forms part of the rationale results and related activities.	Projects not NS at design (designed before IFAD11), but that was not a problem since the approach in use was already nutrition-sensitive.

E. Approach to Nutrition in the sample of Country Case Studies

Country	Nutrition Approach
Benin	NS approach combines support for production including biofortified crops and vegetables, processing and marketing. School gardens in support to WFP's school canteens intervention have been piloted and increased with support from NORAD. The SBCC approach is based on an adapted play activity tool, a card game representing local foods according to their food group. However, the biofortified foods promoted are not included. Actions for nutrition lack synergy and coordination between projects, such as the disconnect between producing nutritious foods (e.g., purple maize) and their potential consumption by malnourished children or the absence of wells in supported school gardens despite nearby irrigated areas. Additionally, inconsistent support for vegetable gardens hampers nutritional outcomes, with some groups fully supported and others neglected.
Burundi	Projects address various levels of the value chains, including agricultural production, storage, processing and marketing. However, interventions are often implemented in isolation and without a comprehensive diagnosis of community needs, thus limiting their effectiveness on nutrition. Support for production and marketing (e.g. milk) has not been followed by an increase in consumption by the targeted farmers, who are mainly income-seekers and who have not benefited from awareness raising and training on good nutritional practices. There is an excessive focus on community-based management of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) and the referral of severe cases (SAM) to health centres preventing an holistic approach to nutrition.
Burkina Faso	The Norway grant strengthened the focus on nutrition which previously had only been partially taken into account. Several pathways have been selected to respond to multi-dimensional needs, but only in one region due to resources available. Furthermore, the selected value chains contribute to the diversification of food availability, but it would have been relevant to add the production of specific vegetables rich in vitamin A and milk. The relevance of setting up school gardens remains to be demonstrated, as implemented in isolation and small in size. Activities contributing to reduction of women's workload have brought significant changes for women, but the coverage is limited.
Mozambique	By design, nutrition focuses exclusively on the consumption side, which limits a comprehensive and holistic connection with food production, food supply, food market dynamics, including the linkage of nutrition with the sustainable food systems approach. The biggest obstacle is an isolated understanding of nutrition, rather than a holistic, across-the-board approach to projects.
Zimbabwe	The nutrition design stage was weak as activities towards achieving nutrition outcomes were only knowledge exchange related. Due to lack of financial resources and limited options for allocating loan resources investments fell short of considering nutrition adequately from inception. Nevertheless, the incoming NORAD grant allowed for addressing nutrition more comprehensively.
Egypt	Projects introduced nutrition-focused approaches centred on the development of social infrastructure, drinking water supply, nutrition education and women's empowerment. These were relevant to address challenges and constraints of the rural poor. Nutrition-sensitive interventions had a primary focus on women and children but the strategies to reach them were not always clearly elaborated. Key challenges included: lack of comprehensive nutrition analysis and data in strategies and projects designs; feasibility issues and designs complexity; lack of targeting strategies to reach the most vulnerable.

Country	Nutrition Approach
Laos	Laos has begun the development of a “convergence” approach, whereby multiple sectors, including health, education, agriculture, and others, work together. The convergence approach was difficult to implement but was nonetheless particularly successful. It allowed multiple perspectives to inform decision-making in nutrition committees across multiple levels (provincial, district and village) and sectoral nutrition planning at district and village levels (i.e. health, education, women sectors). However, the government was able to implement this approach only where partners were funding work in nutrition.
Indonesia	Although various NS pathways have been included, IFAD lacks a comprehensive strategy to address nutrition. For example, some projects focus on the availability and accessibility of food, with an emphasis on energy intake and food safety, often confusing nutrition with organic farming. The narrow focus on stunting via food availability, without addressing broader dietary quality or behaviour change, has limited the impact of nutrition-sensitive activities in IFAD projects. Stakeholders noted that while some efforts are made, such as nutrition awareness campaigns or food diversification, they are underfunded and not fully integrated into larger agricultural or health strategies. On the other hand, READSI project adopted a pragmatic approach to addressing budget constraints by integrating nutrition awareness into Farmer Field Schools, alongside organic home gardening and financial literacy. This approach, emphasizing food budgeting with local products at households’ level, was well-received by both men and women, enabling households to save money while improving vegetable consumption.
Bangladesh	SACP was designed to increase the commercial viability and competitiveness of farmers by focusing on high value crops (HVC). According to KII, it is the first project working on HVC, while before the focus was mainly on cereals. Not nutrition sensitive at design, SECAP started in a moment when IFAD was trying to retrofit nutrition in its project and benefited from a grant in response to COVID (RPSF) which allowed to strengthen nutrition activities. Nutrition is addressed mainly through nutrition education and awareness raising and the integrated home stead food production model. Following the experience of SACP, co-financing from GAFSP were mobilised for a spin off project (RAINS) largely dedicated to nutrition.
Brazil	Brazil takes an integrated approach to nutrition, covering aspects from increased and diversified food production, access to markets, diets diversification, along with interrelated aspects such as access to water, markets, gender issues and natural resources.

F. School-based interventions in IFAD's projects – data collection process

School based interventions are one of the seven activities supporting nutrition in IFAD's interventions and they have the objective to improve children's nutritional education and practices through activities such as school gardens, training workshops and school meals. An analysis based on secondary and primary data collection was conducted to inform understanding around School-based Interventions in response to a demand from the Evaluation Committee.

This review specifically focused on the interventions which support school meals and school feeding programmes. As recognized by the WFP, school meals programmes are a multisectoral game changer that improve children's education, health and nutrition, whilst more broadly they support the whole community by providing an important safety net, and by strengthening food systems and economies.[282] IFAD joined the School Meals Coalition (SMC) and actively participated in its monthly Partner Group meetings[283]. It also contributed to SMC White Paper and the School Meal and Food system Report. In 2023, IFAD also contributed to the Concept Note on the Rome Based Agencies (RBA) Joint South-South Technical Cooperation (SSTC) Initiative on School Feeding.[284]

The analysis of project design reports shows that IFAD's ongoing portfolio of school-based nutrition related activities include an estimation of 36 projects in 27 countries (Box A1).[285] 25 link smallholder producers to schools as a market outlet (schools) for their produce, 19 use the schools for nutrition education targeting pupils and local communities, 18 support the establishment of school gardens; 15 are linked with government sponsored School Feeding programs; and 14 of them have established or plan to establish a collaboration with WFP.[286]

Box A1
IFAD's school based nutrition investments overview

APR: Bhutan (CARLEP), India (REAP and Tejaswini M.P. Project), Kiribati (KOIFWP), Laos (AFN II and PICSA), Samoa (SAFPROM) and Sri Lanka (SARP).

ESA: Angola (SREP), Burundi (PNSADR-IM and PRODEFI II), Kenya (ADBP and SDCP), Lesotho (ROLL), Madagascar (PROGRES) and Rwanda (KIIWP2 and RDDP).

LAC: Bolivia (ACCESOS Rural, PRO-CAMELIDOS), Brazil (Planting Climate, PSA and PDHC II), El Salvador (Rural Adelante 2.0), Guatemala (Linking family farming with the School Meal National Program in Guatemala), Haiti (I-BE), and Honduras (INNOVASAN).

NEN: Egypt (PRIDE and SAIL), Tajikistan (CASP), and Tunisia (PROFITS).

WCA: Benin (PADAAM and PADMAR), Guinea Bissau (PADES and REDE), Liberia (STAR P), Niger (SD3C-NER), Nigeria (LIFE ND) and Sao Tome and Principe (COMPRAN).

Source: Data provided by the Nutrition Team (updated as of January 2024)

The first step of the evaluation analysis was to conduct a **desk review** of all the 37 projects with a school-based component implemented in the 5 regions. For each of the projects, an exhaustive review of the design reports was done to verify which type of school activities were included in the projects at design. Subsequently, a review of the latest supervision mission reports for each project was performed to assess if the activities agreed at design where effectively implemented.

[282] https://www.wfp.org/school-meals
[283] https://schoolmealscoalition.org/
[284] https://www.ifad.org/documents/48415603/49749059/rbas-home-school-feeding.pdf/0e9ee5df-b516-a47a-6014-127c3cf1300e?t=1726642172404
[285] 73 countries have signed a declaration of commitment for the school meals coalition in January 2023. Of the overall 28 countries implementing school-based interventions within IFAD projects only 8 did not signed the declaration (Guinea Bissau, India, Kiribati, Laos, Sao Tome, Samoa, Tajikistan, and Tunisia)
[286] Data provided by the Nutrition Team, ECG (updated as of January 2024)

Drawing from the desk review, **a specific dive-in was done on the projects with a focus on school feeding and/or on linking farmers to schools**. Interviews were organised with four projects (Table A5) which showed interesting outcomes on school feeding and on linking the farmers with school meals. The interviews have been organised with the Country Teams (Country Director and Country Officers/Analysts) and in some cases they have also involved the Project Coordinators.

Table A5
Selected projects for interviews

Region	Country	Project Name	Short Name	Status
APR	Bhutan	Commercial Agriculture and Resilient Livelihoods Enhancement Programme	CARLEP	Ongoing
NEN	Tajikistan	Community-Based Agricultural Support Project	CASP	Completed
NEN	Tunisia	Siliana Territorial Development Value Chain Promotion Project	PROFITS	Ongoing
WCA	Guinea Bissau	Economic Development Project for the Southern Regions	PADES	Ongoing
WCA	Guinea Bissau	Family Farming Diversification, Integrated Markets, Nutrition and Climate Resilience Project	REDE	Ongoing

Questionnaires were also sent to the Country Directors of six projects which showed limited outcomes from the desk review on school feeding and on linking farmers to schools to better understand challenges faced (the list is presented in Table A6). This led to an additional interview with one Country Team, while no written feedback was received for the others.

Table A6
Selected projects for questionnaire

Region	Country	Project Name	Short Name	Status
APR	Sri Lanka	Smallholder Agribusiness and Resilience Project	SARP	Ongoing
ESA	Rwanda	Kayonza Irrigation and Integrated Watershed Management Project - Phase II	KIIWP2	Ongoing
ESA	Angola	Smallholder Resilience Enhancement Project	SREP	Ongoing
WCA	Niger	Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflict and Climate Change	SD3C - NER	Ongoing
WCA	Liberia	Smallholder Agriculture Transformation and Agribusiness Revitalization Project	STAR P	Ongoing
WCA	Nigeria	Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprises Project in the Niger Delta of Nigeria	LIFE ND	Ongoing

Lastly, information was collected from the country case studies conducted for this evaluation. Specifically, out of the ten countries, five (Brazil, Benin, Burundi, Egypt and Laos) presented school-based interventions in their portfolios.

Table A7
Projects from the Country Case Studies with a school-based intervention

Region	Country	Project Name	Short Name	Status
APR	Laos	Agriculture For Nutrition - Phase 2	AFN II	Ongoing
APR	Laos	Partnerships for Irrigation and Commercialisation of Smallholder Agriculture Project	PICSA	Ongoing
ESA	Burundi	Value Chain Development Programme Phase II	PRODEFI II	Completed
ESA	Burundi	National Programme for Food Security and Rural Development in Imbo and Moso	PNSADR-IM	Completed
LAC	Brazil	Planting Climate Resilience in Rural Communities of the North-east Project	PCRP	Ongoing
NEN	Egypt	Sustainable Agriculture Investments and Livelihoods Project	SAIL	Ongoing
NEN	Egypt	Promoting Resilience in Desert Environments	PRIDE	Ongoing
WCA	Benin	Market Gardening Development Support Project	PADMAR	Ongoing
WCA	Benin	Agricultural Development and Market Access Support Project	PADAAM	Ongoing

The results of the analysis are presented in the main report.

G. Examples of innovations in Country Case Studies

Box A2
Agroecological Logbooks in Brazil

Presented in Logbook format, the Agroecological Logbook has four columns to organize the information about the women's production. Use of the logbook produces a daily record of what has been sold, donated, exchanged, and consumed. It covers everything that is cultivated in the spaces of women's domain in the productive units of family farming and peasant agriculture, from agricultural production to handicrafts and processing. The Agroecological Logbook was created as a political-pedagogical instrument for the formation of women, at first, with the objective of "empowering" women by generating visibility and the awareness of the importance of their own work, having as a starting point their own perception of the importance of their participation in production and in the family income. This is expected to contribute to promotion of women's autonomy. As the first returns from the notes appeared, the Logbook proved to be an efficient tool for monitoring the women's production, valuing their almost invisible production for self-consumption, exchange, donation, and sale.[287]

Box A3
Farmer Nutrition Schools in Laos

To address the multiple causes of malnutrition, particularly amongst the rural poor, Lao PDR has recently began a "convergence" approach, whereby multiple sectors, including health, education, agriculture, and others, work together in the same geographic locations (provinces, districts, and villages) through coordinated technical approaches to improve outcomes for families and communities. IFAD piloted the approach in the SSSJ project, and mainstreamed it in the AFN project through two main components: Farmer Nutrition Schools (FNS) and home gardening. These aimed to improve dietary diversity and address malnutrition, particularly among women of reproductive age and children under five. The FNS targeted women with access to land, either through ownership or rental, and prioritized pregnant women and mothers with young children. Other community members, including caregivers and adolescent girls, were also encouraged to participate. FNS provided monthly training sessions that covered basic nutrition concepts, the impact of food deficiencies, agricultural practices, and the importance of a nutritious diet. Nutrition Facilitators also gave cooking demonstrations focused on improving the nutritional value and diversity of meals. The sessions were developed in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP), the National Nutrition Centre, FAO, and the Ministry of Health, with WFP staff and district health officials facilitating the lessons. Home gardening was promoted as a means of improving household food security. Gardens were established near homes to grow vegetables and raise poultry, providing nutrient-rich foods to address dietary deficiencies, particularly in protein. Women who completed the FNS modules received a flexible grant to purchase supplies and were trained in gardening techniques, including bed preparation, crop selection, and poultry rearing. The key objective was to ensure the production and consumption of nutrient-dense food from all five food groups. These interventions demonstrate the application of a multi-sectoral coordinated policy approach which IFAD spearheaded in remote rural communities.

Box A4
Traditional Agricultural Systems Award

The Ministry of Agriculture in partnership with the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA), in the frame of the PDHC Project financed by IFAD launched the "Traditional Agricultural Systems Award". The Award aims to recognise groups and communities that manage their traditional agricultural systems in such a way as to guarantee food security and sovereignty; the conservation of agrobiodiversity; traditional knowledge; culture, value systems and forms of social organisation and the sustainable management of the landscape. Civil society organisations, such as associations, cooperatives, networks and NGOs representing communities and/or social groups, including family farmers and traditional peoples and communities, are eligible for the award. The initiative also has the support of FAO, the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (Iphan), the Ministry of Tourism, the Brazilian Semi-Arid Articulation (ASA), the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples and Organisations[288]. This award has been acknowledged as an innovative strategy to draw attention to the importance of food systems and their contribution to the country's social, economic and cultural development (including promoting nutrition), serving as a source of knowledge and inspiration for the development of new projects and initiatives on the ground.

[287] Further information on the methodology can be found at https://bibliotecasemiaridos.ufv.br/jspui/bitstream/123456789/114/1/Texto%20completo.pdf and an analysis of results is available at https://bibliotecasemiaridos.ufv.br/jspui/bitstream/123456789/114/1/Texto%20completo.pdf
[288] Further information available at https://www.embrapa.br/premio-sat-do-semiarido-dom-helder-camara

H. Analysis of Surveys assessing Nutrition Indicators – MDDW and KAP

Country	Project name	Replenishment cycle	NORAD fund-related survey	Type of survey	Study year	Conclusion
Bangladesh	SACP	IFAD10	No	Baseline	2020	This study aligns with OPR requirements in terms of data collection (sampling strategy, 24-hour recall, 15g minimum portion criterion). However, its weaknesses lie in the interpretation of the data and the absence of clear programmatic recommendations. This data is not reported in ORMS.
Bangladesh	SACP	IFAD10	No	Mid-term	2021	This study meets most OPR requirements in terms of data collection methodology (24-hour recall, 15g portion criteria). However, weaknesses are observed in the interpretation and statistical analysis of the data, and the absence of values in ORMS affects their centralized monitoring. Comparability with the baseline study appears to be good; however, as the data collection periods were not specified, it is difficult to assess any potential seasonality bias in the MDD-W.
Burundi	PIPARV-B	IFAD10	No	Baseline	2021	This study partially meets OPR standards in terms of data collection methodology for MDD-W. However, significant gaps in methodological transparency, analysis clarity, and data interpretation, along with the absence of documentation in ORMS, limit the study's compliance with OPR requirements for robust, traceable nutrition COI indicator collection.
Burundi	PIPARV-B	IFAD10	No	Mid-term	2023	While this study includes key COI indicators and has values recorded in ORMS, it falls short of OPR standards in several areas. The methodology lacks detail: no information about adherence to the minimum 15g portion, confusion is noted between the diversification score and MDD-W, lack of clarity regarding the KAP behaviors being promoted (e.g., water and hygiene, food safety), sub-topics are either not covered or not clearly defined, analysis is insufficient, and programmatic insights are absent. These gaps limit the study’s ability to provide actionable insights on nutrition outcomes. The comparability of the MDD-W indicator between the baseline and mid-term surveys is limited by methodological inconsistencies, timing differences that introduce potential seasonality bias, and a lack of clarity in analysis and programmatic interpretation. The absence of the KAP indicator in the baseline survey further restricts comparability for behavioral insights over time. Overall, while both surveys include COI indicators, the lack of methodological rigor and

Country	Project name	Replenishment cycle	NORAD fund-related survey	Type of survey	Study year	Conclusion
						consistency reduces the reliability of longitudinal comparisons in nutrition outcomes for the PIPARV-B program.
Burundi	PRODEFI-II	IFAD09	No	Endline	2022	The survey partially meets OPR requirements for MDD-W by including it and providing basic methodological details. However, the lack of enumerator training information, absence of food group analysis, and missing ORMS documentation limit the robustness and traceability of the findings.
Burkina-Faso	PAPFA - NORAD	IFAD10	Yes	Baseline	2022	This survey partially meets OPR requirements for MDD-W and KAP indicators. It includes both indicators with relevant methodologies and detailed KAP coverage, but lacks methodological clarity for MDD-W, and neither indicator value is recorded in ORMS. Additionally, the absence of programmatic interpretation limits the practical utility of the findings.
Burkina-Faso	PAPFA - NORAD	IFAD10	Yes	Endline	2024	This survey partially meets OPR requirements for the MDD-W and KAP indicators. It includes both indicators with relevant methodologies and detailed analyses, but lacks methodological clarity for MDD-W, comprehensive programmatic interpretation, and ORMS recording for both indicators. Additionally, timing differences between baseline and endline surveys introduce potential comparability issues for MDD-W results.
Burkina-Faso	PAPFA	IFAD10	No	Baseline	2020	This survey does not meet OPR requirements for COI nutrition indicators, as it lacks both the MDD-W and KAP indicators and does not provide any alternative nutrition or food security-related outcomes.
Burkina-Faso	PAPFA	IFAD10	No	Endline	2024	This survey partially meets OPR requirements for the MDD-W indicator by including it and providing detailed methodology and analysis. However, the lack of minimum portion adherence for MDD-W, missing survey piloting, and discrepancies in ORMS recording limit the survey's compliance and data reliability.

Country	Project name	Replenishment cycle	NORAD fund-related survey	Type of survey	Study year	Conclusion
Zimbabwe	SIRP	IFAD10	No	Baseline	not specified	This survey does not meet OPR requirements for COI nutrition indicators due to the absence of both MDD-W and KAP. While some alternative nutrition and food security indicators are present, they do not align with the standard COI requirements. This limits the survey's utility in assessing nutrition impact as expected by OPR standards.
Zimbabwe	SIRP	IFAD10	No	Endline	2024	This survey partially meets OPR requirements for MDD-W and KAP. Both indicators are included with some analysis and partial programmatic implications. However, methodological gaps for MDD-W (lack of details on the recall period, type of recall (open or list-based), and the 15g minimum portion requirement), limited KAP analysis, missing annexes, and the absence of KAP in ORMS reduce compliance and data reliability.
Zimbabwe	SIRP - NORAD	IFAD10	Yes	Baseline	2022	This survey partially meets OPR requirements for MDD-W and KAP indicators, including both with some analysis and programmatic interpretation. However, gaps in terms of methodological clarity, lack of questionnaire accessibility reduce overall compliance and data reliability.
Zimbabwe	SIRP - NORAD	IFAD10	Yes	Endline	2024	This survey mostly meets OPR requirements for MDD-W and KAP indicators by including both, providing analyses, and interpreting programmatic implications. However, gaps in methodological details (notably the lack of information regarding period of data collection at endline), and inaccessible questionnaires reduce the survey's overall compliance and data transparency.
Benin	PADMAR	IFAD09	No	Endline	2023	This survey meets some OPR requirements for the MDD-W indicator by including it with relevant data presentation and analysis. However, methodological biases (ex. the questionnaire allowed husbands to respond on behalf of their wives, creating a bias in the data) and the lack of programmatic interpretation reduce the rigor of findings.

Country	Project name	Replenishment cycle	NORAD fund-related survey	Type of survey	Study year	Conclusion
Benin	PADAAM	IFAD10	No	Mid-term	2023	The survey meets some OPR requirements for the MDD-W indicator, including basic data presentation and documentation. However, methodological errors (the survey used 9 food groups instead of 10 and limited the age criterion to 15 years, omitting the full target range (15-49 years). The recall period is inconsistent (with a 24-hour recall collected alongside a 7-day food consumption score (FCS), which could impact data accuracy) and lack of clarity in statistical analysis and programmatic interpretation limit the rigor of findings.
Benin	PADMAR/PADAAM - NORAD		Yes	Baseline	2022	The survey partially meets OPR requirements for MDD-W and KAP indicators. While it includes relevant methodologies and analysis for both indicators, limitations in methodological rigor (e.g., lack of 15g portion guideline and unclear guidance for 24h recall for MDD-W), the absence of rigorous analysis for the MDD-W and the absence of programmatic implications weaken its compliance.
Benin	PADMAR/PADAAM - NORAD		Yes	Endline	2024	The survey partially meets OPR requirements. Although both MDD-W and KAP are addressed with sufficient methodological detail (whereas details on whether the minimum 15g portion guideline was considered are missing), errors in the food group count for MDD-W, and the lack of programmatic interpretation reduce compliance. Data collection periods differ between baseline and endine, limiting the comparability of the data.
Brazil	PDHC (II)	IFAD09	No	Baseline	2018	This survey does not present COI nutrition indicators due to the absence of both MDD-W and KAP. The project is not nutrition-sensitive, hence nutrition related COI indicators are not mandatory.
Brazil	PDHC (II)	IFAD09	No	Endline	2022	This survey partially meets OPR standards. It includes the MDD-W indicator though the implementation quality is limited by a lack of methodological rigor (sampling strategy does not target women specifically - it is asked for the family as a whole) and targeted analysis. The project is not nutrition-sensitive, hence nutrition related COI indicators are not mandatory.

Country	Project name	Replenishment cycle	NORAD fund-related survey	Type of survey	Study year	Conclusion
Brazil	PSA	IFAD09	No	Baseline	2018	This survey does not present COI nutrition indicators due to the absence of both MDD-W and KAP. The project is not nutrition-sensitive, hence nutrition related COI indicators are not mandatory.
Brazil	PSA	IFAD09	No	Endline	2023	This survey does not present COI nutrition indicators due to the absence of both MDD-W and KAP. The project is not nutrition-sensitive, hence nutrition related COI indicators are not mandatory.
Mozambique	PROCAVA	IFAD11	No	Mid-term	2024	This survey partially meets the OPR standards, with significant gaps in methodology (sampling strategy lacks clarity, with no control group and an unclear methodology, no adherence to the 15g minimum requirement, and no adaptation of ingredients to local habits). The findings section does not provide a comprehensive analysis of MDD-W or food groups consumed by women, nor are programmatic implications derived from the data.
Mozambique	REFP	IFAD10	No	Baseline	2021	This baseline survey does not meet OPR standards for nutrition sensitivity, as it lacks both MDD-W and KAP indicators, which limits its ability to provide insight into the nutrition-related aspects of the project.
Mozambique	REFP	IFAD10	No	Mid-term	2023	This mid-term survey does not meet OPR standards for nutrition sensitivity, as it lacks both MDD-W and KAP indicators, which limits its ability to provide insight into the nutrition-related aspects of the project.

I. Analysis of project design

	Malawi "Sustainable Agricultural Production Programme - Phase 2" Approved in 2023	**El Salvador** "Programme for the Sustainable, Inclusive and Nutritional Economic Development of Rural Areas" Approved in 2023	**Nigeria** "Value Chain Programme in Northern Nigeria" Approved in 2024	**Angola** Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture Project Phase 2 Approved in 2024
Overall comment on quality of design	**Good** Good approach to nutrition by promoting climate smart and nutrition sensitive production, suitable use of natural resources, and effective marketing towards improving food and nutrition security. Nutrition is included in two of the three project components. The project's focus on improving food and nutrition security aligned to the national food systems action plan. The PIM assigns joint responsibilities to the Ministry of Agriculture and Health in relation to nutrition. However, nutrition will only be under the responsibility of the "Gender, Youth, Nutrition and social inclusion" officer.	**Weak** Basic approach to nutrition focusing only on community gardens and nutrition education. Nutrition is not mentioned in the project components. The ToC is very weak without any supporting narrative explaining the causal relationships and nutrition only appears at the 'Impact' level, but not in the outcomes and outputs. There is a specific "Nutrition Focal Point" foreseen. The Ministry of Agriculture is primarily responsible. No joint actions with other sectors	**Excellent** Good context analysis. Comprehensive approach to nutrition through different interconnected pathways: i) policy frameworks; climate adaptive capacity and resilience; gender awareness; nutrition awareness raising/training to enhance dietary diversity and nutrition knowledge and attitudes; use GALS to empower women. A "nutrition lens" is applied and the ToC is well constructed by identifying nutrition in its assumptions and relating it through the link between activities, outputs and outcomes. There is a specific "Nutrition Focal Point" foreseen. The PIM stresses that multisectoral coordination.	**Poor** Nutrition context analysis is weak. Very poor and narrow approach to nutrition: i.e., nutrition is not articulated nor mentioned in the Outcomes. The ToC is weak in what comes to nutrition. Nutrition only appears at the 'Impact' level, but not in the outcomes and outputs. The PIM includes a staff member "Community Development and Social Inclusion Specialist" covering different aspects including nutrition.
Context analysis	Good contextual analysis of nutrition and food security, including in children and adults (including pregnant women), with data and sources of information. Identifies the main drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition mentioning that these are multi-faceted, and are also climate change related. Also includes analysis of obesity problems.	Good contextual analysis identifying the triple burden of nutrition. Identifies the situation of malnutrition in the general population, highlighting children and women. Relates malnutrition to diseases (hypertension, diabetes, etc). Strongly emphasises on obesity.	Good context analysis identifying vulnerable groups, the nutrition-related problems affecting them, the underlying causes of malnutrition and extensive data to substantiate the analysis.	Nutrition context analysis is weak. It only presents general malnutrition data (statistics on malnutrition in the population and children, including wasting by province), but does not elaborate on the causes of malnutrition.

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Approach to nutrition	Good approach to nutrition by promoting climate smart and nutrition sensitive production, suitable use of natural resources, and effective marketing through private sector engagement in order to contribute towards wealth creation, and improve food and nutrition security among the rural population.	A basic approach to nutrition that is not comprehensive, focusing only on traditional entry points: Rational to nutrition aimed at improving the physical accessibility of food through community gardens and the economic factor through increased income and consumption through nutrition education and food behaviour change.	Comprehensive approach to nutrition. Value chains will address the high levels of poverty, vulnerability, food and nutrition insecurity through different interconnected pathways: i) improve, policy/institutional frameworks for value chain development, food and nutrition security; ii) improve productivity, climate adaptive capacity and resilience of farming systems in target VCs; iii) improve nutrition and gender awareness; iv) promote nutrition-sensitive VCs and techniques to enhance dietary diversity and nutrition knowledge and attitudes; and use GALS to empower women and promote gender equality.	Very poor and narrow approach to nutrition. Although the project aims at contributing to improved household income, food and nutrition security through sustainable and climate resilient fisheries and aquaculture, "Nutrition" is not articulated nor mentioned in the Outcomes.
Formulation of project components	Nutrition is included in two of the three project components, including: Increased smallholder capacity for climate-smart, nutrition-sensitive production systems and gender transformative approaches (Component 1); Commercialisation of smallholder farming systems promoted (Component 2);	Nutrition (or food security) is neither mentioned nor explicitly mentioned in the project components.	A "nutrition lens" is applied with nutrition included in the two project components: Foster climate resilient and nutrition sensitive production (Component 1); Nutrition will be enhanced by promoting fortification, nutrition-sensitive processing of foods, food safety, packaging, and labelling (Component 2);	Nutrition is not mainstreamed across the board. It is only referenced in Component 1: Small-Scale Aquaculture Production Systems, focussing on expanding interventions and lessons in climate-resilient and nutrition-sensitive fisheries and aquaculture production strategies.
Articulation of theory of change (TOC)	The project has a well developed Thoery of Change. The project will improve access to food and dietary diversity of the beneficiary communities, particularly the most vulnerable women, children and	The Theory of Change is very weak in general and particularly in what comes to nutrition. Only a figure (schematic) is presented, without any supporting narrative to explaining the causal relationships	The ToC is well constructed by identifying nutrition in its assumptions and relating it through the link between activities, outputs and outcomes. The TOC articulates	The ToC is weak in what comes to nutrition. Nutrition only appears at the 'Impact' level, but not in the outcomes and outputs.

	Malawi "Sustainable Agricultural Production Programme - Phase 2" Approved in 2023	**El Salvador** "Programme for the Sustainable, Inclusive and Nutritional Economic Development of Rural Areas" Approved in 2023	**Nigeria** "Value Chain Programme in Northern Nigeria" Approved in 2024	**Angola** Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture Project Phase 2 Approved in 2024
	adolescents through the following pathways (i) ensure availability of food from own production particularly for staples and home gardening activities (ii) invest in short value chains that increase availability and potentially affordability of nutritious foods in local markets (ii) increase economic access to food through incomes generated by surplus production and commercialization activities. The overall food security strategy is focused on i) availing nutritious food in the markets, ii) enabling farmers to produce a surplus, thereby increasing their ability to purchase food (access) from the market, and iii) integrate the nutrition strategy elaborated above.	identified in the figure. Nutrition only appears at the 'Impact' level, but not in the outcomes and outputs.	gender, nutrition, and climate change in all the Components. Value Chains aims to support key target groups (including women, youth, IDPs and PWDs) to overcome the above challenges through three interlinked impact pathways: (1) promoting social cohesion and an enabling policy/institutional framework and mechanisms for conflict management at the local levels; (2) fostering climate-resilient and nutrition-sensitive production; and (3) enhancing inclusivity in profitable VC through deliberate inclusion of target groups.	Only a figure (schematic) is presented, without any supporting narrative to articulating the causal relationships identified in the figure.
Food Systems	The project's focus on improving food and nutrition security aligned to national food systems action plan. Identifies key food systems pathways (Project Design, p.9).	The project intends to promote value chains that seek to transform food and production systems into healthy and environmentally responsible systems with adaptation to climate change, but without elaborating in detail the pathways to do so.	The project articulates the strategy within the food system approach. It intends to promote sustainable, responsive, and inclusive food systems. It is aligned with the priorities of the National Food Systems Transformation Pathways.	The systemic approach is weak, with no connection with nutrition.
Staff	There is no specific "Nutrition Focal Point" foreseen. Nutrition will be under the responsibility of the "Gender, Youth, Nutrition and social inclusion" officer.	There is a specific "Nutrition Focal Point" foreseen, including specific ToR.	There is a specific "Nutrition Focal Point" foreseen, including specific ToR.	The PIM does not include any position for a 'Nutrition Focal Point', nor for gender or social inclusion.

	Malawi "Sustainable Agricultural Production Programme - Phase 2" Approved in 2023	**El Salvador** "Programme for the Sustainable, Inclusive and Nutritional Economic Development of Rural Areas" Approved in 2023	**Nigeria** "Value Chain Programme in Northern Nigeria" Approved in 2024	**Angola** Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture Project Phase 2 Approved in 2024
SECAP	SECAP provides a good analysis of the state of nutrition and its causes. SECAP recognizes that one of the underlying causes are poor diets, which lack diversity. It recommends establishing home gardens combined with a strong behaviour change and nutrition education package to influence dietary patterns, particularly for children under two years and women of reproductive age. Investments in VCs that are nutrient rich and also with high market value should also be promoted to make healthy diets affordable.	The SECAP analyses the causes of malnutrition in greater depth than the project document, including relating the causes of malnutrition and food insecurity as encompassing socio-economic, climatic and environmental aspects.	SECAP provides a good analysis of malnutrition and its causes, including disaggregation of the analysis by region. It identifies causes related to lack of access to resources, but also deficiencies in families' diets. It identifies its relationship with the prevalence of diseases (e.g. anaemia). It also analyses nutrition in the context of armed conflict.	SECAP expands the contextual analysis of malnutrition a little further by identifying problems related not only to lack of access to food (food insecurity), but also to micronutrient deficiencies. It stresses that women's role in food utilisation is critical, as they are responsible for food processing and preparation and therefore are crucial to the dietary diversity of their household and overall family nutrition status.
PIM	The PIM assigns joint responsibilities to the Ministry of Agriculture and Health in relation to nutrition, including the following tasks: Conduct nutrition demonstrations; Identification and mapping of nutrition Champions; Development and dissemination of nutrition messages; Training of Staff (staff will be trained on nutrition sensitive agriculture and food systems); Scaling up Integrated homestead gardens.	The PIM states that the Ministry of Agriculture is primarily responsible. No joint actions with other sectors have been foreseen. Focuses on nutrition interventions through municipalities.	The PIM stresses that multisectoral coordination is key to implement the project. Key actors at the national level for food security and nutrition are, the: Multisectoral Nutrition Coordination Mechanism led by the Federal Ministry of Health, which is also the Scaling Up Nutrition focal point in Nigeria, MBEP, and National Committee on Food and Nutrition, which is the national focal point for nutrition policy, programme planning, and coordination	The PIM does not identify institutional responsibilities related to nutrition. The Ministry of Fisheries is the sector responsible for implementation. Other sectors are identified for potential synergies, but nutrition is not mentioned.

J. Nutrition Pathways: Examples from the Country Case Studies

Growth and diversification of production	The CCS conducted for the present evaluation revealed that in all countries assessed IFAD investments included this pathway, namely through the **production of staple crops** such as maize, rice (e.g. Burundi, Benin, Indonesia), and cassava (e.g. Benin, Brazil and Mozambique), while **promoting diversification** through the introduction of vegetables (all countries), poultry, cowpeas (e.g. Burkina Faso), and even support to sustainable extractive activities as is the case of non-timber forest products by indigenous peoples found in Brazil. Less frequently, production-related interventions also cover the distribution and improvement of **livestock** practises (e.g. cows in Burundi, goats and poultry in Brazil). There is equally evidence that the increase and diversification of food production also includes **nutritious food**. This is particularly visible in terms of increasing production of fruits and vegetables as well as of other nutrient-rich food, such as yellow cassava or purple maize (Benin), orange-flesh sweet potato (Mozambique), **bio-fortified crops**, such as iron fortified beans, vitamin A fortified maize (Zimbabwe) or cowpeas, rich in protein (Burkina Faso). **Homestead gardens** are the most common approach in IFAD investments to increasing food production and diversification. For example, in Benin, homestead gardens using available local seeds were reported by beneficiaries as having shown positive and lasting results in supporting diversification of household production and increased incomes, but the indicator results available show no significant difference between beneficiaries and control group.[289] Similarly, in Mozambique, families repeatedly reported an increase in the availability of food, increasing income (selling surplus production) and dietary diversification (families consuming food products that were not part of their diet before, including fruit, vegetables and beans).
Increased availability in markets	IFAD supported the **rehabilitation of market infrastructures** (Mozambique, Laos) and **rural roads** (Egypt, Burundi) to facilitate better access to markets for agricultural products. Efforts in Mozambique have included **strengthening farmers' groups** to improve their bargaining power in market negotiations, establishing **networks of agri-dealers** to facilitate access to inputs, and improving market information systems to enhance transparency and **decision-making**. Support has also been provided to smallholder **marketing strategies**, enabling farmers to better connect with buyers, while cooperatives have been bolstered to manage key value chains, such as staple crops (Benin, Indonesia) and milk (Burundi). Additionally, investments targeted both **cooperative-based processing units** (Indonesia, Benin) and private sector-led initiatives to promote food processing and add value to agricultural products. In Benin, **processing fresh onions and tomatoes** during the production peak enabled women groups to sell these products when their availability on markets is very limited, but their expansion and sustainability was hampered by the need to be accredited by the sanitary authorities, which has not been addressed despite the recommendations of the supervisory missions. In Zimbabwe, support for **biofortified value chains** increased access to enriched foods, such as vitamin A-rich maize, as evidenced by the growing adoption of this crop by producers.[290] In Burundi the dairy value chain highlights **tensions between commercialization and household consumption**, as milk is mostly sold to cooperatives for incomes, which is then sold to private actors such as IFAD-supported bakeries for making cakes, reducing its direct nutritional impact.

[289] In Benin 70.11% of beneficiary households have a vegetable garden where green leaves and vegetables are grown, compared with 74.76% of non-beneficiary households; 23.30% of non-beneficiary households have a vegetable garden containing foods rich in vitamin A, compared with 21.35% of beneficiary households.
[290] 58 percent of beneficiaries compared to 5 percent in control groups.

Growth and diversification of income	In Burundi, IFAD established **VSLAs** which enabled beneficiaries, particularly women, to diversify their income sources by investing in income-generating activities. Additionally, the promotion of **small-scale livestock farming**, such as the distribution of small livestock (e.g. goats, poultry, pigs) in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Egypt and Brazil, generated additional income[291] while potentially contributing to healthy diets. In Mozambique, **community gardens generated surplus production** that was sold in local markets, thereby increasing participating households' incomes. In Burundi, dairy value chains allowed beneficiary households to sell milk to cooperatives, although this led to prioritizing commercialization over family consumption. In Indonesia**, financial literacy modules** integrated into the Rural Empowerment and Agriculture Development Scaling-Up Initiative (READSI) Farmer Field Schools helped farmers better understand and manage their agricultural income, and the cost of a healthy diet based on locally available food.
Nutrition knowledge and practices	Common approaches to nutrition education and behaviour change communication were the development or adaptation of **nutrition education and communication materials**, **training of trainers** and/or trainings or **awareness raising sessions** at the community level. Sessions were mainly directed to women, while in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Laos, there was an assumption that women transfer that knowledge to men. **Cooking demonstrations** were also seen as a promising approach and were successfully applied in Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Indonesia and Zimbabwe. These demonstrations introduced new recipes to maximise the use of locally available food sources and promote the use of neglected underutilised foods. In Bangladesh, intensive **capacity development of agriculture extension workers**, who also delivered the nutrition education, has taken place. In both Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, such nutrition education was delivered in cooperation with the health sector. However, across all countries studied, the cooperation with other sectors and actors, e.g. the health sector was mostly opportunistic, focusing on specific trainings or workshops, and missing opportunities to establish institutional linkages to synchronise efforts and strategically work together on shared principles and objectives.
Empowerment of women and youth	In Burkina Faso, with additional funding from NORAD, a number of activities aimed at **reducing women's workload** were introduced, including the supply of dryers, the construction of boreholes, donation of improved stoves, and the provision of mills and rickshaws but on a limited scale. The field visits and available data confirmed that these activities had a very significant impact on the time available to the women.[292] In Burundi, testimonies from beneficiaries highlighted the importance of working on the **economic empowerment of women** and **raising awareness among husbands** about the importance of nutrition for all members of the household. In Indonesia, the systematic inclusion of women in farming field schools focusing on food crops (traditionally managed by men) produced results in terms of **shared decision-making between women and men** on these crops within households. In Brazil innovative women's empowerment methodologies have been promoted by IFAD's investments with a significant increase in **women's capacity over food production and consumption options**, an increase in **women's self-esteem and control over productive resources**. In Laos "farmer nutrition schools" adopted a gender approach that positively enhanced knowledge of family nutrition and meal preparations (including by men). In Benin, it was possible to adapt awareness-raising messages targeting women, and projects have adopted approaches such as **positive masculinity**, targeting men to raise their awareness of the importance of child

[291] For example, in Djibouti households in the treatment group experienced an average increase of 35% in income which is directly linked to the implementation of the IGAs supported by the programme such as small livestock promotion.
[292] Time used by women to collect water is less than one hour in 89.9 % of NORAD beneficiaries, against 54.7% in the control group; between 1 and 2 hours in 9.2% NORAD and 44.2% in the control group. However, due to limited funding, only the Hauts Bassins region has been able to benefit. The 10 mills and 18 dryers distributed are also insufficient for the size of the project, which is more akin to a pilot initiative.

	nutrition. In Indonesia, Farmer Field Schools were originally focused on production of crops, but one project managed to merge home-gardening and nutrition education and systematically included women with benefits for knowledge and practice changes by families.
Climate resilience and environmental sustainability	In Indonesia, climate change is likely to impact water availability, health and nutrition, but the CCS did not find substantive evidence of promoting access to water to strengthen resilience. In Benin, lack of access to water is a major challenge for continuous production in home and school gardens and access to drinking water is also a barrier to the adoption of good hygiene practices. In Burundi field visits showed that the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) dimension is under-addressed, which is crucial for improving nutrition. In Zimbabwe promotion of key-hole gardens in the arid districts was an impactful and quick win innovative approach, however its effectiveness was affected by lack of water. In Laos, improving irrigation and access to clean water was not successfully implemented, as many families undertaking home gardens did not have adequate water supply to sustain them. On a positive note, important activities to promote access to water are present in a number of projects, mainly those focused on semi-arid contexts, such as in Brazil (through rainwater harvesting and storage and water reuse systems), Mozambique (construction of multi-use water access systems for consumption and irrigation), Burkina Faso (promotion of water-saving techniques in vegetable gardens), and in Djibouti with a focus on ensuring access to water. In these semi-arid regions, increasing food production is conditional on efficient water use. Water activities have enabled increased production, especially through homestead gardens, thus increasing the availability of food, as observed in some field visits (e.g. Mozambique, Burkina Faso and Brazil). In addition to agricultural production, in some this pathway was found to have an effect on nutrition by improving access to drinking water. In Mozambique, multifunction water systems also include water for families consumption, irrigation and animal consumption.

K. GIZ Global Programme on Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience

GIZ Global Programme on Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience

The GIZ Global Programme on Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience (*Globalvorhaben Ernährungssicherung und Resilienzstärkung*, GV-ESRS) is designed to address food security and malnutrition. It uses a multi-sectoral, multi-level approach modelled on the UNICEF framework. This approach was chosen because malnutrition is influenced by factors beyond just food availability, including health, water, hygiene, childcare and social protection. Launched in 2014, the programme aims to directly reach more than 5 million people by 2026. It is implemented in 12 countries where the teams have some flexibility in selecting and implementing activities to achieve their objectives: Benin (2015-2023), Burkina-Faso (2015-2025), Cambodia (2015-2024), Ethiopia (2015-2023), India (2015-2025), Kenya (2016-2020), Malawi (2015-2025), Mali (2014-2026), Madagascar (2020-2025), Togo (2016-2023), Yemen (2015-2020) and Zambia (2015-2025).

Through its GV-ESRS programme, GIZ has implemented a structured monitoring system with a harmonised approach that includes regular follow-up surveys (FUS) every two to three years to measure the project outcomes. This survey is centrally coordinated and an integral part of the M+E system. In addition, continuous activity monitoring and annual output measurements are conducted in each country package. The surveys follow the impact logic of the global programme, are related to the UNICEF-model, and have allowed the teams in the countries to assess and adapt their approaches. Since a high importance was placed on generating evidence for the effectiveness of proven approaches, the project results monitoring was an integral part of the project conception.

To measure nutrition outcomes, the project uses internationally recognised and standardised indicators. These indicators are the Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W), Minimum Adequate Diet for children (MAD), and the Household Food Insecurity Experience Scale (HFIES). These core metrics are used to track food security and dietary diversity outcomes across the 12 country packages as part of the monitoring and evaluation framework. The surveys also collect data on women's empowerment, agricultural diversification, and participation in project activities. This permits a comprehensive evaluation of nutritional pathways and the project's influence on them. Further, hypotheses can be tested and the projects contribution to changes in diet or hygiene behaviour can be assessed.

All surveys are conducted following the same methodology and using the same tools. However, country-specific requirements can be incorporated. Women with a child between six and 23 months are requested to complete a household questionnaire and an open 24-hour recall for nutrition data. For open 24-hour recalls, specialised training of skilled enumerators is required. With the new Diet Quality Questionnaire (DQQ), data on diet can be collected substantially easier and cheaper. This enables non-nutrition-specific projects to integrate data on diets into their regular data collections.

The sample size for each region was calculated based on the programme's previous target of a 0.5 food group increase (equivalent to 5 percent of the 10 MDD-W groups). Because the target was increased to 1 food group, after a successful start of implementation, the reduced required sample size allowed the project to include a control group within the budget. Per region, a total of 200 women are part of the treatment group and 200 are part of the control group.

Depending on the duration of the project, several follow-up surveys are conducted. After an initial baseline at the start of implementation, follow-up surveys are conducted every two to three years. The surveys are independent cross-sectional

studies. They are conducted three to five months after the main harvest to minimise seasonal biases and enable consistent tracking of core indicators.

To coordinate, harmonize and carry out the survey GIZ works with a consulting company. GIZ awards a framework contract to a leading service provider responsible for:

(1) ensuring the coordination and implementation of the standard methodology across the different surveys over time and across countries:

- sampling based on country packages' data,
- structuring of the questionnaire following the international guides with the necessary adaptations for each country,
- coding of the questionnaire,
- setting-up of a secured server and databases,
- selection of national partners capable of mobilising professional interviewers and managing the collection logistics,
- selection of national nutritionist consultants responsible for supporting the questionnaire adaptation, the enumerators' training and interpreting the data,
- providing 5 to 6 days training of enumerators and supervisors as well as members of the country package teams on essential knowledge of nutrition, indicators and their purpose, data collection tools and setting-up of a pretest;

(2) checking, cleaning, and analysing the data received.

(3) production of a survey report comparing the data obtained with those from previous surveys (statistical tests), hypothesis testing on the nutritional results measured and modelling of the factors influencing the dietary diversification of women and children.

(4) production of a cross-cutting report for all the country packages analysing specific thematic factors as requested by GIZ (e.g. gender, links between agricultural and nutritional diversification, etc.).

In addition to quantitative data collection every survey also includes focus group discussions to answer specific questions and contextualise the data. The results are presented in country-specific reports, which are used in countries to adjust their interventions, as well as a cross-cutting report analysing the effectiveness of the project's interventions.

L. Nutrition experts in design mission

Replenishment Period	Region	Country	Project ID	Project Abbreviation	Nutrition expert in the design mission	Social inclusion expert in the design mission	Design mission with no expert (social inclusion/nutrition)	Information on the composition of the design mission not available
IFAD10	APR	Bangladesh	2000001464	SACP				
IFAD11	APR	Bangladesh	2000002356	RMTP (PKSF)				
IFAD12	APR	Bangladesh	2000004167	RAINS				
IFAD10	APR	Indonesia	1100001706	IPDMIP				
IFAD10	APR	Indonesia	2000001181	READSI				
IFAD11	APR	Indonesia	2000002234	UPLANDs Project				
IFAD10	APR	Laos	2000001131	SSFSNP-GAFSP				
IFAD11	APR	Laos	2000001892	PICSA				
IFAD12	APR	Laos	2000003760	AFN II				
IFAD10	ESA	Burundi	2000001146	PIPARV-B				
IFAD11	ESA	Burundi	2000003549	PRODER				
IFAD10	ESA	Mozambique	2000001175	REFP				
IFAD12	ESA	Mozambique	2000004008	PROPEIXE				
IFAD10	ESA	Zimbabwe	2000001233	SIRP				
IFAD11	ESA	Zimbabwe	2000002341	SACP				
IFAD12	ESA	Zimbabwe	2000003944	HEEP				
IFAD11	LAC	Brazil	2000002253	PCRP				
IFAD12	LAC	Brazil	2000002694	Piaui Project - PSI				
IFAD12	LAC	Brazil	2000002987	PAGES				
IFAD12	LAC	Brazil	2000004316	Parceiros da Mata				
IFAD10	NEN	Egypt	2000001280	PRIDE				
IFAD11	NEN	Egypt	2000002202	STAR				
IFAD10	WCA	Benin	2000001073	PADAAM				

Replenishment Period	Region	Country	Project ID	Project Abbreviation	Nutrition expert in the design mission	Social inclusion expert in the design mission	Design mission with no expert (social inclusion/nutrition)	Information on the composition of the design mission not available
IFAD11	WCA	Benin	2000003066	Regional Programme PRIMA				
IFAD10	WCA	Burkina Faso	2000001063	PAPFA				
IFAD11	WCA	Burkina Faso	2000001925	PAFA-4R				
IFAD12	WCA	Burkina Faso	2000003918	PSSRC				

Source: IOE

M. Nutrition experts in supervision missions since 2019 for the 10 country case studies

Replenishment Period	Region	Country	Project ID	Project Abbreviation	Number of SM	Number of SM with a nutrition expert	Number of SM with a social inclusion expert	Number of SM with no expert (social inclusion/nutrition)	Number of SM for which the information was not available
IFAD10	APR	Bangladesh	2000001464	SACP	5	1	2	2	0
IFAD11	APR	Bangladesh	2000002356	RMTP (PKSF)	4	1	3	0	1
IFAD12	APR	Bangladesh	2000004167	RAINS	1	1	0	0	4
IFAD10	APR	Indonesia	1100001706	IPDMIP	5	1	2	2	0
IFAD10	APR	Indonesia	2000001181	READSI	4	0	3	1	1
IFAD11	APR	Indonesia	2000002234	UPLANDs Project	5	0	1	4	0
IFAD10	APR	Laos	2000001131	SSFSNP-GAFSP	5	3	1	1	0
IFAD11	APR	Laos	2000001892	PICSA	3	3	0	0	2
IFAD12	APR	Laos	2000003760	AFN II	1	1	0	0	4
IFAD10	ESA	Burundi	2000001146	PIPARV-B	5	1	2	2	0
IFAD11	ESA	Burundi	2000003549	PRODER	2	0	1	1	3
IFAD10	ESA	Mozambique	2000001175	REFP	5	1	4	0	0
IFAD12	ESA	Mozambique	2000004008	PROPEIXE	0	0	0	0	5
IFAD10	ESA	Zimbabwe	2000001233	SIRP	5	1	1	3	0
IFAD11	ESA	Zimbabwe	2000002341	SACP	2	0	2	0	3
IFAD12	ESA	Zimbabwe	2000003944	HEEP	0	0	0	0	5
IFAD11	LAC	Brazil	2000002253	PCRP	0	0	0	0	5
IFAD12	LAC	Brazil	2000002694	Piaui Project - PSI	0	0	0	0	5
IFAD12	LAC	Brazil	2000002987	PAGES	1	0	1	0	4
IFAD12	LAC	Brazil	2000004316	Parceiros da Mata	0	0	0	0	5
IFAD10	NEN	Egypt	2000001280	PRIDE	4	0	4	0	1
IFAD11	NEN	Egypt	2000002202	STAR	1	0	1	0	4
IFAD10	WCA	Benin	2000001073	PADAAM	4	1	1	2	1
IFAD11	WCA	Benin	2000003066	Regional Programme PRIMA	1	0	1	0	4
IFAD10	WCA	Burkina Faso	2000001063	PAPFA	5	2	2	1	0

Replenishment Period	Region	Country	Project ID	Project Abbreviation	Number of SM	Number of SM with a nutrition expert	Number of SM with a social inclusion expert	Number of SM with no expert (social inclusion/nutrition)	Number of SM for which the information was not available
IFAD11	WCA	Burkina Faso	2000001925	PAFA-4R	4	2	2	0	1
IFAD12	WCA	Burkina Faso	2000003918	PSSRC	0	0	0	0	5

Source: IOE

Grants and Supplementary Funds Analysis

A. Methodology

A specific analysis of grants and supplementary funds related to nutrition was conducted as part of the evaluation.

For the grant analysis, the first step has been the systematic extraction of nutrition-focused grants from OBI using the thematic classification as well as through word search. A first screening allowed to identify 38 grants. A review of goals, objectives and components was conducted to verify the relevance to nutrition. Grants that had a global and capacity development focus and grants that have been implemented in the countries selected for the case studies had been prioritised for the analysis. On total, 13 projects have been considered for an in-depth analysis which comprised a review of available documents and interviews with grantees, complemented by information shared at the self-assessment workshop or during bilateral meetings with grant managers or related divisions. Out of the 13 grants, two were funded exclusively by IFAD, five were co-funded through IFAD's regular grants and partners, while the remaining six through supplementary funds provided by donors (3 Canada, 1 Sweden, 1 ASAP2 and 1 Italy). The analysis covered the different evaluation criteria focusing on main achievements and challenges.

The evaluation also covered supplementary funds relevant to nutrition and executed within the given time frame of this evaluation, in particular Canada, Germany and Norway. Documents reviewed were the EB annual reports for the SF execution (SF received, committed and used from 2016 to 2023); progress reports of the SF and completion reports. The Supplementary Resources Strategy, IFAD, May 2021, has also been considered. Results were complemented by the information deriving from global interviews with two of the main donors (NORAD, CIDA) as well as the information provided at the TE self-assessment workshop and bilateral meeting with ECG.

B. List of grants covered

	Division	Project ID	Project Name	Intervention level	Recipient Organisation	Date & Project Status	Amount & Financier	Goal and Objectives
1	PMD	2000001833	Strategic support on mainstreaming nutrition in IFAD's investments	Global Focus on Burundi; Nepal; Uganda	Bioversity (CGIAR Organisations)	2017-2018 Financial Closure	$400,000 CIDA	**Goal**: that smallholder farmers and rural people overcome poverty and achieve food security and nutrition through remunerative, sustainable and resilient livelihoods, with positive nutrition outcomes, also an essential component of IFAD SF Strategic Objective 1 'Increase rural people's productive capacities'. **Objective**: to increase the impact on nutrition of IFAD's investments and its advocacy and policy engagement activities, primarily through agriculture and food-based approaches that improve the quality and quantity of diets of rural families.
2	ECG	2000002361	Strategic support to mainstreaming nutrition - Phase II	Global and Country Level (India, Burundi)	Bioversity (CGIAR Organisations)	2018-2019 Financial Closure	$270,000 CIDA	**Goal**: to support smallholder farmers and rural people overcome poverty and achieve food security through remunerative, sustainable and resilient livelihoods, with positive nutrition outcomes. **Objective**: to increase the impact on nutrition of IFAD's investments and its advocacy and policy engagement activities, primarily through agriculture and food-based approaches that improve the quality and quantity of diets of rural families.
3	RIA	2000001514	Linking Research to Impact: Increasing the Effectiveness of Agriculture and Food Systems in Improving Nutrition	Global With focus on: India; Indonesia; Lao People's Democratic Rep; Malawi; Mozambique; Nicaragua; Nigeria	Bioversity (CGIAR Organisations)	2017-2022 Completed	$3,395,000 Bioversity $375000 CGIAR CCAFS $500,000 IFAD SSD (now RIA) $2,520,000	**Goal**: to optimize the contribution of agriculture to healthier diets and improved nutrition. **Objectives**: (i) improved design and more effective implementation of nutrition-sensitive agricultural investments, including through policy engagement; (ii) more effective links between researchers and the people who make decisions about program investments, including policymakers, project design and implementation; and (iii) a stronger global evidence base for the impact of agriculture on nutrition, particularly in terms of design and implementation of investments.

	Division	Project ID	Project Name	Intervention level	Recipient Organisation	Date & Project Status	Amount & Financier	Goal and Objectives
4	ESA	2000001639	Strengthening Nutrition in Agri-food Systems in East and Southern Africa through Root and Tuber Crops	Regional **Countries:** Eswatini; Madagascar; Mozambique; Rwanda; Tanzania.	CIP (CGIAR Organisations)	2019-2022 Project Completed	$1 626 000 CIP $126 000 IFAD ESA $1 500 000	**Goal**: to contribute to nutrition security and incomes of poor farming households in 5 countries. Focus group: young children, women, and youth, under increasing climate change threats. **Objective**: to enable stakeholders to fully utilize the potential of RTCs for nutrition and income of smallholder farming households in the selected countries through effective partnerships between national and international research organizations and IFAD country programs and investment projects.
5	PMI	2000002864	Increasing Water Productivity for Sustainable Nutrition-sensitive Agricultural Production & Improved Food Security	Global Focus on six countries: Benin; Egypt; Jordan; Mozambique; Niger; Rwanda	FAO (United Nations Agency)	2020-2023 Project Completed	$2 400 000 FAO $400 000 IFAD PMI $2 000 000	**Goal**: to strengthen capacities of smallholder farmers for the adoption of sustainable water management and nutrition-sensitive agriculture practices, which will in-turn increase their productivity (yields), incomes and nutritional outcomes. **Objectives**: (i) expand the NWP methodology to a more integrated approach of "more nutrients and better economic prospects per drop"; (ii) pilot the new Nutrition-sensitive Water Productivity (NsWP) methodology in five countries and generate knowledge and lessons on supporting farmers to change cropping patterns, and exchange these results also in Egypt; (iii) strengthen capacities at local and national levels to promote farmers' adoption of new farming practices; (iv) promote inter-sectorial coordination on the management of water for nutrition sensitive agriculture production at national and global levels through the development of Global Guidelines on Nutritional Water Productivity (NWP); and (v) catalyse partnerships that will support to address the constraints for smallholder farmers to sustainably access remunerative markets.
6	ECG	2000000974	Strengthening capacity of local actors on nutrition-sensitive agri-food value chain in	Regional (Eritrea; Malawi; Zambia)	McGill University (Academic Organisations)	2016-2019 Financial Closure	$2 000 000 IFAD ESA	**Goal**: to improve the nutritional status of the farming households in the participating countries. **Objective**: to promote availability, accessibility and consumption of diverse, safe nutritious foods for improved household nutrition and health.

	Division	Project ID	Project Name	Intervention level	Recipient Organisation	Date & Project Status	Amount & Financier	Goal and Objectives
			Zambia and Malawi					
7	ECG	2000002023	Project-Friendly Metrics and Technologies for Better Results in Nutrition-Sensitive Projects	Global (Bolivia; Ethiopia; Lao PDR; Zambia)	McGill University (Academic Organisations)	2019-2023 Financial Closure	$1 374,000 McGill Uni $324 000 IFAD ECD (now ECG) $1,050,000	**Goal & objectives**: to enhance evidence based management decision making on Nutrition Sensitive programming through the development and implementation of Project friendly metrics and technologies.
8	ECG	2000002378	Leaving no one behind making the case for adolescent girls - event	Global	Save the Children Italy (Not for profit organisation)	2018 Financial Closure	$65 000 CIDA Micro-grant	**Goal**: to maintain a high momentum on the on-going dialogue on adolescent/girls as a key target group in order to achieve the global nutrition goals and to define concrete next steps/actions and potential commitments on this. **Objectives**: (a) highlight the importance of investing in adolescent nutrition to not only improve women's and child nutrition but also women's empowerment and prevent the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition, food insecurity and poverty; (b) identify action-oriented strategies and best practices to successfully address adolescent girls' nutrition to achieve women's empowerment; and (c) feed into on-going global dialogue on adolescent nutrition and gender.
9	ECG	2000001632	Empowering Indigenous Youth and their Communities to Defend and Promote their Food Heritage	Global	Slow Food International (Not for profit organisation)	2017-2020 Financial Closure	$900,000 IFAD PTA (now PMI)	**Goal**: to empower indigenous youth and communities and improve their livelihoods by promoting and protecting their food heritage. **Objectives**. Project objectives will be the following: (i) increase the economic value of food heritage products; (ii) strengthen the ITM network; and (iii) demonstrate and share how the valorisation of food heritage contributes to improve IP communities' livelihoods

	Division	Project ID	Project Name	Intervention level	Recipient Organisation	Date & Project Status	Amount & Financier	Goal and Objectives
10	ECG	2000004267	Enhancing indigenous youth and women capacities to protect and promote their communities' food heritage	Global	Slow Food International (Not for profit organisation)	2022-2025 Available for Disbursement	$470 000 MAECI-DGCS- ITA	**Objectives:** - Reinforce local value chains and food systems using the Slow Food Presidia model. This involves implementing certification mechanisms that enhance commercialization opportunities and promote the unique qualities of local food products. - Strengthen the capacities of local leaders, foster peaceful and inclusive societies and enhance resilience through training, exchanges and events. The project also provides seed funding opportunities to support the development of impactful local projects that address community needs. - Advocate for agroecology by sharing knowledge and evidence-based information. This includes highlighting the importance of agroecological practices in protecting biodiversity, ensuring social justice and addressing the urgent challenges posed by the climate crisis. Through these initiatives, Slow Food aims to empower Indigenous peoples, local communities, and marginalized groups, recognizing their crucial role in preserving cultural heritage, protecting biodiversity, and promoting sustainable and resilient food systems. By focusing on youth and women, Slow Food strives to ensure a more inclusive and equitable future for all.

	Division	Project ID	Project Name	Intervention level	Recipient Organisation	Date & Project Status	Amount & Financier	Goal and Objectives
11	LAC	2000002449	Linking family farming with the School Meal National Program in Guatemala	Country (Guatemala)	World Food Programme Guatemala (United Nations Agencies)	2019-2022 Financial Closure	$808,000 Government of Guatemala $268,000 FAO GTM $45,000 WFP Guatemala $45,000 IFAD LAC $450,000	**Goal**: to contribute to the effective participation of family farming organizations in the School Feeding Program (SFP) in Guatemala, as local suppliers of healthy and nutritious foods with cultural relevance. **Objectives**: 1) improve the management skills of family farming organizations participating in the Project, concerning productivity, market access, environmental sustainability, and financial management; 2) contribute to creating operational conditions to scale up the SFP through the establishment of effective coordination among the parties involved in the program.
12	LAC	2000004234	Linking family farming with the School Meal National Program in Guatemala II	Country (Guatemala)	World Food Programme Guatemala (United Nations Agencies)	2022-2023 Financial Closure	IFAD $180,000 Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)	**Same as above**
13	ECG	2000003246	Climate change and nutrition linkages in IFAD's investments - ASAP2	Global (Lesotho; Viet Nam; Zimbabwe)	WUR	2020-2021 Financial Closure	$298 632 ASAP2 $298 632	**Goal**: to increase nutrition co-benefits for about 300 000 poor smallholder farmers and their families in three target countries. **Objective**: to strengthen IFAD's capacity of addressing the bidirectional relationships between climate and nutrition in IFAD project design.

C. Main findings from grant analysis

Project Name (serial number refers to the serial numbers given above)	Summary of findings
1. Strategic support to mainstreaming nutrition - Phase II (Mainstream nutrition phase II) - ID 2000002361 2. Strategic support to mainstreaming nutrition - Phase II (ID 2000002361) (presented as grant No 1 and 2 in the table above)	**Relevance:** Both grant projects were very well designed and extremely relevant to IFAD's mandate and ambitions to mainstream nutrition and contribute to improved diets and better nutrition, identified gaps and opportunities, resulting in strategic as well as very operational support to IFAD globally and at the selected focus countries. **Effectiveness & efficiency:** The defined deliverables were of high quality, however, its application was limited, partly because lack of systematic sharing and follow up for assisting field operations for applications and partners for financing. Results could have been managed more effectively and efficiently within IFAD and among partners. It can be assumed that those directly targeted and involved were able to learn and expand their capacities, which might have triggered sustained changes. Hence, the projects were effective to some extent. **Sustainability:** Follow up and guidance for application was, however, not systematic, hence, there is little known in view of enhancing or sustaining impact. **Outlook:** The ambitious of meeting IFADs target to mainstream nutrition in 35 percent of the investments was achieved in those years. These 2 grant funded projects contributed to that, however, the intensity and quality of mainstreaming nutrition is not known.
3. Linking Research to Impact: Increasing the Effectiveness of Agriculture and Food Systems in Improving Nutrition (Linking Research to Impact) - ID 2000001514 (grant no. 3 in the table above)	**Relevance:** Assisting to make one third of IFAD's investment nutrition relevant was relevant to meet IFAD's commitments as well as the global trend to accelerate food based approached to tackle malnutrition. **Effectiveness and efficiency:** Cost-effectiveness studies for India and Burundi completed, impact and process evaluation completed, presentations were conducted, documents and reports completed and submitted to HQ **Sustainability:** Approach and products developed were valuable for future adoption, however, uptake within the countries has not been assessed. **Innovations:** profound analysis of the opportunities and cost effective approaches for making agriculture investment plans nutrition sensitive was innovative at that time. **Challenges:** Countries investments with highest potential for integrating nutrition across its investments were identified through an in-depth assessment, this had to be redirected to India and Burundi where limited opportunities and commitments compromised the uptake of the recommendations.
4. Strengthening Nutrition in Agri-food Systems in East and Southern Africa through Root and Tuber Crops (RTC, ID 2000001639) (grant no. 4 in table above)	**Relevance:** Relevant to the context and target group (e.g. climate-smart appropriate solution to enrich diets of the poorest, matching food practices). **Innovation:** Developing new varieties of sweet potatoes that address micro-nutrient deficiency (mainly carotene, pro-vitamin A).

Project Name (serial number refers to the serial numbers given above)	Summary of findings
	Efficiency and effectiveness: Mismatch of timelines as well as objectives (between loan and grant project), however, additional options were rising for the integration into the second phase of the project. Achievements were positive in 3 countries (government actively promoted the OFSP; OFSPs were added to the national gazette, recipes were adopted). It did demonstrate how OFSPs could be integrated into IFAD investments, however, the realisation of the integration is not evident. **Sustainability**: Adoption in IFADs investments at that time missing, however, it created a basis for IFAD uptake in the future. CIP and other partner organisations in the regions applied/transferred learning to other project in the region. The IFAD FoodSTART grant was scaled up by the World Bank-funded "Building Sweeter Livelihoods" project which is part of the Government's "Mionjo" project, with an implementation period from May 2023 to May 2025.[293] **Lesson learnt:** lending and grant objectives and timelines must be aligned, nutrition has to be an integral part of IFADs lending, resource and coverage has to be balanced well (avoid spreading resources thin). Testing of different varieties improves acceptance among beneficiaries, working in schools, which was missing, appears as an effective way to introduce/promote new products.
5. Increasing Water Productivity for Sustainable Nutrition-sensitive Agricultural Production & Improved Food Security (Nutritious and Water Productivity) - ID 2000002864 (grant no. 5 in table above)	**Innovation**: Integration of nutrition and water productivity at large scale appeared innovative (international attention, till then, less practiced). **Achievements:** Key tasks well implemented, approach effective and appreciated in partner countries (created understanding that nutrition is not a medical problem only, platforms and working groups continue, guidelines and materials available to countries, multi-disciplinary extension workers continue) **Effectiveness and efficiency:** Priorities and approach met with the interest of the partner countries ((upon request), which ensure sufficient commitment to the subject. **Sustainability:** There is little information on the uptake within IFAD, however, FAO and partner countries continue to support the integrated approach (community-based extension workers have capacities to continue; training materials exist, platforms partly exist and are followed up by FAO). **Challenges:** Communication gap between FAO and IFAD resulted in delays and inefficient use of resources, serious delays have posed a risk to the achievement of objectives.
6. Strengthening capacity of local actors on nutrition-sensitive agri-food value chain in Zambia and Malawi (ID 2000000974)	**Relevance:** highly relevant, because it makes the link between local resources and better diets for children and families, enriches the otherwise monotonous diets among the poorest populations. **Effectiveness:** very effective was the integration of fish in the diets of infants, further, powdering and drying of local fish to enrich diets. For this purpose, low-cost food processing center was established and equipped in

[293] https://cipotato.org/pressreleases/international-potato-center-officially-hosted-madagascar-agricultural-research-development

Project Name (serial number refers to the serial numbers given above)	Summary of findings
(grant no. 6 in table above)	both countries. An approach to develop a system to monitor the nutritional status has also been developed and applied. **Limitation:** one of the objectives was to develop a policy paper or scientific paper emphasizing IFAD's support. This has not been done, however, one of the team members, also being a researcher at the University published a paper on the subject and the results. **Efficiency:** the excellent collaboration among all partners, including McGill and IFAD, enriched the design and implementation. **Lesson learnt:** Introduction of processing technology was key to incorporate nutrient dense products into diets (e.g. building trying tends for drying food, centers plus equipment for powdering and drying), monitoring tool, with significant data collection was well perceived.
7. Project-Friendly Metrics and Technologies for Better Results in Nutrition-Sensitive Projects (ID 2000002023) (grant no. 7 in table above)	**Relevance and coherence:** Not demonstrated for IFAD internally, not yet relevant for IFAD's field level application, because preconditions are not in place (requires very advanced technology, complex data bases, computer app). However, its relevant for the global context. **Effectiveness & key achievement:** Data base and nutrient profile of foods established, computer application developed, dietary diversity indicator can be tracked through pictorial data bases. Publications prepared, but not yet applicable in the field. **Efficiency- strong point:** Project steering and technical committee for oversight and review of progress in implementation (enrich the approach, oversight and accountability). **Efficiency- weak point:** The process of finalising and validating the complex data base and computer app is a process of many years. IFAD is not yet well positioned to advance and introduce the tool. Close link to IFAD's country investments was missing.
8. Leaving no one behind making the case for adolescent girls (ID 2000002378) (grant no. 8 in table above)	**Relevance and coherence:** Shedding light on IFAD's options to work with adolescents has relevance to the global context of alleviating malnutrition. However, the basis of IFADs involvements has not yet been prepared, hence, at that moment in time, less relevant or limited coherence. **Effectiveness:** The conference and the agreements on actions by actors were a success. However, the expected donor commitments were not coming in, further, actions have not been followed up, accountability mechanisms were missing, hence, using results effectively is missing. **Efficiency:** Contracting process delayed the start, partner advanced budgets to prepare and recruit required personnel. Steering committee only supported the preparation and completion of the workshop, but did not continue to function for oversight on follow up of action points.

Project Name (serial number refers to the serial numbers given above)	Summary of findings
9. Empowering Indigenous Youth and their Communities to Defend and Promote their Food Heritage – ID 2000001632 10. Enhancing indigenous youth and women capacities to protect and promote their communities' food heritage (ID 2000004267) (grant no. 9 and 10 in table above)	**Relevance:** Very relevant to the global and the selected countries context of sustainable food systems to deliver healthy diets. **Coherence:** Coherent to IFAD's internal and external efforts to promote sustainable and traditional systems. Yet, the project was not linked to the IFAD investments in the country and was not based on a request by the Governments. **Effectiveness:** The key tasks, strengthening local networks and platforms, building local communities' capacities, engage youth and develop value chains that bring nutritional and economic benefits for the indigenous people, was effective. **Sustainability:** The introduced indigenous value chains and quality assurance will be sustained (continued). Further, awareness on indigenous underutilised species has possibly been raised. However, an uptake of lessons learnt and integration into project, programmes, strategies or policies is not evident. **Efficiency:** IFAD Office, PMU and partners were not involved, which limits it efficiency of resources spend. **Innovation:** Strengthening indigenous people capacities and networks and promoting indigenous food (product lines) is an innovation, as is the establishment of a participatory guarantee system. Further, an independent evaluation was conducted (not seen in other projects, regardless the scale).
11. Linking Family Farming with the School Meal National Program in Guatemala, ID 2000002449 12. Linking family farming with the School Meal National Program in Guatemala II, ID 2000004234 (grant no. 11 and 12 in the table above)	**Relevance and coherence:** The design (particularly the creation of family farmer networks and involvement) is relevant and coherent to IFAD's strategic directions and options for involvement, its also relevant and coherent to the country context. **Effectiveness & Efficiency:** Respondent considered the project as very successful, reporting that 9,400 small holder producers benefited and 62 percent of the beneficiaries reported improved food intake in their home. The established network and supply systems appears sustainable, while some areas do better then others (San Marco doing well, 'dry corridor' more problematic), further, MoA showed interest to expand the networks further. **Challenges:** Cooks/students had different food preferences that what the farmers were able to supply. M&E systems and policy dialogue was missing. **Innovations:** WFP and Ministry of Education introduced a school feeding mobile application as ad-hoc monitoring tool for the school feeding programme management (IFAD, WFP and WB provided funding for the application). **Observation:** Though the design focused IFADs support on strengthening the farmers networks and family farming to supply school, the grant recipient's focus and attention appeared stronger on interactions in schools, the menu, the food preparation and meals. It is important to ensure that IFAD's rare resources are focusing on the supply side (farmers network, creating contractual basis and establishing a sustainable procurement process, diversity and quality of food to be delivered to the schools etc).

Project Name (serial number refers to the serial numbers given above)	Summary of findings
13. Climate change and nutrition linkages in IFAD's investments - ASAP2 (ID 2000003246) (grant no. 13 in the table above)	**Relevance & coherence:** Objectives were highly relevant to the global context of climate change and food-based approaches, its bi-directional relationship and rising needs to link to become impactful. **Effectiveness & efficiency:** Thorough and high-quality literature review and situation analysis on climate, nutrition and interlinkages as well as potential pathways were prepared demonstrating options for the design of IFADs' NSA-Climate Smart investment. Budgets remaining from the cancelation of country missions, due to COVID 19 pandemic, were effectively and efficiently being used to prepare an educational video. Further, a research series on overweight and obesity has been published. Whether this has benefited the design and financial commitments to the proposed approaches remains unclear. **Innovation:** about 20 potential value chains were developed, applying a colour coding system to identify the most appropriate solutions based on the context.

D. Grant SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Grants have been used very successfully in varies ways: - allowed to expand human resources for NSA - allowed to provide inputs to the development of investments (pre-design stage). - allowed to establish and strengthen important partnerships at the global level and engage in policy dialogue. - allowed to develop important and high-quality operational guiding materials as well as analysis and knowledge products and research.	**Weaknesses jeopardizing effective use and sustainability of results:** - grant funded projects are not systematically linked to loan funded projects. - results of grants used to mainstream nutrition are not disseminated systematically, not shared widely (across the organisation, across projects, and in the long term) - lack quality assurance and no follow up to turn recommendations/lessons into actions. Longer term access or adoptions depends on individual commitment and memory.
Opportunities	**Threats**
- IFAD grants as well as supplementary funds used for Non-IFAD grant funded projects were/are an opportunity to create success stories, continue organisational learning, provide technical assistance over the life time of a project. This is to consolidate and advance on the agenda of food system for sustainable healthy diets.	- Need is rising while grant and supplementary fund resources for nutrition are depleting. This requires urgent attention and a sound and strong strategic resource mobilisation approach.

Methodology estimation of budget funds allocated to nutrition at design

The **objective** of the budget analysis was to estimate the allocation of funds to nutrition at design. The review included all nutrition sensitive projects approved in 2022, 2023 and 2024. The documents used for the analysis were IFAD Project Design Reports including the detailed cost tables.

1. Identification of nutrition activities

The first step has been reviewing the PDR to identify the types of activities as described in the project components as well as the implementation arrangements. In the narrative, activities were described under the nutrition section which is always included when the project is NS, so it was easily identified.

The list of activities included were:

- NS Homestead Gardens
- 2.0 Food Production
- 3.0 Marketing
- 4.0 Nutrition Education & BCC
- 5.0 School-based Interventions
- 6.0 GEWE
- 7.0 Policy Engagement
- 8.0 Dedicated Nutrition Staff

Specifically, regarding activities on "policy dialogue and/or coordination with sectors and institutions outside agriculture to enhance nutritional impact", the activity was indicated only if the related budget was also available in the costab. The same was done for "partnerships with UN and/or specialised NGOs" were the activity was considered only if included explicitly in the project implementation arrangements and project costs.

2. Data collection on nutrition standalone budget

Following the review of activities in the narrative, the second step has been to look at the COSTAB for the corresponding funds. The PDR and related budgets compared to the past show: i) a clearer description of nutrition activities in the PDR narrative and ii) a clearer correspondence between the activities in the narrative and budget lines in the COSTAB.

The estimation included:

- Dedicated budget for nutrition activities described in the PDR for all 8 types of nutrition activities.
- Dedicated budget for nutrition staff

For some projects, there was a sub-component totally dedicated to nutrition while in others, nutrition activities were funded through different budget lines under different components or sub-components. Funds for the different activities were then aggregated to estimate the total budget available for nutrition.

3. Identification of the source of funding

The third step has been the identification of sources of funding of nutrition activities. The categories used for the funding sources included: IFAD financing; Government co-financing; international co-financing; others (including beneficiaries, private sector…) and financial gap.

Concepts and Definitions

Diets are a combination of foods consumed at the given time. A healthy diet should be composed of safe and nutritious foods. Nutritious foods are those foods that provide nutrients that are beneficial to meet an individual's requirements, these nutrients include protein, vitamins, major and trace minerals, essential amino acids and fatty acids, as well as dietary fibre. At the same time, foods should be safe and should not impair health outcomes, hence, harmful substances, such as anti-nutrients, quantities of sodium, saturated fats, sugar should be minimised.[294]

There is no globally accepted classification of individual food items to be considered as 'nutritious', 'less' or 'not nutritious' foods, but the combination of foods consumed makes it a healthy or unhealthy diet.

A **healthy diet** promotes growth and development, and prevents malnutrition and diseases, supports health outcomes. A healthy diet is defined as a diet that "provides adequacy without excess, of nutrients and health-promoting substances from nutritious foods and avoids the consumption of health-harming substances".[295] Though different concepts and approaches exist to promote healthy diets at different stages in life, key recommendations remained relatively un-changed over the recent years, guiding principles for a healthy diet have been updated by FAO and WHO in 2019, highlighting the importance of being contextually appropriate sustainable, affordable and healthy.[296]

Dietary diversity contributes to a healthy or balanced diet. A healthy diet is composed of a variety of nutritious and safe foods that provide dietary energy and nutrients in the amounts needed for a healthy and active life. It is based on a wide range of unprocessed or minimally processed foods, balanced across food groups, while it restricts the consumption of highly processed foods and drinks. A healthy diet includes wholegrains, legumes, nuts, an abundance and variety of fruits and vegetables, and can include moderate amounts of eggs, dairy, poultry and fish, and small amounts of red meat.[297]

Consuming a healthy diet throughout the life cycle is critical for preventing all forms of malnutrition, including child stunting and wasting, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight or obesity. In this regard, healthy diets reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and certain types of cancer.[298]

Sustainable healthy diets are dietary patterns that promote all dimensions of a healthy diet and, in addition, minimise a negative impact on the environment and support the preservation of biodiversity and planetary health. Sustainable healthy diets must ensure a healthy diet while combining all dimensions of sustainability to avoid unintended consequences.[299]

Optimal nutrition is determined by the quantity and quality of foods consumed and by the ability of the body to use them. These factors are influenced by the interaction of diet and an individual's health status. In turn, malnutrition is an outcome of food insecurity and/or other factors, such as inadequate care practices for children, or lack of health and other basic services and an unhealthy environment and inadequate sanitary and hygiene practices.

Malnutrition no longer refers only to undernutrition measured by levels of wasting, stunting, underweight or deficiencies in vitamins or minerals. Malnutrition, in all its forms, includes overweight and obesity as well as dietary factors that increase the risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and certain forms of cancers.

[294] GAIN, 2017; Drewnowski, A. 2005; Katz, David L., Doughty, K., Njike, V. et al., 2011.
[295] Neufeld, Lynnette M., Sheryl Hendriks and Marta Hugas, 2021.
[296] FAO and WHO, 2019.
[297] FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2023.
[298] FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2019; WHO, 2018.
[299] FAO and WHO, 2019.

Different forms of malnutrition can coexist - within countries, communities and families or even within an individual. As an example, a country can have high levels of stunting as well as obesity, or anemia, and a child can suffer from both stunting and overweight. This double burden is the leading cause of poor health in the world, and is especially prevalent in low and middle-income countries.[300]

Malnutrition, in all its forms, is caused by different factors. Direct factors include dietary intake and a person's health status. Dietary intake includes types and quantities of food one eats, determined by the ability to access and consume diverse foods year-round. An un-healthy environment, lack of access to clean water, in-adequate sanitary and hygiene practices and maternal and child's caring practices are among the underlying causes.[301]

Levels of overweight and obesity are rapidly increasing, largely caused by dietary patterns and sedentary lifestyles, globalization and economic growth are among the key factors of the rapid increase in overweight and obesity.

Food Security has been defined by the World Food Summit in 1996 as "all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life".[302] Food security is an outcome of adequate physical availability, economic and physical access and proper utilisation of foods over time, the latter being referred to as "stability". Globally and at a national level it is being measured by the level of undernourishment and food insecurity. Household food security is an essential condition but not sufficient to ensure optimal nutrition, which is determined by a whole range of biological, economic and social factors, and measured by an individual's nutritional status.

Definitions of malnutrition[303]

Undernutrition is a diet-related condition resulting from insufficient food intake to meet needs for energy and nutrients, including stunting, wasting, underweight and micronutrient deficiencies.

Stunting, also called chronic malnutrition, is a form of childhood undernutrition. It is the result of chronic or recurrent undernutrition in utero and early childhood. Stunting, refers to the condition of being too short for one's age, undermines the physical and cognitive development of children. Stunted children not only earn less as adults as a result of less schooling and learning difficulties when in school, but they are also more likely to be at risk of overweight and obesity than children of normal height.

Wasting, also called acute malnutrition, is a form of child hood undernutrition. It a life-threatening condition attributable to poor nutrient intake disease, poor nutrient absorption and/or frequent or prolonged illness, in particular diarrheal diseases. Wasting refers to a condition of being too thin at a given height. Characterized by a rapid deterioration in nutritional status over a short period of time, children suffering from wasting have weakened immunity, increasing their risk of death due to greater frequency and severity of common infection, particularly when severe.

Micronutrient deficiencies can occur in children and in adults. It is caused by inadequacies in intake of one or more vitamins and minerals essential for the prevention of malnutrition in all its forms. Iron-deficiency anemia, Iodine deficiency and Vitamin A deficiency are the among the most prevalent public health problems with severe impacts on maternal and child morbidity and mortality.

Overweight and obesity can occur in children as well as in adults It is defined as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that presents a risk to health. They are caused by a combination of modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors, including lifestyle/behavioural, environmental, physiological and genetic factors. Obesity is both a

[300] IFPRI, 2014; FAO and WHO, 2019; Popkin, Barry M, Camila Corvalan, Laurence M Grummer-Strawn, 2020.
[301] The World Bank & UNICEF, 2003; USAID Advancing Nutrition, 2022.
[302] FAO, 2006.
[303] UNICEF, WHO and World Bank, 2023.

chronic disease and a risk factor for other nutrition related NCDs. Particularly children who are overweight or obesity face both immediate and potentially long-term health impacts, including a higher risk of NCDs later in life

List of projects covered in CCS and level of coverage

Legend:

- Focus Projects: visited or discussed in detail in remote CCS.
- Covered Projects: Included in the CCS with moderate or light detail.
- Not Covered Projects: Excluded for reasons such as novelty, high risk area or irrelevance

Region	Country	Project ID	Project Name	Project Abbreviation	Replenishment	EB Approval	Status	NS	Modality	Coverage of the TE
APR	Bangladesh	1100001537	Char Development and Settlement Project IV	CDSP IV	IFAD08	2011	closed	Yes	R	Not covered
APR	Bangladesh	2000004167	Diversified Resilient Agriculture for Improved Food and Nutrition Security	RAINS	IFAD12	2023	on-going	Yes	R	Focus
APR	Bangladesh	2000002356	Rural Microenterprise Transformation Project	RMTP (PKSF)	IFAD11	2019	on-going	Yes	R	Covered (light)
APR	Bangladesh	2000001464	Smallholder Agricultural Competitiveness Project	SACP	IFAD10	2018	on-going	Yes	R	Focus
APR	Indonesia	1100001706	Integrated Participatory Development and Management of the Irrigation Sector Project	IPDMIP	IFAD10	2017	closed	Yes	M	Visited
APR	Indonesia	2000001181	Rural Empowerment and Agricultural Development Scaling-up Initiative	READSI	IFAD10	2017	on-going	Yes	M	Visited
APR	Indonesia	2000002234	The Development of Integrated Farming Systems in Upland Areas	UPLANDs Project	IFAD11	2019	on-going	Yes	M	Covered (light)
APR	Laos	2000003760	Agriculture for Nutrition - Phase 2	AFN II	IFAD12	2022	on-going	Yes	M	Visited

APR	Laos	2000001131	Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme - Strategic Support for FSN Project	SSFSNP-GAFSP	IFAD10	2016	closed	Yes	M	Covered
APR	Laos	2000001892	Partnerships for Irrigation and Commercialisation of Smallholder Agriculture Project	PICSA	IFAD11	2019	on-going	Yes	M	Visited
APR	Laos	1100001608	Soum Son Seun Jai - Community-based Food Security and Economic Opportunities Programme - SSSJ	SSJ	IFAD08	2011	closed	Yes	M	Covered
APR	Laos	1100001680	Southern Laos Food and Nutrition Security and Market Linkages Programme (FNML)	FNML	IFAD09	2013	closed	Yes	M	Covered
ESA	Burundi	2000001146	Agricultural Production Intensification and Vulnerability Reduction Project	PIPARV-B	IFAD10	2018	on-going	Yes	M	Visited
ESA	Burundi	2000000738	National Programme for Food Security and Rural Development in Imbo and Moso	PNSADR-IM	IFAD09	2014	closed	Yes	M	Visited
ESA	Burundi	2000001009	Programme de Développement des Filières-Deuxième Phase II - PRODEFI Phase II	PRODEFI Phase II	IFAD09	2015	closed	Yes	M	Visited
ESA	Burundi	2000003549	Rural Entrepreneurship Development Programme	PRODER	IFAD11	2021	on-going	Yes	M	Covered (light)
ESA	Mozambique	2000001979	Small-scale Aquaculture Development Project	PRODAPE	IFAD11	2019	on-going	No, NR	M	Visited

ESA	Mozambique	2000001981	Inclusive Agrifood Value Chain Development Programme	PROCAVA	IFAD11	2019	on-going	No, NR	M	Visited
ESA	Mozambique	1100001517	Artisanal Fisheries Promotion Project	ProPesca	IFAD08	2010	closed	Yes	M	Visited
ESA	Mozambique	2000004008	Artisanal Fisheries Resilient Development Project	PROPEIXE	IFAD12	2023	on-going	Yes	M	Visited
ESA	Mozambique	2000001175	Rural Enterprise Finance Project	REFP	IFAD10	2018	on-going	Yes	M	Visited
ESA	Zimbabwe	2000003944	Horticulture Enterprise Enhancement Project	HEEP	IFAD12	2022	on-going	Yes	R	Not covered
ESA	Zimbabwe	2000002341	Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project	SACP	IFAD11	2021	on-going	Yes	R	Covered
ESA	Zimbabwe	2000001233	Smallholder Irrigation Revitalization Programme	SIRP	IFAD10	2016	on-going	Yes	R	Focus
LAC	Brazil	2000002987	Amazon Sustainable Management Project	PAGES	IFAD12	2022	on-going	Yes	M	Not covered
LAC	Brazil	1100001674	Rural Sustainable Development Project in the Semi-arid Region of Bahia	Pro-semi-arid Project / PSA	IFAD08	2013	closed	No, NR	M	Visited
LAC	Brazil	2000002694	Piaui Inclusive Sustainable Project	Piaui Project - PSI	IFAD12	2022	on-going	Yes	M	Not covered
LAC	Brazil	2000002253	Planting Climate Resilience in Rural Communities of the North-east Project	PCRP	IFAD11	2021	on-going	Yes	M	Not covered
LAC	Brazil	1100001620	Policy Coordination and Dialogue for Reducing Poverty and Inequalities	Dom Helder Camara	IFAD08	2013	on-going	Yes	M	Visited

			in Semi-Arid North-east Brazil							
LAC	Brazil	2000004316	The Sustainable Atlantic Rainforest Development Project	Parceiros da Mata	IFAD12	2024	approved	Yes	M	Not covered
LAC	Nicaragua	2000001242	Desarrollo de una agricultura familiar sostenible en el corredor seco de Nicaragua	NICAVIDA	IFAD10	2016	on-going	Yes	R	Covered (light)
NEN	Djibouti	2000002545	Integrated Water Resources Management Project	PGIRE	IFAD11	2020	on-going	Yes	R	Covered (light)
NEN	Djibouti	2000000732	Soil and Water Management Programme	PROGRES	IFAD10	2016	on-going	Yes	R	Covered (light)
NEN	Egypt	2000001280	Promoting Resilience in Desert Environments	PRIDE	IFAD10	2017	on-going	Yes	M	Visited
NEN	Egypt	1100001745	Sustainable Agriculture Investments and Livelihoods Project	SAIL	IFAD09	2014	on-going	Yes	M	Visited
NEN	Egypt	2000002202	Sustainable Transformation for Agricultural Resilience in upper Egypt	STAR	IFAD11	2019	on-going	Yes	M	Focus
WCA	Benin	2000001073	Agricultural Development and Market Access Support Project	PADAAM	IFAD10	2018	on-going	Yes	M	Visited
WCA	Benin	2000000882	Market Gardening Development Support Project	PADMAR	IFAD09	2015	on-going	Yes	M	Visited
WCA	Benin	2000003066	Regional Programme for the Integration of Agricultural Markets	Regional Programme PRIMA	IFAD11	2020	on-going	Yes	M	Covered

WCA	Burkina Faso	2000001063	Agricultural Value Chains Promotion Project	PAPFA	IFAD10	2017	closed	Yes	M	Visited
WCA	Burkina Faso	2000001925	Agricultural Value Chains Support Project in the Southwest, Hauts-Bassins, Cascades and Boucle du Mouhoun Regions	PAFA-4R	IFAD11	2019	on-going	Yes	M	Visited
WCA	Burkina Faso	1100001580	Participatory Natural Resource Management and Rural Development Project in the North, Centre-North and East Regions	Neer Tamba Project	IFAD08	2012	closed	Yes	M	Not covered
WCA	Burkina Faso	2000003918	Programme to Strengthen Smallholder Resilience to Climate Change	PSSRC	IFAD12	2023	on-going	Yes	M	Not covered

Analysis of e-survey results

Introduction

The Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) is conducting a Thematic Evaluation on Nutrition (TE on Nutrition) that aimed at providing lessons and recommendations to contribute to the preparation of IFAD's new Nutrition Action Plan and Strategic Framework. As part of this evaluation, an electronic survey was conducted targeting IFAD's staff from relevant divisions and coordinators of IFAD-funded projects.

The survey aimed to gather feedback on various aspects of IFAD's work on nutrition, including awareness on IFAD's work on nutrition, integration of nutrition into project designs, the support provided for implementation, effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems, knowledge management practices, perceptions of IFAD's role in promoting nutrition-sensitive activities, challenges affecting performance, and suggestions for improving IFAD's support to nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

Survey methodology

Following the initial pilot in early July 2024, the survey was launched on July 30th and was closed on the 6th of October 2024. To encourage broad participation among the target audience and to reduce language barriers, the survey was made available in English, Spanish and French.

The survey universe consisted of two groups – (1) IFAD staff from Regional Divisions; OPR, QAG and RIA (integrated in ODE since January 1, 2025); ECG, PMI and GPR divisions and (2) coordinators of IFAD-funded projects who had the option of delegating the response to a member of their team. One unified questionnaire was used to survey both. The total survey population for IFAD staff was 397 individuals. As for the project staff, after the removal of duplicates and invalid e-mail addresses, the total survey population was 178 individuals. In total, the survey population was 575 individuals.

Response rate. Out of 575 potential respondents, 242 agreed to participate in the survey and answered the first questions of the questionnaire, but in the end, only 191 respondents provided complete valid responses (33% of the total response rate). When respondents filled in the first sections of the survey, their answers were considered in the analysis event if they did not complete all the questions. When looking at the response rate separately per target group, for *IFAD staff*, out of 397 potential respondents 132 started the survey and *103 finished it* (26% response rate for IFAD staff), while in the case of *project staff*, out of 178 potential respondents 110 started the survey and 88 respondents provided complete responses (49% response rate for the project staff).

An important caveat in interpreting and extrapolating the results is the self-enrollment of respondents (i.e., non-probability sampling). Individuals interested in nutrition-related issues were more likely to participate. Additionally, the relatively low response rate and the small number of observations limit the data analysis, reducing the statistical power for disaggregated analysis by subgroups such as regions, experience with IFAD, as well as project type (classified as Nutrition-Sensitive by IFAD or not) among project staff from IFAD-funded projects.

An ordinal scale was used to measure respondents' attitudes toward various aspects of nutrition-related topics at IFAD: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Moderately Disagree; 4 = Moderately Agree; 5 = Agree; 6 = Strongly Agree; 0 = Don't know. Percentages are calculated excluding the "don't know" response option.

To determine if there were statistically significant differences in responses between different subgroups of respondents, statistical significance tests were conducted (Mann-Whitney U

test and Chi-squared test). Comparisons between subgroups are only reported if the differences are statistically significant and the number of responses in various groups is sufficient.

In addition to submitting answers for statement evaluation, several participants provided supplementary comments or observations after each survey section, which have contributed to the evaluation analysis.

General characteristics of the survey participants

Slightly more IFAD staff (55%) than project staff (45%) took part in the survey. Regionally, the distribution of respondents was the following: 19% APR, 19% WCA, 11% LAC, 22% ESA and 11% NEN. An additional 16% indicated that they worked at IFAD at the global level and 3% opted for other option.[304]

Table A8
Length of time IFAD staff and project staff have worked at IFAD

How long have you been working for IFAD or for an IFAD-funded project (cumulatively, even with interrupted record)?	
Answer Choices	All respondents (Percent)
Less than 2 years	28%
2 to 4 years	22%
5 to 10 years	30%
More than 10 years	21%

Source: Nutrition TE survey

The interviewees were diverse in terms of their work experience with IFAD, ranging from slightly more than a quarter (28%) with less than 2 years of engagement with IFAD to 51% with more than five years of engagement with IFAD (Table A8).

When asked where respondents were based, plurality (42%) reported working at Project Management Unit, while nearly equal shares reported working from headquarters (22%) or MCO/ICO (24%); only 9% said working at regional office and 4% selected other option. Out of all surveyed coordinators of IFAD-funded projects, the majority (65%) reported working for projects classified as Nutrition-Sensitive by IFAD. These questions were not used in the disaggregated data analysis and group comparisons due to the small number of observations for these questions.

Responses of both IFAD and project staff is presented in the following tables. Due to the small number of observations (191 responses to the full survey), group comparisons are made only for the respondent position (IFAD or project staff).

[304] Note: Here and in other relevant cases, response percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Awareness on IFAD's work on nutrition: Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements from the perspective of your current position

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Moderatel y disagree	Moderatel y agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I have a good understanding of IFAD's role in nutrition sensitive agriculture (N=214)	IFAD staff	1%	3%	5%	24%	37%	30%
	Project staff	2%	7%	4%	19%	42%	25%
	Total	1%	5%	5%	21%	39%	28%
I am familiar with the IFAD Nutrition Action Plan 2019-2025 (N=210) **	IFAD staff	2%	12%	22%	19%	26%	19%
	Project staff	5%	17%	17%	25%	28%	7%
	Total	3%	14%	20%	22%	27%	13%
I am familiar with the IFAD How To Do Note “Mainstreaming nutrition into COSOPs and investment projects (2019)” (N=209)	IFAD staff	2%	15%	16%	26%	22%	20%
	Project staff	7%	18%	12%	25%	27%	11%
	Total	4%	16%	14%	25%	24%	16%
I am familiar with the nutrition outcomes that IFAD projects aim to achieve as described in the nutrition action plan (N=213)	IFAD staff	1%	6%	10%	21%	35%	27%
	Project staff	3%	11%	9%	27%	28%	23%
	Total	2%	8%	9%	23%	32%	25%
I am sufficiently familiar on how to integrate nutrition in rural development projects (N=214)	IFAD staff	1%	4%	6%	28%	34%	28%
	Project staff	3%	4%	7%	19%	47%	19%
	Total	2%	4%	7%	24%	40%	24%
I am sufficiently familiar with IFAD’s work on nutrition to communicate IFAD’s role on nutrition to external stakeholders (N=214)	IFAD staff	1%	5%	14%	28%	31%	21%
	Project staff	2%	8%	14%	24%	39%	13%
	Total	1%	7%	14%	26%	35%	17%

Note: Percentages are calculated without No Knowledge/No opinion answer option. Response percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

***, ** and * denote significance when comparing female and male respondents at 1%, 5%, and 10% level using original ordinal scale and Mann–Whitney U test

Integration of nutrition in the design of IFAD's operations: Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements from the perspective of your current position

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
IFAD provides adequate guidance for integrating nutrition in its country strategies (COSOPs) (N=189)	IFAD staff	1%	7%	13%	36%	29%	15%
	Project staff	1%	15%	9%	27%	26%	22%
	Total	1%	11%	11%	32%	28%	18%
IFAD provides adequate guidance for integrating nutrition in project design (N=198)	IFAD staff	1%	5%	16%	32%	33%	13%
	Project staff	1%	13%	7%	26%	33%	20%
	Total	1%	8%	12%	30%	33%	16%
Project activities on nutrition are tailored to the specific needs of the context (N=202) *	IFAD staff	1%	5%	11%	29%	43%	11%
	Project staff	3%	9%	3%	21%	36%	28%
	Total	2%	7%	7%	26%	40%	18%
Project design related to nutrition activities takes into account existing capacities in the country (N=198) **	**IFAD staff**	**3%**	**6%**	**16%**	**37%**	**31%**	**8%**
	Project staff	**1%**	**9%**	**4%**	**30%**	**38%**	**17%**
	Total	**2%**	**7%**	**11%**	**34%**	**34%**	**12%**
The level of detail and quality of nutrition activities at design stage is sufficient to guide implementation (N=195)	IFAD staff	1%	8%	20%	38%	27%	6%
	Project staff	4%	15%	13%	26%	28%	13%
	Total	3%	11%	17%	32%	28%	9%
Adequate financial resources for nutrition activities are allocated at project design (N=194)	IFAD staff	4%	21%	16%	35%	22%	3%
	Project staff	10%	22%	11%	16%	30%	11%
	Total	7%	21%	14%	26%	25%	7%
Government has strong ownership of nutrition activities integrated in IFAD's projects (N=190) ***	**IFAD staff**	**6%**	**15%**	**27%**	**28%**	**17%**	**8%**
	Project staff	**1%**	**8%**	**10%**	**24%**	**35%**	**22%**
	Total	**4%**	**12%**	**19%**	**26%**	**25%**	**15%**

Co-financing facilitates the integration of nutrition activities in IFAD-funded projects (N=187)	IFAD staff	0%	7%	14%	25%	34%	21%
	Project staff	1%	8%	4%	29%	36%	21%
	Total	1%	7%	9%	27%	35%	21%

Note: Percentages are calculated without No Knowledge/No opinion answer option. Response percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

***, ** and * denote significance when comparing female and male respondents at 1%, 5%, and 10% level using original ordinal scale and Mann–Whitney U test

Support to implementation: Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements from the perspective of your current position

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
IFAD provides adequate technical support on nutrition during project implementation (N=187)	IFAD staff	3%	1%	27%	35%	28%	7%
	Project staff	5%	12%	9%	29%	31%	14%
	Total	4%	6%	19%	32%	29%	10%
Supervision and mid-term missions offer the necessary expertise to support performance to achieve nutrition results (N=182)	IFAD staff	2%	3%	16%	34%	34%	10%
	Project staff	4%	10%	6%	24%	36%	20%
	Total	3%	6%	12%	30%	35%	15%
Consultants hired by IFAD to support nutrition sensitive actions have the right profile for their task (N=158)	IFAD staff	3%	2%	13%	34%	34%	13%
	Project staff	4%	7%	10%	23%	38%	18%
	Total	4%	4%	11%	29%	36%	15%
IFAD funded projects develop sufficient operational partnerships with other organizations at country level to deliver on nutrition (N=179)	IFAD staff	3%	7%	23%	38%	22%	6%
	Project staff	3%	10%	16%	29%	26%	16%
	Total	3%	8%	20%	34%	24%	11%
IFAD provides adequate and timely support to strengthen nutrition capacity of PMU staff (N=177)	IFAD staff	2%	6%	25%	37%	20%	10%
	Project staff	7%	10%	17%	32%	21%	13%
	Total	5%	8%	21%	34%	21%	11%
Nutrition-focused grants or supplementary funds are necessary for IFAD loans to achieve nutrition results (N=186)	IFAD staff	1%	1%	5%	19%	32%	42%
	Project staff	2%	2%	5%	6%	40%	45%
	Total	2%	2%	5%	13%	35%	43%

Note: Percentages are calculated without No Knowledge/No opinion answer option. Response percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

***, ** and * denote significance when comparing female and male respondents at 1%, 5%, and 10% level using original ordinal scale and Mann–Whitney U test

Monitoring and Evaluation system: Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements from the perspective of your current position

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am familiar with IFAD's Core Nutrition indicators at outcome level. (N=187) *	IFAD staff	1%	6%	10%	21%	31%	31%
	Project staff	4%	10%	15%	20%	27%	24%
	Total	2%	7%	12%	21%	29%	28%
**IFAD's core nutrition indicators are appropriate to measure project progress/achievements. (N=173) ** **	**IFAD staff**	**3%**	**4%**	**13%**	**43%**	**33%**	**4%**
	Project staff	**3%**	**6%**	**12%**	**21%**	**36%**	**23%**
	Total	**3%**	**5%**	**12%**	**33%**	**34%**	**13%**
**The nutrition data collected and analyzed leads to readjustment in implementation during the life of the project. (N=160) ** **	**IFAD staff**	**2%**	**11%**	**24%**	**36%**	**26%**	**1%**
	Project staff	**5%**	**11%**	**7%**	**24%**	**37%**	**17%**
	Total	**4%**	**11%**	**16%**	**30%**	**31%**	**9%**
**I can easily find the technical expertise needed to measure the nutrition indicators in the country where I work. (N=172) ** **	**IFAD staff**	**7%**	**9%**	**27%**	**23%**	**30%**	**5%**
	Project staff	**7%**	**8%**	**17%**	**19%**	**31%**	**18%**
	Total	**7%**	**9%**	**22%**	**21%**	**30%**	**11%**
**A system is in place to verify that data related to the nutrition indicators are collected following the correct methodology and are of good quality (N=160) ** **	**IFAD staff**	**4%**	**13%**	**21%**	**40%**	**13%**	**9%**
	Project staff	**4%**	**14%**	**10%**	**26%**	**33%**	**13%**
	Total	**4%**	**14%**	**16%**	**33%**	**23%**	**11%**
Adequate technical support for collecting, analyzing and reporting on nutrition indicators is provided by IFAD to project staff (N=172)	IFAD staff	2%	10%	22%	42%	20%	4%
	Project staff	4%	11%	21%	24%	31%	9%
	Total	3%	10%	22%	34%	25%	6%

Note: Percentages are calculated without No Knowledge/No opinion answer option. Response percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

***, ** and * denote significance when comparing female and male respondents at 1%, 5%, and 10% level using original ordinal scale and Mann–Whitney U test

Knowledge management: Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements from the perspective of your current position

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I know where to find resources and information on nutrition, including guidance and tools. (N=184)	IFAD staff	2%	5%	13%	27%	36%	16%
	Project staff	5%	6%	8%	25%	36%	20%
	Total	3%	5%	11%	26%	36%	18%
IFAD is capturing the lessons learnt from its projects to adequately provide evidence on what works and what doesn't in nutrition-sensitive agriculture. (N=167) **	**IFAD staff**	**1%**	**3%**	**16%**	**41%**	**30%**	**9%**
	Project staff	**3%**	**8%**	**4%**	**22%**	**42%**	**22%**
	Total	**2%**	**5%**	**10%**	**32%**	**35%**	**15%**
IFAD's knowledge management is useful to support the design and implementation of nutrition sensitive investments (N=176) *	IFAD staff	1%	6%	10%	36%	33%	14%
	Project staff	2%	6%	10%	18%	38%	26%
	Total	2%	6%	10%	28%	35%	19%
IFAD's knowledge products on nutrition are disseminated in a timely and effective way (N=163)	IFAD staff	0%	9%	15%	38%	30%	7%
	Project staff	4%	13%	14%	27%	31%	10%
	Total	2%	11%	15%	33%	31%	9%
Knowledge generated by IFAD projects is used for policy dialogue (N=161) ***	**IFAD staff**	**1%**	**9%**	**23%**	**40%**	**16%**	**11%**
	Project staff	**1%**	**6%**	**6%**	**29%**	**36%**	**21%**
	Total	**1%**	**7%**	**15%**	**34%**	**26%**	**16%**
IFAD sufficiently leverages key global and regional events to promote its work on nutrition, share knowledge and engage in dialogue (N=158) **	**IFAD staff**	**1%**	**9%**	**17%**	**38%**	**23%**	**11%**
	Project staff	**1%**	**6%**	**18%**	**18%**	**38%**	**18%**
	Total	**1%**	**8%**	**18%**	**29%**	**30%**	**15%**
Nutrition workshops organized by IFAD at regional level (in WCA, ESA and NEN) significantly contributed to sharing knowledge on nutrition across countries (N=137)	IFAD staff	0%	10%	4%	30%	34%	21%
	Project staff	3%	4%	13%	12%	33%	34%
	Total	1%	7%	9%	21%	34%	28%

IFAD's knowledge products are shared to those involved in design and implementation (N=167) **	**IFAD staff**	**0%**	**9%**	**17%**	**44%**	**23%**	**7%**
	Project staff	**4%**	**6%**	**11%**	**22%**	**32%**	**25%**
	Total	**2%**	**8%**	**14%**	**34%**	**27%**	**16%**

Note: Percentages are calculated without No Knowledge/No opinion answer option. Response percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

***, ** and * denote significance when comparing female and male respondents at 1%, 5%, and 10% level using original ordinal scale and Mann–Whitney U test

IFAD's role in nutrition: Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
IFAD has a clear vision of how its work contributes to nutrition (N=175) * **	**IFAD staff**	**1%**	**7%**	**13%**	**30%**	**34%**	**14%**
	Project staff	**0%**	**3%**	**5%**	**18%**	**37%**	**37%**
	Total	**1%**	**5%**	**10%**	**25%**	**35%**	**25%**
IFAD has an important role to play in addressing undernutrition (N=186) *	IFAD staff	2%	3%	4%	17%	39%	36%
	Project staff	0%	1%	4%	9%	40%	46%
	Total	1%	2%	4%	13%	39%	40%
IFAD has an important role to play in addressing overweight (N=176)	IFAD staff	4%	12%	13%	19%	31%	21%
	Project staff	1%	5%	13%	20%	37%	24%
	Total	3%	9%	13%	19%	34%	22%
IFAD has a distinct comparative advantage in the nutrition sensitive agriculture space (N=176)	IFAD staff	4%	2%	13%	21%	35%	24%
	Project staff	0%	5%	9%	14%	41%	31%
	Total	2%	3%	11%	18%	38%	27%
IFAD has a distinct comparative advantage in the food security sector/space (N=180)	IFAD staff	1%	1%	7%	22%	32%	37%
	Project staff	1%	3%	5%	14%	36%	41%
	Total	1%	2%	6%	18%	34%	39%
**IFAD uses its influence to advance nutrition-sensitive agriculture in countries where it operates (N=174) ** **	**IFAD staff**	**3%**	**5%**	**20%**	**29%**	**27%**	**15%**
	Project staff	**0%**	**9%**	**9%**	**19%**	**35%**	**30%**
	Total	**2%**	**7%**	**15%**	**24%**	**30%**	**22%**
**IFAD has formed strategic partnerships with other organizations working on nutrition at the country level (N=151) ** **	**IFAD staff**	**4%**	**8%**	**13%**	**33%**	**31%**	**11%**
	Project staff	**1%**	**9%**	**12%**	**18%**	**37%**	**22%**
	Total	**3%**	**9%**	**13%**	**26%**	**34%**	**16%**
	IFAD staff	**1%**	**3%**	**9%**	**31%**	**42%**	**14%**

IFAD has formed strategic partnerships with other organizations working on nutrition at the global level (N=139) **	**Project staff**	**2%**	**5%**	**5%**	**15%**	**39%**	**35%**
	Total	**1%**	**4%**	**7%**	**24%**	**40%**	**24%**
IFAD engages adequately with the private sector on nutrition (N=153) ***	**IFAD staff**	**13%**	**22%**	**29%**	**21%**	**9%**	**7%**
	Project staff	**2%**	**15%**	**11%**	**21%**	**33%**	**18%**
	Total	**8%**	**19%**	**21%**	**21%**	**20%**	**12%**

Note: Percentages are calculated without No Knowledge/No opinion answer option. Response percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

***, ** and * denote significance when comparing female and male respondents at 1%, 5%, and 10% level using original ordinal scale and Mann–Whitney U test

Challenges influencing effective performance of nutrition actions in IFAD operations: FAD's role in nutrition: According to your experience, please select the three most important challenges that you encountered in mainstreaming nutrition in IFAD's operations and that have impacted nutrition performance.

Answer Choices	IFAD Staff	Project Staff	All respondents
IFAD's lack of understanding of the importance of nutrition-sensitive activities (N=6)	5%	1%	3%
Government's lack of understanding of the importance of nutrition-sensitive agriculture (N=49)	29%	22%	26%
Lack of nutrition expertise in IFAD design and supervision missions (N=33)	17%	18%	17%
Insufficient level of detail and quality of nutrition activities at design stage to guide implementation (N=47)	23%	26%	25%
Lack of skills in nutrition sensitive agriculture within the Project Management Unit and other project implementers (N=84)	44%	44%	44%
Not enough nutrition expertise within IFAD at country or regional level to support nutrition actions (N=39)	20%	20%	20%
Inadequate budget to meet nutrition objectives as set-out in the project design (N=73)	33%	44%	38%
Duplication of activities or lack of synergy with other organizations working in the country (N=43)	26%	18%	23%
Nutrition activities are perceived by the Ministry of Agriculture as separate to their routine work (N=45)	**36%****	**9%****	**24%**
Insufficient availability of grants or supplementary funds supporting nutrition mainstreaming in investments (N=66)	34%	35%	35%
Contextual factors within the country such as level of income, fragility status, effects of climate change or inequalities in the country (N=57)	**15%****	**48%****	**30%**

****, ** and * denote significance when comparing IFAD and project staff respondents at 1%, 5%, and 10% level using Chi square test*

Source: Nutrition TE survey

List of people met[305]

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Focus group discussion at project level

As part of the CCS, the evaluation conduced 36 focus group discussions during project site visits with a total of 829 participants

Country	Number of FGD	Number of participants
Benin	8	82
Brazil	9	160
Burkina Faso	7	106
Burundi	9	76
Indonesia	19	194
Mozambique	11	211

Source: IOE

Note: the list of people met does not include stakeholders interviewed as part of the Laos and Egypt CSPE as these are listed in the respective reports.

Senior Independent Advisor's Report

Professor Jessica Fanzo, Columbia University

Quality of the Thematic Evaluation

This thematic evaluation of IFAD's support for nutrition, the first corporate-level assessment of the organization's global nutrition portfolio, presents a well-structured, comprehensive, and methodologically rigorous analysis covering the period from 2016 to 2024. It evaluates the first and second Nutrition Action Plans (NAPs) and was conducted by IFAD's Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) in strict adherence to the IFAD Evaluation Manual (2022) and the principles established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). Employing a robust mixed-methods approach that integrates both quantitative and qualitative data analysis, the evaluation was informed by a reconstructed Theory of Change. It included ten country case studies: six were mission-based (Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Indonesia, Mozambique), two remote (Bangladesh and Zimbabwe) and two conducted as part of country strategy and programme evaluations led by IOE (Egypt and Laos), ensuring a diverse contextual representation. The evaluation process involved extensive consultations, incorporating surveys of IFAD staff and partners (with 191 respondents), as well as interviews and focus group discussions. The quality assurance process, including peer reviews by internal and external experts, enhanced the credibility of the findings. The methodology employed triangulation and multiple-source validation to ensure analytical rigor, in alignment with the revised IFAD Evaluation Policy (2021). However, the evaluation acknowledges challenges such as inconsistencies in project classification and the limited availability of longitudinal data, which may have constrained the ability to capture IFAD's full impact on nutrition. The overall findings underscore the need for IFAD to holistically integrate nutrition considerations into its core programmatic operations, investments, and evaluation frameworks.

Significance of the Evaluation

This evaluation is of considerable significance to IFAD and the broader development community. As the first corporate-level review of IFAD's global nutrition strategy, it offers essential insights into the effectiveness, coherence, and alignment of IFAD's initiatives with Sustainable Development Goal 2, while also providing evidence-based recommendations to enhance IFAD's contributions to addressing malnutrition through agriculture and rural development. The report comes at a critical juncture, informing IFAD's new Strategic Framework and the third NAP, both set to commence in 2026. The evaluation also responds to IFAD's shortfall in meeting the corporate impact target outlined in its Results Management Framework (RMF) for the 11th replenishment cycle, which aimed to improve nutrition for 12 million people but achieved only 0.5 million. This shortfall underscores the necessity of refining IFAD's nutrition-sensitive approach to ensure interventions are more contextually responsive and aligned with evolving food system dynamics. By deepening the understanding of IFAD's proof of concept and identifying barriers to progress, including financial and organizational constraints, this evaluation serves as a crucial tool for shaping future strategies and interventions in this critical area of development.

Challenges and Limitations of the Evaluation

Despite its methodological rigor, the evaluation faced several challenges and limitations. The extensive timeframe (2016–2024) poses difficulties in capturing evolving

approaches and contextual shifts. Data limitations were evident, particularly in assessing nutrition outcomes due to the absence or low quality of dietary diversity assessments in certain projects. Furthermore, inconsistencies in the classification of projects as nutrition-sensitive impacted the depth of analysis, with some projects contributing to nutrition outcomes despite not being formally categorized as such. The evaluation also highlights that nutrition was often incorporated late in project design, limiting its potential impact. This was the case in particular for projects designed before IFAD11. While most country case studies were conducted through missions, remote data collection may have constrained the depth of insights. Survey response rates were relatively low (33% overall), and logistical constraints hindered the organization of remote interviews. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for bias, although triangulation efforts help mitigate this concern.

Opportunities for Improved Design and Evaluation

To enhance future evaluation practices, IFAD should prioritize robust baseline and midline data collection mechanisms to facilitate more effective tracking of nutrition outcomes. Incorporating real-time evaluation elements would allow for continuous adaptation of nutrition-sensitive approaches. Standardizing definitions and methodologies across projects would improve comparability, while greater use of participatory evaluation methods could foster stakeholder engagement. Strengthening quantitative impact assessment techniques would provide a more comprehensive understanding of IFAD's contributions to nutrition. Expanding the scope to incorporate a deeper analysis of food systems transformation would yield a more holistic perspective, addressing gaps in IFAD's predominantly production-driven approach by integrating considerations of food environments and consumer behavior. Enhancing survey response rates through targeted engagement and improving integration of qualitative insights with quantitative data would further enrich findings. Increased investment in independent evaluations of grants and partnerships would provide a clearer picture of IFAD's impact. Additionally, developing specific methodologies to assess IFAD's contributions to reducing overweight and obesity—an underexplored area in IFAD's programming—is recommended. Establishing a standardized nutrition-sensitive project assessment tool and a longitudinal evaluation framework would support more consistent and insightful evaluations. Finally, deeper collaboration with academic institutions could introduce innovative methodologies to strengthen IFAD's nutrition monitoring and evaluation including impact assessments.

Opportunities for Policy Engagement

The evaluation findings provide valuable opportunities for policy engagement. IFAD can leverage these insights to strengthen its role in global nutrition policy dialogues, advocating for enhanced commitments to nutrition-sensitive agriculture. Greater engagement with national governments should focus on embedding nutrition objectives into policy frameworks and investment plans, particularly in countries experiencing severe malnutrition challenges (particularly in rural areas). Strengthening partnerships with international organizations, such as FAO and WFP, would enhance policy coherence and financial mobilization. The evaluation also highlights IFAD's strategic positioning within ministries of agriculture but stresses the importance of deeper engagement with health and education ministries to foster multi-sectoral coordination on nutrition.

Opportunities in Knowledge Management

The evaluation underscores the need for improved knowledge-sharing mechanisms within IFAD. Establishing a centralized knowledge hub for best practices, case studies, and lessons learned would facilitate cross-regional learning among IFAD staff and partners. A community of practice could foster ongoing knowledge exchange and innovation in nutrition-sensitive agriculture. Ensuring that nutrition findings inform IFAD's strategic discussions would strengthen institutional learning. While IFAD has generated valuable evidence through grants and supplementary funds, knowledge dissemination remains inconsistent. Developing targeted learning products, such as webinars and case studies in collaboration with academic institutions, could enhance knowledge transfer across IFAD and its partner organizations.

Opportunities to Enhance Organizational Capacity

The evaluation highlights gaps in nutrition expertise within IFAD and project staff, emphasizing the need for capacity-building initiatives. Increased budgetary allocations for nutrition-focused training, recruitment of specialized personnel, and technical assistance would bolster IFAD's ability to deliver effective nutrition interventions. While nutrition staffing has expanded at the headquarters and regional levels, thanks also to supplementary funds, but these funds are not sufficient nor sustainable in the long-term. Also, capacity at country office and project levels remains insufficient. Strengthening internal expertise by recruiting specialists in identified gap areas would enhance IFAD's ability to design and implement impactful nutrition-sensitive programs. Additionally, targeted training and mentorship for IFAD Country Directors and project team leaders would further facilitate the integration of nutrition considerations into project design and implementation.

Conclusions

This thematic evaluation represents a significant milestone in assessing and improving IFAD's approach to addressing malnutrition. Its findings provide a valuable roadmap for enhancing the effectiveness of IFAD's nutrition-sensitive interventions. While the evaluation offers critical insights, addressing existing data limitations, methodological inconsistencies in IFAD's assessments of nutrition outcome, and capacity constraints will be essential for improving IFAD's future contributions to nutrition policy and action. IFAD is well-positioned to enhance its impact on nutrition-sensitive agriculture, and the recommendations outlined in this evaluation should inform its strategic advancements in policy engagement, knowledge management, and institutional capacity-building. By addressing these challenges and leveraging the identified opportunities, IFAD can strengthen its contribution to global efforts to combat malnutrition and achieve sustainable food systems.

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