

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ETHIOPIA'S FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION STAKEHOLDERS

Summary of key findings from Ethiopia's Food Systems Stakeholder Mapping Analysis, 2024

Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, Ethiopia¹

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Key Messages

- Stakeholders from diverse groups have a role to play in transforming Ethiopia's food system to address complex challenges arising across the supply chain that contribute to food insecurity and malnutrition.
- Each stakeholder group must take steps towards enhancing collaboration, aligning efforts, and working to deliver a more sustainable and resilient food system for the country.
- Key recommendations include strengthening government commitment, mobilising financial and technical resources, building capacity across different groups, setting up accountability mechanisms, boosting inclusivity of decision-making processes, leveraging technology and innovation, and conducting periodic assessments to identify emerging challenges and opportunities.

¹ This brief is based on a report submitted to GAIN by LM Group, November, 2024 titled "ETHIOPIA'S FOOD SYSTEMS STAKEHOLDER MAPPING ANALYSIS."



Introduction

Ethiopia's food system is shaped by factors including agroecology, cultural traditions, economic policies, and demographic pressures. Smallholder agriculture accounts for the majority of both employment and food produced. The country's accelerated urbanization is driving dietary shifts, creating demand for more diverse and nutritious foods, however it is also raising concerns about non-communicable diseases (NCDs) linked to the consumption of unhealthy, ultra-processed foods.

Food system challenges occur at different parts of the food system (Box 1), contributing to food insecurity and malnutrition. Food and nutrition policies² created to address some of these challenges often suffer from inadequate implementation capacityⁱ.

Box 1: Key challenges arising across Ethiopia's food supply chain

Across the supply chain:

Climate-induced shocks, conflicts, and food price volatility.



Crop production:

Land degradation, low productivity, limited access to modern inputs (such as fertilizers and improved seeds), and vulnerability to climate shocks (e.g. more frequent droughts).



Livestock sector:

Low productivity, poor animal health services, and inadequate market access, with pastoralists increasingly dealing with land degradation and competition over grazing lands.



Food value chains:

Underdeveloped, with weak linkages between producers, processors, and consumers; high post-harvest losses due to limited infrastructure for post-harvest handling, storage, processing, and transportation.



Rural-urban market integration:

Weak due to inadequate roads and market information systems.



Since 2021, in alignment with the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) ongoing processes, the Government of Ethiopia has developed the Ethiopian Food System Framework, targeting action to address a suite of different food system challenges including several identified in Box 1 by 2030.

2 E.g. Key Ethiopian government initiatives include the Agricultural Growth Program (AGP), Sustainable Land Management Program (SLMP), Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE), Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), Livestock Master Plan (LMP), Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), National Nutrition Program (NNP), Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture (NSA), Ethiopian Urban Food Security Strategy (EUFSS), Digital Green, and Ethiopian Soil Information System (EthioSIS).

What role for stakeholder engagement?

Stakeholder engagement plays a pivotal role in shaping and transforming food systems. In 2024, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), in support of Ethiopia's efforts towards food system transformation, facilitated an analysis of food system stakeholders. Stakeholders were identified using desk reviews, before being interviewed using a questionnaire. The questionnaire covered:

- a) engagement in the regional food system;
- b) opinions on the current food systems and their aspirations for the future;
- c) existing networks and perceived level of influence with other stakeholders in the food system; and
- d) challenges and enabling environment needs for regional food system transformation.

This work aimed, among other things, to explore mechanisms to effectively engage key stakeholders at both the national/federal and subnational/regional states levels towards supporting food systems transformation.

Stakeholder mapping key findings

The analysis of Ethiopia's food systems stakeholders revealed five critical insights:

- **Stakeholder diversity:** A broad spectrum of stakeholders, including government entities, civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector, plays a pivotal role in influencing food system policies and practices at both national and regional levels.
- **Influence and engagement:** A large fraction (68%) of stakeholders perceive themselves as highly influential in the food system transformation process. However, many acknowledge the current system's weaknesses, including low/inadequate/ insufficient collaboration, political commitment, and resources to drive change.
- **Shared aspirations:** Stakeholders aspire to a resilient and sustainable food system that enhances nutrition security, promotes sustainable agricultural practices, and supports economic stability. These aspirations align with the broader goals of the Agenda 2030 framework.
- **Barriers to transformation:** Major challenges including peace and security issues, lack of coordination, and limited access to technical and financial resources hinder the potential for impactful collaboration, preventing effective stakeholder engagement.
- **Need for multistakeholder platforms:** Existing platforms for collaboration among stakeholders are recognized², yet there is a pressing need to strengthen or better structure existing platforms for more effective multisectoral work – facilitating communication, coordination, and, crucially driving joint action, which at present remains underexploited.

² Platforms mentioned by the stakeholders include: a) The food system and nutrition inter-ministerial steering committee; b) Network for Ethiopia Policy Analysis in Research, Agriculture & Food Systems; c) The food system summit dialogues platform; d) National and subnational food system and nutrition council; e) National Food and Nutrition Technical Committee at all administration levels; f) Food Safety & Quality, Food Fortification, and Research Steering Committees; g) Food safety technical working group taskforce, food system taskforce, and nutrition-sensitive agriculture Forum; h) Nutrition development partners forum, SUN business private sector, National Codex and SPS Committees.

Summary of engagement strategies arising from the stakeholder mapping

Following the analysis of the stakeholder responses, recommended actions by five categories of stakeholders – public sector; research and academia; private sector; development organisations and international partners; and civil society and interest groups – have been drawn out. **Table 1** captures the strategies each group is encouraged to implement in order to: enhance collaboration, align efforts, and work towards a more sustainable and resilient food system in Ethiopia.

Table 1: Recommended engagement strategies for five categories of food systems stakeholders

Stakeholder group	Recommendations
Public Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance collaboration on food systems transformation between ministries and agencies. • Organize regular workshops to foster dialogue and share best practices among different ministries involved in food systems. • Facilitate meetings to ensure that policies across sectors (agriculture, health, and environment) are aligned and support food system transformation. • Provide training programs on food systems management and stakeholder engagement to enhance the skills of public officials.
Research & Academia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate relevant food systems research findings into policy-making. • Foster innovation in implementing game changing solutions for food systems. • Establish partnerships between academic institutions and government agencies to facilitate evidence-based policy-making as it relates to food systems. • Share findings of research to policymakers and practitioners. • Encourage collaborative proposals for funding between academic institutions and other stakeholders to further work to transform food systems.
Private Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase investment in food systems and innovation. • Foster public-private partnerships in support of food systems transformation. • Host roundtable discussions to identify opportunities for investment and collaboration in food system initiatives. • Organize events that connect private sector stakeholders with public entities and NGOs to foster partnerships in the food systems space.

Stakeholder group	Recommendations
Development Organizations & International Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance coordination of development initiatives related to food systems. • Ensure alignment with local food system needs and capacities. Hold regular meetings to discuss ongoing projects, share resources, and avoid duplication of efforts with respect to food systems transformation. • Offer training and support to local organizations to strengthen their capacity to implement food systems development initiatives.
Civil Society & Interest Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amplify community voices in food system discussions. • Organize campaigns that raise awareness about food systems issues and encourage stakeholder participation in decision-making processes. • Provide training for civic society groups on advocacy strategies to influence food policy. • Provide feedback on food policies and initiatives, ensuring key concerns are raised.

Source:ⁱⁱⁱ

Call to action

The stakeholder mapping exercise revealed ongoing challenges, but also ways forward for different stakeholder groups seeking to transform Ethiopia's food system.

Building on this work, eight primary actions are recommended to enhance stakeholder engagement and drive the transformation of Ethiopia's food systems.

- 1** Strengthen **multisectoral platforms** that bring together diverse stakeholders to facilitate dialogue, share best practices, and coordinate efforts toward common goals in food system transformation.
- 2** Advocate for stronger **political will and commitment** from government leaders to prioritize food system transformation in policy agendas. This includes aligning policies with the Ethiopian Food System Framework and supporting initiatives that promote stakeholder engagement.
- 3** Enhance efforts to **mobilize financial and technical resources** for food system initiatives. This could involve partnerships with international organizations, development partners, and private sector actors to secure funding and expertise.
- 4** Implement **targeted capacity-building** programs aimed at enhancing the skills and knowledge of stakeholders, particularly in areas such as sustainable agricultural practices, nutrition, and food security. This will empower stakeholders to contribute more effectively to the transformation agenda.
- 5** Develop and implement **accountability mechanisms** that ensure stakeholders are held responsible for their contributions to food system transformation. This could include monitoring and evaluation systems that track progress and outcomes.

- 6** Promote **inclusive decision-making processes** that consider the perspectives and needs of underrepresented groups, including women and marginalized communities. This will help ensure that the benefits of food system transformation are equitably distributed.
- 7** Leverage **technology and innovation** to enhance food production, distribution, and consumption. This includes utilizing data and digital platforms for better information dissemination and stakeholder engagement.
- 8** Conduct **periodic assessments** of stakeholder engagement and influence within the food system to identify emerging challenges and opportunities. This will facilitate adaptive management and continuous improvement in collaborative efforts.

The shared vision of an Ethiopia without malnutrition, with a thriving and vibrant food system contributing to strong public health will only be realised through the combined efforts of diverse stakeholders. Commitment from stakeholders from all groups is needed to advance this work and achieve the goals described.

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- iii Compiled from LM Group, November 2024 report submitted to GAIN titled "ETHIOPIA'S FOOD SYSTEMS STAKEHOLDER MAPPING ANALYSIS."

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