



MONITORING FOOD SYSTEMS in Ghana

KEY MESSAGES

- Ghana's food system holds the potential to drive significant nutrition, environmental, and economic advancements, but this hinges upon an integrated, well-governed data architecture capable of supporting coherent food systems monitoring.
- Ghana's data landscape is fragmented, weakly coordinated, and uneven in coverage, limiting its value for timely, integrated decision-making.
- A national Food Systems Dashboard can turn existing data into actionable insights, strengthen accountability, and accelerate food systems transformation.

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Introduction

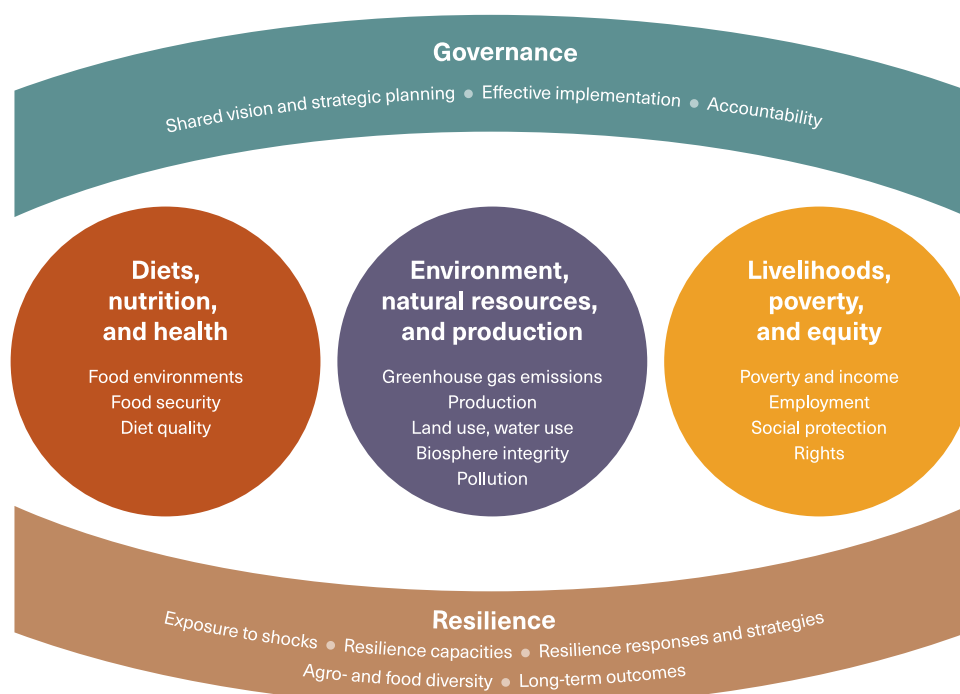
Ghana's food system—like many others around the world—faces various challenges that must be addressed in order to enable sustainable and equitable transformation. Ghana's dietary landscape illustrates the depth of these challenges. Diet quality indicators reveal a transition toward more processed and calorie-dense foods, driven by rapid urbanisation and changing food environments. While 98% of the population consumes at least one starchy staple daily and 85% consume animal-source foods, dietary diversity remains limited, with only 44% of women achieving minimum dietary diversity and just 46% consuming fruit daily ^{1,2}. In 2024, an estimated 67% of the population could not afford a healthy diet, while 45% experienced moderate or severe food insecurity ³. In addition to this, unhealthy dietary practice is widespread in Ghana. About 47% of the population consume sweetened beverages daily, 34% consume salty or fried snacks, and 26% consume deep-fried foods daily ⁴, contributing to rising overweight and obesity, especially in urban areas ^{5,6}.

In addition to nutrition challenges, Ghana relies heavily on the agricultural sector, which employs about half of the country's work force. However, Ghanaian agriculture

remains mostly rain-fed and dominated by subsistence farmers with little access to climate-smart production technologies and practices ^{7,8}. As a result, Ghana is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events. In addition, agriculture itself is a large driver of climate change in the country: Ghana's greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture increased from 4,732 kT CO₂eq to 11,278 kT CO₂eq between 1990 and 2023 ⁹.

These intersecting pressures—nutritional, environmental, and economic—highlight the need for coordinated, system-wide responses that can only be achieved through effective monitoring and data integration. While substantial local data exist across agriculture, health, nutrition, environment, and social protection, the data systems are fragmented, and there is weak coordination, and limited integration across sectors. As a result, policymakers lack a coherent, system-wide view of food system performance, limiting their ability to track progress and design effective, evidence-informed interventions. Strengthening food systems monitoring through integrated data systems is therefore critical to Ghana's efforts to transform its food systems.

Countdown themes and indicator groups. Outer shapes refer to cross-cutting themes. Interior circles refer to long-term outcomes.



- 1 Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) and ICF. (2024). Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 2022. Accra, Ghana, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: GSS and ICF
- 2 Global Diet Quality Project. (2024). Diet Quality Profile—Ghana. Available from: <https://www.dietquality.org>.
- 3 FAOSTAT. (2026). Suite of Food Security Indicators. Available from: <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FS>.
- 4 Global Diet Quality Project. (2024). Diet Quality Profile—Ghana. Available from: <https://www.dietquality.org>.
- 5 Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) and ICF. (2024). Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 2022. Accra, Ghana, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: GSS and ICF
- 6 Ofori-Asenso R, Agyeman AA, Laar A. (2017). Metabolic Syndrome in Apparently “Healthy” Ghanaian Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Int J Chronic Dis*. 2562374. doi: 10.1155/2017/2562374
- 7 Asante, F.A. (2023). Brief Review of Ghana's Food Systems Transformation Pathways. Available from: <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/3faf3a05-e2cc-4158-965a-a27fcb89559b/content>
- 8 Laar et al (2022). Ghana Food Systems Summit Dialogues Synthesis Paper. From Dialogues to Action: Ghana's food systems actors identify food systems challenges and opportunities for transformation. Accra, Ghana.
- 9 FAOSTAT. (2026). Emissions Totals. Available from: <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/GT>.

This policy brief examines the current state of food systems monitoring in Ghana and provides recommendations for building an integrated monitoring system that can drive sustainable transformation.

The Food Systems Countdown Initiative

The Food Systems Countdown Initiative emerged from the United Nations Food Systems Summit as an interdisciplinary collaboration that now includes over 65 food systems experts from dozens of institutions worldwide. The Countdown developed a global monitoring framework, comprising five themes: (1) Diets, nutrition, and health; (2) Environment, natural resources, and production; (3) Livelihoods, poverty, and equity; (4) Governance; and (5) Resilience and undertook a consultative process to select a set of 50 indicators across these themes, which constitutes the global indicator framework. The Countdown publishes annual monitoring updates and additional analysis to monitor global food systems transformation. The Countdown's global indicator framework is being adapted at the country level to meet local needs and priorities. Ghana was one of the first countries to undertake this process through the Agri-Food Systems Accelerator, a multi-partner initiative that supports governments to turn food system priorities into investable actions, with support from BMZ.

Prioritised Indicators

The Beyond the Dialogues commitments tracking initiative was established to track and support the implementation of Ghana's national commitments to food systems transformation following the UN Food Systems Summit, with the goal of strengthening accountability and informing policy action. In doing so, it has compiled food systems-related data across multiple domains, including a set of 70 indicators validated by local food systems stakeholders, which are now being used to track progress toward food systems transformation. At the same time, it has revealed fragmentation in existing data systems and reinforced the need for a unified platform that can bring together diverse data streams into a coherent, decision-support framework.

Building on these, the Countdown workshop held in Accra in February 2026 represents a critical milestone in Ghana's journey toward integrated food systems monitoring. Bringing together over 70 stakeholders across government, academia, development partners, civil society, and the private sector, the workshop focused on adapting global food systems indicators to Ghana's context and advancing the development of a national dashboard.

Workshop participants proposed 17 indicators for the **Diets, nutrition, and health** theme. These include measures of undernutrition and overweight among children under five, anaemia prevalence among women of reproductive age (15–49), and overweight and obesity in the adult population. Dietary quality indicators cover consumption of all six food groups, minimum dietary diversity for women and children (SDG 2.2.4), and the proportion of the population unable to afford

a healthy diet. Supplement coverage—including iron-folic acid supplementation, vitamin A supplementation, and iodised salt consumption—was also prioritised, alongside school meal programme reach, food loss per capita (SDG 12.3.1), and the availability of food-based dietary guidelines.

Fourteen indicators were proposed to capture Ghana's **Environment, natural resources, and production**.

These encompass crop and livestock production values, fisheries output, and overall food supply. Environmental sustainability indicators include fertiliser and pesticide use per unit of agricultural production, water use efficiency in agriculture (SDG 6.4.1), land degradation (SDG 15.3.1), and agricultural contribution to water stress (SDG 6.4.2). Progress toward sustainable agriculture (SDG 2.4.1), forest harvesting intensity, and water quality measures (SDG 6.3.2) are also included. Food safety is addressed through indicators on aflatoxin, heavy metal, and pesticide contamination of crops, and fisheries governance through access rights for small-scale fishers (SDG 14.b.1).

Within **Livelihoods, poverty, and equity**, participants proposed 10 indicators that address the economic and equity dimensions of the food system. Core measures include agricultural productivity, average income of small-scale food producers (SDG 2.3.2), rural poverty rates, and final consumption expenditure per capita in rural areas. Equity-focused indicators cover secure land tenure (SDG 5.a.1), child labour in agriculture (SDG 8.7.1), the proportion of time spent on unpaid care work, and rural unemployment. Social protection coverage—including input subsidy programmes, cash transfers, and the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme—was also identified as a priority.

Participants proposed 12 **Governance** indicators reflecting the policy and regulatory environment shaping Ghana's food system. These include the share of the national budget allocated to agriculture, farmer access to extension services, and agricultural import dependency. Regulatory and trade environment indicators cover customs and trade obstacles for firms, access to finance, and international trade in agricultural raw materials. Food environment governance is captured through front-of-pack labelling coverage, sugar-sweetened beverage taxes, food hygiene standards compliance, and the legal recognition of the right to food. Civil society participation and measures to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing (SDG 14.6.1) round out this theme.

Fifteen indicators were proposed to assess the **Resilience** of Ghana's food system. Infrastructure-related measures include rural electrification, road quality, and an agriculture infrastructure index. Financial inclusion is addressed through mobile money and financial institution account ownership, and mobile device ownership. Food system shocks are tracked through direct agricultural losses from disasters, food price anomalies (IFPA/CPI), post-harvest losses across major commodity groups, and import dependency for key commodities (poultry, rice, tomatoes, wheat). Additional indicators cover livestock

vaccination coverage, farmer access to mass media, dietary sourcing flexibility, and disaster risk management encompassing conflict, displacement, pest and disease outbreaks, and epidemics.

Data Availability and Gaps

Ghana's data ecosystem provides a strong foundation for the development of a national Food Systems Dashboard, whereby the country already has a functioning statistical core, multiple sectoral information systems, and a visible shift toward open dissemination and metadata. It also has a candid self-diagnosis, in both the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics and the health information strategy. However, there are significant gaps in data coverage across key food systems domains.

While production and market data are relatively well developed, areas such as food environments, dietary quality, and food safety are less systematically captured. This imbalance reflects a historical focus on agricultural production rather than broader food systems outcomes. In addition, household survey indicators are richer but periodic, while routine health data are more frequent but narrower in terms of relevance to diets and nutrition.

For livelihoods, poverty, and equity, the challenge is routine data collection. Ghana Living Standards Survey and the census support high-value analysis, and LEAP Management Information Systems provides an administrative foothold for social protection, but there is no obvious single routine system for tracking food-systems livelihoods, precarious employment, and vulnerability in near real time. Therefore, some stakeholders called for inclusion of social protection indicators such as LEAP and for stronger alignment with national priorities.

For governance and accountability, Ghana has the SDG platform, National Development Planning Commission reporting processes, and there is some interest among stakeholders to align the Food Systems Countdown Initiative with Beyond the Dialogues Project, CAADP, and national indicators. The gap here is not lack of reporting frameworks but lack of a consolidated governance-indicator layer that can sit alongside outcomes and drivers in one dashboard.

For resilience and environment, Ghana has important ingredients but weaker consolidation. Climate documentation is improving through Ghana Meteorological Agency's state-of-climate reporting, and the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics envisioned administrative environmental databases such as an Environmental Impact Assessment database at EPA. But some of the local stakeholders still see important blind spots around environmental degradation, illegal mining impacts, zoonotic disease risks, resilience communications, transportation, and cold chain systems.

In addition to coverage, there are institutional gaps in data production and reporting. For example, stakeholder consultations revealed that some institutions, such as those responsible for disaster risk management, do not currently produce structured food systems indicators or

lack functional reporting systems. In other cases, reporting systems are under development or not yet operational, limiting the availability of reliable data in critical areas such as early warning systems and disaster preparedness.

Furthermore, there are significant weaknesses in data quality and standardisation. Indicators are often defined differently across institutions, some indicators have no definitions, and there is limited use of standardised metadata frameworks. This creates challenges for data integration and comparison across sectors. In addition, inconsistencies in data collection methodologies and irregular update frequencies further undermine data reliability.

Finally, the system is heavily reliant on project-based data collection efforts, which are often not sustained beyond the duration of specific interventions. This results in gaps in time series data and limits the ability to track long-term trends. For diets, nutrition, and health, Ghana has for years relied on the Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (and recently the DHIMS2), but the dashboard will still face challenges. These are done once every 5 years, or once every 3 years, and sometimes are missed, and there is uncertainty about whether the Demographic and Health Surveys will continue to be conducted. In this context, Ghana is currently relying on the Beyond the Dialogues project to track progress on its food systems transformation commitments, highlighting both the value of such initiatives and the risks of dependence on time-bound project data.

Recommendations for Strengthening Monitoring-Policy Linkages

1. **Establish a formal food-systems data governance mechanism** co-led by Ghana Statistical Service and National Development Planning Commission, with designated data stewards from Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ghana Education Service, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Ghana Meteorological Agency, and other relevant agencies.
2. **Build capacity and institutionalise data use** by embedding key food systems indicators into formal government processes, including National Development Planning Commission review cycles, sector performance reviews, and national and sectoral planning and budgeting frameworks.
3. **Develop and operationalise a national Food Systems Dashboard** as an interoperable data integration platform that connects existing information systems, and provides a unified, real-time view of food system performance to support evidence-based decision-making.
4. **Enhance subnational data systems and utilisation** to strengthen the availability, quality, and use of disaggregated data at regional and district levels, particularly for nutrition, livelihoods, and climate resilience.