



MONITORING FOOD SYSTEMS in Lao People's Democratic Republic

KEY MESSAGES

- Lao PDR's food systems policy architecture is increasingly integrated and ambitious, advancing a more sustainable and resilient food systems agenda through strengthened institutional coordination and alignment.
- The food systems monitoring landscape provides a solid platform to build on, with established systems such as NIPN, LRIMS and LAOSIS that collate nutrition, agriculture, and socioeconomic data. However, most of these efforts are still managed separately across sectors and ministries, leaving a disconnected set of food system indicators. Limited national and subnational capacity, data coverage, and data gaps constrain the integrated food system analysis needed for effective cross-sectoral decision-making.
- With the exception of health and agriculture data, routine data collection for other systems like governance, diets, and social protection are nascent. Existing systems rely on externally supported surveys and data systems.
- Strengthening food systems monitoring is a strategic opportunity and national priority, essential to delivering on commitments and ensuring targeted investment and action, including the recently launched National Action Plan for Transition toward Food Systems Transformation in Laos (2025-2030).
- Consolidating existing platforms, strengthening capacity, and embedding monitoring into planning and budget cycles will ensure that Lao PDR's ambition for food systems transformation leads to measurable outcomes.



Food Systems
Countdown
Initiative



gain
Global Alliance for
Improved Nutrition



Food and Agriculture
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Introduction

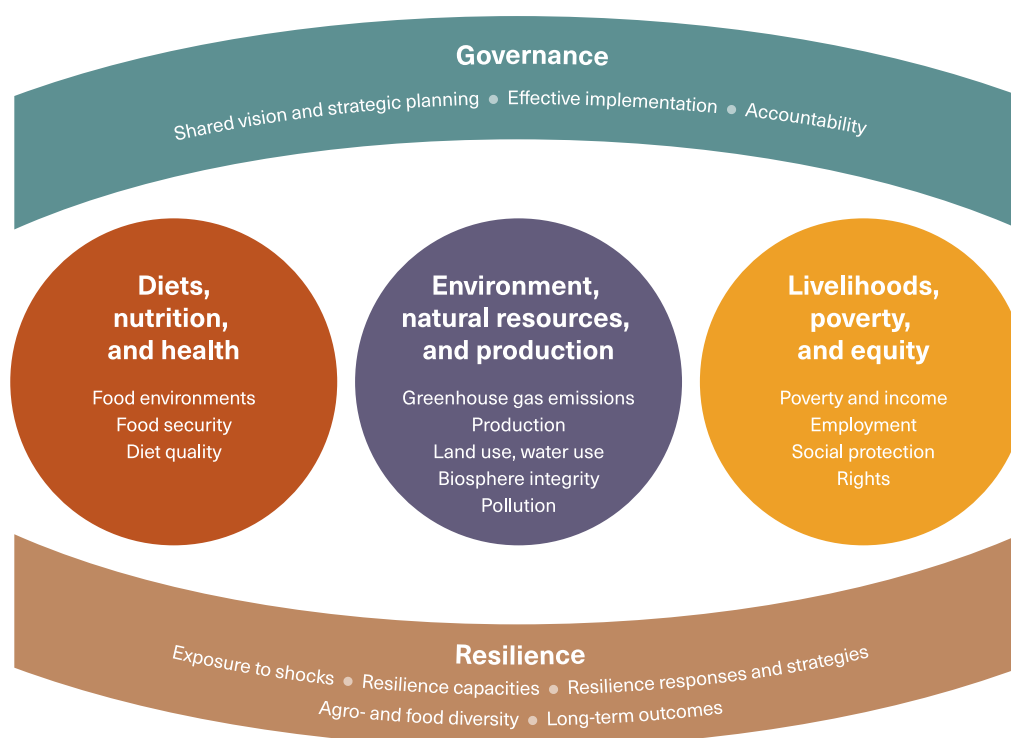
Lao People's Democratic Republic is advancing an integrated, sustainable, and resilient food systems agenda aimed at transitioning the country away from subsistence-based production. Key goals include improving livelihoods, enhancing food and nutrition security, and reducing disparities among rural and vulnerable populations. This agenda supports the government's broader ambition to achieve upper-middle-income status by 2035 and high-income status by 2055, with inclusive and green economic growth as a defining feature of this path ¹.

Agriculture remains central to livelihoods in Lao PDR, employing around 70% of the population but contributing less than 20% of GDP ². The food system faces increasing structural pressures, including environmental degradation linked to cash crop expansion, climate vulnerability, and infrastructure constraints ^{3,4}. Rising dietary risks and persistent malnutrition in all its forms are compounded by limited food affordability, with 80% of the population unable to afford a healthy diet ⁵. These challenges disproportionately affect rural, remote, and vulnerable communities, where poverty and food insecurity remain concentrated ⁶.

Lao PDR's food systems policy landscape demonstrates broad coverage with a shift toward integrated and systems-based approaches. The policy landscape is anchored by the National Socio-Economic Development Plans (10th NSEDP 2026–2030), with the National Action Plan for Transition toward Food Systems Transformation in Laos (NAP-FST) (2025–2030), and Convergence Action Blueprint (2025–2035) providing integrated food systems frameworks, and the Agricultural Development Strategy to 2025 and Vision 2030 and Green and Sustainable Agriculture Framework to 2030 (GSAF) underpinning sectoral direction on production and sustainability.

The policies address diets and nutrition through food environment regulation and life-cycle interventions, while production and natural resource frameworks promote sustainable agriculture, climate-smart practices, and biodiversity conservation. Livelihoods and equity are embedded through national development and social protection strategies, with explicit attention to gender, rural and vulnerable populations. Cross-sectoral coordination for food systems governance is anchored in inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial coordination bodies and reinforced through joint planning, coordinated implementation, and aligned financing mechanisms. Existing data and monitoring platforms provide

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



¹ Government of Lao PDR, 2026. 10th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2026-2030)

² OECD, 2024. Multi-dimensional review of Lao PDR: financing sustainable development. OECD Publishing, Paris.

³ FAO, 2022. The Lao People's Democratic Republic: Soaring prices and reduced availability of agricultural inputs curb 2022 agricultural production prospects, increasing risks for acute food insecurity. GIEWS Update. Food and Agriculture Organisation;

⁴ FAO, WFP, 2025. Special Report: 2024 FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) to the Lao People's Democratic Republic. April 2025. Food and Agriculture Organisation. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd4991en>

⁵ Global Diet Quality Project, UNICEF, 2022. Diet Quality Monitoring in Lao PDR. UNICEF, Vientiane, Lao PDR.

⁶ WFP, 2013. Food and Nutrition Security Atlas of Lao PDR. World Food Programme (WFP); Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany

a foundation for evidence-based planning, while coordinated development partner financing supports implementation of national priorities.

Lao PDR's food systems policies also demonstrate strong alignment with international and regional frameworks, particularly the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ASEAN food security mechanisms, and global standards on nutrition, food safety, and sustainable agriculture. This alignment is further reinforced through integration of climate, biodiversity, and disaster risk frameworks including the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Convention on Biological Diversity positioning national policies within a coherent global food systems transformation and resilience agenda.

The development of Nationally Determined Contributions 3.0⁷ and decentralisation reforms at the sub-district level offer critical entry points to strengthen food systems coordination, monitoring and accountability, and localisation of food systems transformation. The launch of a Private Sector Agribusiness Financing Framework alongside the NAP-FST (2025–2030)⁸ provides a structured pathway for mobilising private capital into food systems transformation.

This policy brief examines the current state of food systems monitoring in Lao PDR 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 priorities⁹.

In Lao PDR, the Countdown framework was adapted and validated to reflect national priorities and strengthen food systems monitoring at both national and sub-national levels. This process was implemented through a multi-stakeholder collaboration that included an advisory committee, an adaptation workshop in February 2026 and a validation workshop in June 2026. The engagement

was led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

Prioritised Indicators

For the **Diets, nutrition and health** theme, stakeholders recommended indicators including dietary diversity for women and children, prevalence of food insecurity and household food affordability. Access to safe water and consumption of fruits and vegetables and sugar-sweetened soft drinks were also included. Stakeholders also noted the importance of indicators related to dietary practices that raise the risk of and protect against noncommunicable diseases.

Under the **Environment, natural resources and production** theme, recommended indicators include production volumes and yield across key commodities (crops, livestock, fisheries), and land use as reflected by changes in cropland, forest cover and degraded land. In addition, stakeholders emphasized the need for indicators related to pesticide and fertilizer application and water used for irrigation. Monitoring greenhouse gas emissions from agri-food systems is also key for tracking the food system's environmental footprint and efforts towards climate change mitigation.

In the **Livelihoods, poverty and equity** theme, priority indicators include agricultural employment and labour productivity, and household reliance on agri-food system livelihoods. Also included are access to agricultural credit and food price inflation. Related to the rights domain, stakeholders highlighted membership of smallholder farmers in agricultural cooperatives and women's land ownership and participation in technical training.

For the **Governance** theme, indicators cover the share of NAP-FST (2025–2030) milestones integrated into provincial budgets and sectoral work plans, and budget allocations for nutrition. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder coordination, with the functionality of the National Nutrition Committee and Provincial Nutrition Committees identified as a practical measure of coordination capacity across national and sub-national levels.

In the **Resilience** theme, recommended indicators include the functionality of provincial markets and food price volatility. Related to agrobiodiversity and food diversity, key indicators include functional local fish conservation pools and household access to wild food habitats (forests, rivers, wetlands). Disaster preparedness is a critical area, and stakeholders recommend monitoring early warning system coverage

7 UN-ESCAP, 2025. A framework for action: Developing Lao PDR's NDC 3.0 roadmap. United Nations Environment and Development Division Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

8 Government of Lao PDR, FAO, 2026. National Action Plan on Preparation and Transition toward the Food Systems Transformation in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. From Pathways (2021) to Action (2025-2030).

9 Food Systems Countdown Initiative, 2024. The food systems countdown report 2024: Tracking progress and managing interactions. Columbia University, Cornell University, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition.

and the proportion of updated and active provincial disaster management plans.

Data Availability and Gaps

Lao PDR's food systems monitoring landscape comprises a mix of national systems, joint platforms, and regional initiatives spanning nutrition, agriculture, climate, and socioeconomic data. Stronger monitoring capacity exists in the health and nutrition sectors, supported by established surveillance and reporting systems. Other areas, particularly environment, livelihoods, and governance, remain more fragmented and reliant on periodic (project-based) surveys or externally supported data systems (e.g., WFP, FAO, DHS program, USAID, etc.).

Despite a relatively comprehensive policy architecture, implementation remains fragmented across sectors, limiting the effectiveness in supporting integrated food systems monitoring and decision-making. Data systems are often sector-specific and not interoperable, constraining cross-sectoral analysis and weakening the ability to track food systems outcomes holistically. Key information platforms include National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPN), Land Resources Information Management System (LRIMS), Lao Statistical Information Service (LAOSIS), Lao PDR Agro-biodiversity Information System, and ESCAP Asia-Pacific Risk and Resilience Portal¹⁰. Strengthening linkages across these and other portals and databases would improve integrated analysis, support coordinated decision-making, and enhance monitoring of food systems transformation outcomes.

There are also challenges related to capacity, coverage, and utilisation. Limited technical capacity and infrastructure constrain consistent data analysis and use. While some sectoral data, mainly nutrition and agricultural production, are routinely collected through Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Environment and Ministry of Finance, there are key indicators identified that are not routinely analyzed or integrated into the current monitoring systems. Examples include cropland area change, pesticide use per area of cropland, access to agricultural credit, and food price volatility. In addition, some priority indicators for food systems transformation are not yet systematically captured within existing frameworks, such as, consumption of fruits and vegetables and sugar-sweetened soft drinks, dietary practices that raise the risk of and protect against noncommunicable diseases, agri-food systems greenhouse gas emissions, and households with access to wild food habitats. Gaps in data disaggregation were also noted, particularly by gender, geography, and vulnerable groups. Also reported are constraints in data coverage and representativeness, especially at subnational levels.

While multiple data platforms exist, they are not yet systematically linked to policy processes or regularly used to inform coordinated planning and resource allocation. Strengthening data integration, standardisation, and reporting across sectors is therefore critical to operationalising the country's increasingly integrated food systems policy agenda.

Recommendations for Strengthening Monitoring and Policy Linkages

1. **Create a national integrated data system:** Designate a centralised, accessible data platform to house food systems data that enables cross-sectoral analysis and supports evidence-based planning. To do so, there is a need to build on and strengthen existing inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms to formalize data-sharing agreements and drive standardisation across sectors. The 10th NSEDP (2026–2030) mandates the creation of standardised, centralised, and decentralised platforms (e.g., data centers, data portals, and dashboards). The NAP-FST (2025–2030) further provides a framework for operationalisation across the food system.
2. **Close critical data gaps and strengthen monitoring capacity:** Build national and subnational capacity for integrated food systems monitoring through defined sets of training on data collection, and multi-sectoral analysis and interpretation of the priority food system indicators. This includes improving data disaggregation and subnational coverage and developing practical guidance and standardised methodologies for the proposed indicators. In addition, strengthen technical and institutional capacity for cross-sectoral synthesis and use of food systems data across ministries and administrative levels.
3. **Integrate monitoring into national and provincial planning and budget cycles:** Systematically embed the priority food systems indicators endorsed in Laos NAP-FST (2025–2030) into national and provincial planning processes. Provide training at sub-national level in data collection, analysis and interpretation. Ensure policy milestones and commitments are tracked and reported against provincial budgets and sectoral workplans. Strengthen accountability between evidence and public investment at both national and sub-national levels.
4. **Strengthen the link between data and policy action:** Establish regular, institutionalised review mechanisms under the NAP-FST (2025–2030) to assess and interpret findings generated through the proposed food systems indicator framework and guide coordinated action across sectors. These mechanisms should bring together government ministries, development partners, private sector, civil society and research organisations to ensure that Lao PDR's increasingly ambitious food systems policy architecture is matched by equally integrated monitoring, learning, and accountability systems.
5. **Develop data infrastructure for emerging priority indicators:** For indicators not yet systematically or routinely captured, invest in the methodological and institutional groundwork needed before full integration into national monitoring is possible.
6. **Secure dedicated domestic financing for monitoring:** Coordination mechanisms and monitoring systems currently rely heavily on development partner funding, creating structural fragility. Embedding dedicated budget lines for food systems monitoring within implementation budget and sectoral workplans is essential to ensure monitoring is sustained.

10 The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) intergovernmental platform.