

# ETHIOPIA'S PATH TO FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION



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Aster Zewdie, Wubet Girma

## KEY MESSAGES

- Through its Food Systems Summit Member State Dialogues and National Pathway, Ethiopia has shown strong **political commitment** to transforming its **food system**.
- The need to address food issues **systemically** is increasingly recognised. We can no longer afford progress in one area driving setbacks in another.
- To be effective, implementation needs to focus on a **transparent and inclusive process** of food systems transformation, where it aligns policies, mobilises resources (including domestic budgets), and works in a **multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach**. GAIN looks forward to participating in this process.

## INTRODUCTION: PATHWAYS TO PROGRESS

In recent years, several key moments, including the announcement and convening of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, have elevated the importance of a food systems approach. A food systems approach entails recognising the interconnectedness of different aspects of food systems and interactions among them and addressing them in an integrated manner – which may include bringing together diverse stakeholders to work on actions that improve outcomes across different domains like health, nutrition, environment, and livelihoods.

The process by which national governments engaged with the UNFSS involved holding Food Systems Summit Member State dialogues at national and sub-national levels. This led to the creation of national pathways, aiming to provide direction on food systems transformation at country level. More than 110 countries, Ethiopia included, developed pathway documents. Within a government policy context, there is notable contrast when comparing this approach to traditional ministerial-level strategies or development plans. National food systems pathways, and action plans emerging from them, cross sectoral boundaries, ideally involving multiple ministries, while also engaging non-state actors including civil society, farmers, the private sector, and marginalised groups. Given the complexity of the challenges Ethiopia faces with regards to its food system, an approach that aims to address the full complexity of their root causes in an inclusive way is essential.

## THE ETHIOPIAN EXPERIENCE

The Ethiopian vision for its food system has been formulated through a multi-stage, multi-sectoral process, co-convened by H.E. Mr. Oumer Hussein, Minister of Agriculture, and H.E. Dr. Lia Tadesse, Minister of Health. Beginning with a high-level roundtable and background paper, the first National Dialogue looked at the current state of Ethiopian food systems, identifying key challenges to be addressed to drive transformation. The second National Dialogue identified and prioritised 22 key 'game-changing solutions'<sup>1</sup> to the identified challenges, while a third National Dialogue brought together key stakeholders to launch the country's food systems vision and publicly affirm its commitment to creating a strong and equitable food system that can

**Ethiopia seeks to use a sustainable and healthy-diet centred lens to transform food systems, uniting around a common goal of healthy and sustainable diets for all.**

<sup>1</sup> Game-changing solutions include increasing the supply and consumption of nutrient dense foods; food safety management; and food fortification and biofortification.

deliver on the promises of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Ethiopia's Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda. The process brought together over 120 stakeholders. GAIN Ethiopia is proud to have been part of the core working group helping to coordinate the dialogues.

The outcomes of this process have been captured in two documents, a [position paper](#) and [technical report](#), that together form Ethiopia's pathway to food systems transformation. All game-changing solutions have been designed to support and evolve existing national policies and programmes, such as the Seqota Declaration promising to end child undernutrition in Ethiopia by 2030. It is also noted that national programmes and budgets will be realigned and (re)allocated where required to support the pathway's implementation.

## NEXT STEPS: FROM PATHWAY TO PLAN TO IMPLEMENTATION

Ethiopia's pathway towards food systems transformation, as formulated in its position paper, represents a first step. It is important that the vision and solutions continue to have strong political legitimacy, with responsibility for implementation shared across departments. The joint convening of the dialogues by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health is an encouraging signal that the government is committed to a multi-sector and multi-actor approach.

If the momentum is maintained through the following actions as outlined in Ethiopia's position paper, the country can set an example of how to undertake food systems planning and implementation with a focus on health and sustainability:

Effective implementation of the 22 game-changing solutions as key pillars of the 20-year food systems transformation plan

Providing leadership and mobilising resources needed to transform these game-changing solutions into action

Mobilising stakeholders and coordinating efforts to maximise impact

Ensuring results, accountability, and transparency through a rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation

It is encouraging to see that one of the first actions the government has taken after the UNFSS is to engage stakeholders to work together to revise the food and nutrition strategy and roadmap. Aligning the roadmap with policies, prioritising actions, and designing an accountability framework are the next steps. The implementation of the Ethiopian food systems vision can build on the multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach of the Seqota Declaration and the lessons learnt from this programme since it began in 2015<sup>2,3</sup>. GAIN stands ready to support Ethiopia's process of food systems transformation, offering knowledge and expertise on topics such as improving policy coherence to advance nutrition and the role of the private sector.

## A CALL FOR CONTINUED ACTION

Some 37% of children under five in Ethiopia are stunted<sup>4</sup>, only 7% of children aged 6-23 months meet the criteria for a diet that is minimally acceptable in terms of both frequency and diversity<sup>5</sup>, and climate change will only exacerbate existing pressures like locust swarms, conflict, and rising food insecurity. Integrated food systems planning holds considerable promise to contribute to Ethiopia's bold aspirations for economic development, while overcoming its food and malnutrition challenges. At GAIN, we welcome and look forward to continue supporting the government's next steps and vision in this journey of food systems transformation.

<sup>2</sup> Scaling up Nutrition. Ethiopia commits to ending undernutrition by 2030 with the Seqota Declaration. 21 July 2025. Available from: <https://scalingupnutrition.org/news/ethiopia-commits-to-ending-under-nutrition-by-2030-with-the-seqota-declaration/>

<sup>3</sup> Federal democratic republic of Ethiopia. Seqota Declaration – Innovation Phase Investment Plan 2017-2020. January 2018. Available from: <http://repository.iifphc.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/1030/Seqota%20Declaration%20Innovation%20Phase%20Investment%20Plan%202018%20-%202020.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Global Nutrition Report. Country nutrition profiles: Ethiopia. Accessed 9 March 2022. Available from: <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/africa/eastern-africa/ethiopia/>

<sup>5</sup> Central Statistical Agency (CSA) [Ethiopia] and ICF. 2016. *Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2016*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Rockville, Maryland, USA. CSA and ICF.