

MAY 2022

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## KEY MESSAGES

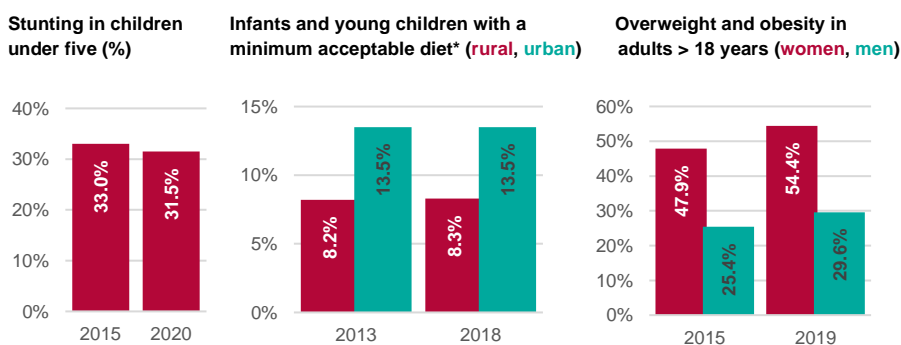
- Nigeria's delivery of a pathway for food systems transformation in advance of the first United Nations Food Systems Summit in 2021 is evidence of strong **political commitment to transformative food systems action**.
- It is increasingly recognised that food system issues must be tackled in a coherent way to **capitalise on synergies** existing across domains like nutrition, agriculture, health, and the environment.
- Strong **momentum is being maintained** in Nigeria around this work, evidenced by an April 2022 convening by the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning, which included a session to sensitise civil servants from all 36 states and the Federal Capital on transformative food systems priorities and plans.

## PATHWAY TO PROGRESS

Following the first ever United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) in 2021, which saw the participation of hundreds of member states and thousands of diverse stakeholders, the term 'food systems' is firmly on the agenda. Moreover, governments around the world have grown to recognise the advantages of tools like national food systems action plans. These plans incorporate actions of different stakeholder groups to improve outcomes across different domains like health, nutrition, environment, and livelihoods. In notable contrast to traditional ministerial-level strategies, food systems action plans cross sectoral lines, ideally driving coherence across multiple policy areas (such as health, agriculture, food security, planning, trade, environment), while also carving a role for non-state actors including farmers, other private-sector stakeholders, civil society, knowledge leaders, and more.

Like other countries, Nigeria can benefit from a food systems approach, particularly considering ongoing challenges of malnutrition (see Figure 1 for some recent trends), coupled with growing impacts of climate change. Dietary diversity, livelihoods, and resilience challenges, exacerbated by the global pandemic and rising fuel and food prices, only add further impetus.

Figure 1: Selected malnutrition trends and indicators, Nigeria



Source: <sup>1</sup>

Note: \*This is a World Health Organization indicator for evaluating child feeding practices, combining minimum dietary diversity and minimum meal frequency.

<sup>1</sup> Global Nutrition Report 2021 <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/africa/western-africa/nigeria/>

## NIGERIA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT

In the run up to the UNFSS, hundreds of multi-stakeholder dialogues were held, feeding the development of documents called **national pathways** to transform food systems. Some 111 countries, Nigeria included, developed such documents<sup>2</sup>. These can be seen as a first step toward ambitious and actionable plans. In preparation for the UNFSS, Nigeria's Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning, supported by a technical group consisting of representatives from academia, UN agencies, and non-governmental organisations like GAIN, convened 40 dialogues with over 4,000 participants. The Nigerian government organised 26 of these<sup>3</sup>, while 14 dialogues were independently convened<sup>4</sup> by other stakeholders.

Highlights of the pathways document that resulted for Nigeria include: a) summarising the current state of the country's food systems, b) laying out the expectations Nigerians hold around food systems transformation<sup>5</sup>, and c) presenting a list of over 80 transformative actions to be taken in both the short and long terms.

At the summit, Nigeria's president, H.E. Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, highlighted seven key commitments, as summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Seven key commitments highlighted by Nigeria's president at the UNFSS in 2021



a) "Supporting private sector investments in food storage and transportation."

b) "Investment in food security and nutrition knowledge dissemination and information management systems to enhance agricultural productivity."

c) "Building sustainable, responsive, and inclusive food systems by integrating our medium-term national development plan 2021-2025 and the national poverty reduction and growth strategy and the food and nutrition policy."

d) "Enhancing productivity of smallholder farmers and empowering women and youth for greater access to food production and processing assets and resources."

e) "Addressing the drivers of food insecurity like food inflation and changing consumption patterns to increase the consumption of nutritious and healthy foods including in humanitarian context."

f) "Strengthening climate mitigation strategies and the conflict early warning system that will reduce the many stresses and shocks to our food systems. Our national livestock transformation plan is one of such initiatives."

g) "Developing a sub-national food systems dashboard, to link research, innovation, and extension for a sustainable food system."

Source: <sup>6</sup>

## LOOKING AHEAD

To kick off implementation of the recommendations, the government of Nigeria has selected three priority areas to focus on in 2022:

<sup>2</sup> Available here <https://summitdialogues.org/overview/member-state-food-systems-summit-dialogues/convenors/>

<sup>3</sup> Government dialogues included one inception dialogue, 12 zonal dialogues achieving participation from all states and the Federal Capital Territory, eight rural dialogues to engage community-level participants, two value chains/private sector dialogues, one women's dialogue, one youth dialogue, and a consolidatory dialogue.

<sup>4</sup> Independent dialogues addressed specific aspects of food systems including child and adolescent nutrition, fortification, and the role of civil-society organisations. Seven international dialogues also included Nigeria as a focus country, covering topics including indigenous vegetables, local initiation of and participation in food systems research, securing land tenure rights, and policy innovations.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, that food systems will deliver higher incomes and reduce poverty, facilitate better education, better access for women to productive resources, lower prices of nutritious foods, and better availability of foods in off-seasons.

<sup>6</sup> The full statement of H.E. Mr. Muhammadu Buhari can be found here: <https://player.vimeo.com/video/611153629?autoplay=1>

- 1) Regular collection and dissemination of information about weather patterns and soil properties and best practices for crops, livestock, aquaculture, and poultry production, produced in a timely way to inform food production decisions each rainy and dry season;
- 2) Establishing farm settlements/estates made up of groups of smallholder producers, prioritising women and young people, and using estates to increase input supply, machinery hiring, extension and other services, as well as market access. Such estates need to include all basic amenities (including internet) to discourage rural to urban migration; and
- 3) Promoting “Operation Feed Yourself” for food and nutrition security at the household level, through local government authorities helping households access information and inputs that will encourage them to produce food around their houses to feed their families<sup>7</sup>.

These areas are especially pivotal because they provide platforms to achieve other food system recommendations by addressing multiple components and challenges of food systems.

To facilitate effective coordination, the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning (FMBNP)<sup>8</sup> together with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture are establishing a Food Systems Command Centre and a Food Systems Dashboard. The Command Centre will provide a real-time platform for monitoring of input and process indicators for implementation of the Action Plan and other food systems activities while the Food Systems Dashboard—based on the existing global Food Systems Dashboard<sup>9</sup>—will provide a snapshot of food systems output and outcome indicators and will facilitate monitoring and evaluation of food systems’ action.

## CONVENING FOR PROGRESS

As part of the ongoing work, in early April 2022, the FMBNP convened the Joint Planning Board and National Council on Development (JPB/NCDP) Meetings in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State. The overarching objective of this set of annual meetings was to agree on a common position on the strategic approach to sustainable development that will ensure inclusive growth and engage all stakeholders. Commissioners of economic planning, permanent secretaries, and directors of planning from all 36 states, including the Federal Capital Territory, were in attendance at this meeting. The Permanent Secretaries of the state ministries of agriculture and health also joined for a technical session focused on discussion around Nigeria’s National Food System Transformation Pathways, which was supported by GAIN<sup>10</sup>.

This technical session aimed to give visibility to the national food systems pathways by ensuring that key implementers at the sub-national level would a) become acquainted with the opportunities presented by the pathways, b) achieve a better understanding of the various roles they can play in helping to implement them, and c) grow to be committed to mobilising support for effective implementation of the pathways – particularly the three priority areas for 2022 detailed above.

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<sup>7</sup> GAIN Country Director Michael Ojo and GAIN Senior Advisor, Food Security and Nutrition, Adeyinka Onabolu serve on the team working on the Operation Feed Yourself Initiative.

<sup>8</sup> This ministry has the mandate to coordinate all the sectors of the economy, including the food and nutrition programme.

<sup>9</sup> <https://foodsystemsdashboard.org/>

<sup>10</sup> The introduction of this session to the JBP Meeting is an outcome of advocacy efforts by GAIN and others on the Food Systems Pathways Implementation Group, underscoring the strategic role of nutrition to the attainment of the SDGs and the need to integrate the national food system transformation pathways into the National Development Plan.

Images: (Top) GAIN Country Director Michael Ojo with Mrs Olusola Idowu, Dr Tayo Adeyemi, and other panellists at the April convening; (Bottom) GAIN's Joyce Akpata and Michael Ojo at the April convening



Source: GAIN

An impressive level of engagement was achieved, with stakeholders from many states showing strong interest in engaging with and moving to implementation of pathways and priority actions.

Going forward, GAIN Nigeria will continue to work with the FMBNP to ensure effective implementation while also supporting states ready start implementation by adapting the pathways to the local context and identifying priority actions and early wins, especially in states where GAIN projects are directly contributing to food systems transformation.

## **A CALL TO ACTION**

Nigeria's bold UNFSS statement, together with its strong pathways document and the ongoing work of FMBNP, represent solid steps. GAIN Nigeria is proud to have been able to support this process, and we look forward to continuing to do so. We are committed to working together with national and state governments, as well as with other development partners, to play our part in the urgently needed acceleration of food systems transformation across Nigeria. This process will need to involve national or state-level food systems action plans with multi-stakeholder buy-in. Policies encompassed in such plans will need to be as coherent and aligned as possible, realistically prioritising activities over different timeframes. Understanding of financial, technical, and budgetary requirements will be critical. Such plans will also benefit from clearly assigning responsibility for implementation. Finally, we believe it will be important to include monitoring and learning activities in plans to assess and improve their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, impact, and sustainability.

Nigeria enjoys a rich food culture increasingly recognised around the world. It is a vast and diverse nation, and Africa's most populous country, but its food and nutrition issues remain significant. These must be overcome to achieve prosperity for all. The agenda for food systems transformation in Nigeria is understandably large and complex, but the rewards for achieving this transformation – for livelihoods and prosperity of Nigeria's people, for their nutrition and health, and for the natural world – would be immense.