



# MONITORING FOOD SYSTEMS in Nigeria

## KEY MESSAGES

- Nigeria has comprehensive food systems and nutrition policies but weak implementation and monitoring systems, limiting accountability and progress toward food systems transformation goals.
- Food insecurity has worsened dramatically, with the percent of the population experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity rising from 35% in 2016 to 74% in 2023, while 79% of the population could not afford a healthy diet in 2022, underscoring the urgent need for evidence-based policies and programming.
- Critical data gaps exist at subnational levels, with only 8 of 50 Food Systems Countdown Initiative indicators available at state level, hindering targeted interventions and monitoring of local progress.
- Strengthened coordination mechanisms and standardised indicators are essential to translate Nigeria's robust policy framework into measurable improvements in human and environmental outcomes.
- Investment in data systems and capacity building is critical to enable real-time monitoring that can inform policy and program adjustments across Nigeria's governance arrangement.

All photos: © GAIN



Food Systems  
Countdown  
Initiative



**gain**  
Global Alliance for  
Improved Nutrition



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



COLUMBIA CLIMATE SCHOOL  
Climate, Earth, and Society

**Cornell CALS**  
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences



**german  
cooperation**

DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Implemented by

**giz**

Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

## Introduction

Nigeria stands at a critical juncture in its food systems transformation journey. As Africa's most populous nation with over 225 million people, Nigeria has demonstrated significant political commitment to food systems transformation, explicitly embedding goals in its National Pathways to Food Systems Transformation and developing comprehensive policy frameworks following the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit. The country's engagement in global food systems transformation efforts led to the development of an implementation strategy for the National Pathways to Food Systems Transformation, coordinated by the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, which serves as the National Convenor for this agenda.

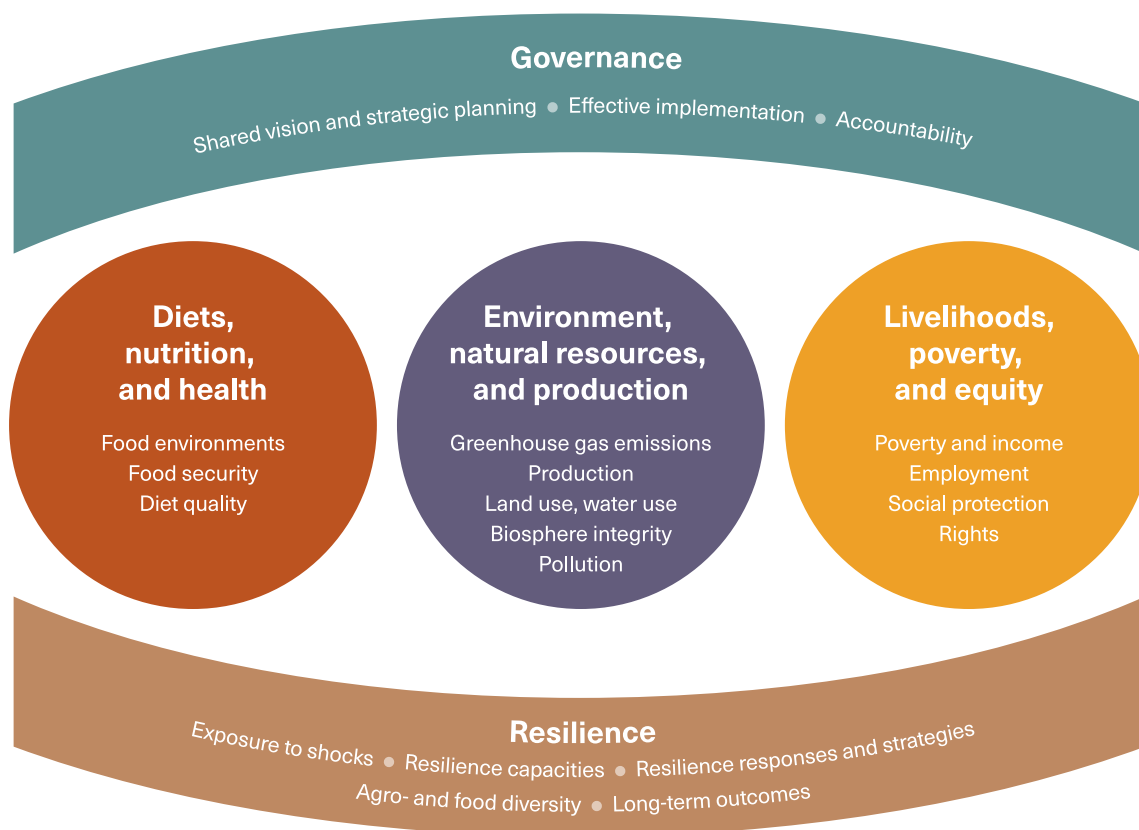
Nigeria's food systems are characterised as rural and traditional, whereby the agricultural sector contributes 23% of Gross Domestic Product, with crop production accounting for 88% of agricultural output.<sup>1</sup> However, this economic significance contrasts sharply with persistent challenges: the percent of the population experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity has risen from 35% in 2016 to 74% in 2023,<sup>2</sup> while 79% of

the population could not afford a healthy diet in 2022.<sup>3</sup> The country faces a triple burden of malnutrition, with 32% of children under-5 years who are stunted,<sup>4</sup> alongside rising rates of overweight and obesity.

With power shared across federal, state, and local government levels, there are both opportunities and challenges for food systems transformation. Nigeria's comprehensive governance structure and over 45 relevant policies spanning all components of food systems have resulted in extensive institutional arrangements, including coordination mechanisms such as the National Council on Nutrition, Presidential Food Systems Coordinating Unit, National Food Systems Task Team, and sector-specific coordination platforms. However, implementation remains fragmented and monitoring systems inadequate for tracking progress toward transformation goals.

This policy brief examines the current state of food systems monitoring mechanisms in Nigeria and how the Food Systems Countdown Initiative global indicator framework could add value to national efforts.

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



1 FAO, European Union, and CIRAD. 2022. Food Systems Profile—Nigeria. Catalysing the sustainable and inclusive transformation of food systems. Rome, Brussels, and Montpellier, France. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3380en>

2 FAO. 2024. FAOSTAT: Suite of Food Security Indicators. Available from: <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FS>

3 FAO. 2024. FAOSTAT: Cost and Affordability of a Healthy Diet. Available from: <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/CAHD>

4 UNICEF, WHO, and World Bank. 2023. Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates. Available from: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/dataset/malnutrition-data/>



It identifies critical indicators and data gaps at the national level and offers targeted recommendations for strengthening governance and coherence in the design and implementation of Nigeria's food system monitoring efforts.

## 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 in an effort 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. Nigeria is one of the first countries to undertake this process in a collaboration between the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, National Bureau of Statistics, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

## Prioritised Indicators

A stakeholder engagement workshop was held in April 2025 as part of the process to adapt the Countdown global indicator framework to the Nigerian setting. This workshop brought together stakeholders across government, academia, civil society, and the private sector in a participatory process to identify Nigeria's priority indicators across the Countdown's five themes. Stakeholders reviewed indicators with available data, emphasising relevance to policy, methodological soundness, feasibility, and coverage.

Cross-cutting indicators emphasised by multiple thematic groups included food insecurity prevalence, women's empowerment measures, social protection coverage, and access to agricultural inputs and services, highlighting the interconnected nature of food systems challenges.

In the **Diets, nutrition, and health** theme, Nigerian stakeholders prioritised indicators focusing on immediate nutrition outcomes and food safety concerns. These include minimum dietary diversity for children aged 6-23 months, food safety compliance rates, school food and nutrition programme coverage, and micronutrient deficiency prevalence for vitamin



A, iron, and zinc. The emphasis on food safety and school feeding programmes reflects particular national priorities not fully captured in the global framework.

For **Environment, natural resources, and production**, various indicators were prioritised, with participants emphasising agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability. These encompass crop productivity yields, soil health index, biofortification coverage, livestock productivity, and physical insecurity affecting agricultural activities. The inclusion of physical insecurity as a production indicator reflects Nigeria's specific context of conflicts affecting agricultural areas, particularly in northern regions.

In the **Livelihoods, poverty, and equity** theme, stakeholders identified several priority indicators that emphasised market access and agricultural services alongside traditional poverty measures. Key indicators include access to agricultural markets and services, female agricultural land ownership, social protection coverage and adequacy, agricultural employment for income diversification, and access to storage facilities and agricultural extension. These selections reflect

stakeholder recognition that livelihoods in Nigeria’s largely agricultural economy depend heavily on market integration and service access.

For **Governance**, stakeholders suggested indicators on effectiveness and accountability in food systems policy implementation. These included government effectiveness in food systems policies, public access to information, recognition of the right to food amongst all states, implementation of food systems transformation pathways, timely delivery of agricultural subsidies, and food environment policy implementation. The emphasis on implementation and service delivery reflects widespread concerns about the gap between comprehensive policies and actual programme delivery.

Under the **Resilience** theme, stakeholders identified indicators spanning infrastructure and adaptive capacity. Priority measures included food price volatility, post-harvest losses, early warning system availability, climate-resilient infrastructure access, and extreme coping strategies due to food insecurity.

Data Availability and Gaps

Nigeria’s data landscape presents a mixed picture of substantial national-level capacity alongside critical subnational gaps. For example, the [Nigeria Food Systems Dashboard](#) is a comprehensive data platform covering all 36 states of Nigeria as well as the Federal Capital Territory. There are 150 indicators covering many dimensions of food systems, facilitating data triangulation to provide evidence-based insights for each state. The country also demonstrates significant

strengths in data availability, with national-level data existing for 44 of the 50 Countdown indicators. This reflects strong institutional capacity at the National Bureau of Statistics and well-established data collection systems through Demographic and Health Surveys, National Food Consumption and Micronutrient Surveys, and agricultural censuses. The robust policy frameworks developed over the past two decades have embedded monitoring requirements that support systematic data collection efforts.

However, critical gaps emerge when examining subnational data availability and only eight Countdown indicators have state-level data. The scarcity of subnational data significantly limits the ability to target interventions and monitor progress where implementation actually occurs. The situation becomes more acute at local government area and ward levels, where no systematic data collection systems exist despite strong stakeholder demand for local-level monitoring capacity. The thematic distribution of data gaps reveals particular challenges in governance and resilience indicators, where the greatest deficiencies exist.

The concentration of data at the national level creates a fundamental mismatch with Nigeria’s governance structure, where states and local governments play crucial roles in food systems implementation. Real-time monitoring capacity remains inadequate for tracking implementation progress and providing early warning signals, limiting the ability to make adaptive management decisions. These data gaps constrain evidence-based policymaking and accountability mechanisms essential for effective food systems transformation.

Recommendations For Strengthening Monitoring-Policy Linkages

1. **Maintain an Integrated Data System:** In alignment with the 78-point National Pathways to Food Systems Transformation, maintain a unified monitoring platform that enables real-time tracking across sectors and governance levels, to identify various food systems challenges, thus allowing better targeting of interventions.<sup>5,6</sup>

2. **Strengthen Subnational Capacity:** Invest in state and local government capacity for data collection, analysis, and use, with particular focus on the 36 state and federal capital territory committees on food and nutrition and local government committees.<sup>4</sup>

3. **Enhance Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms:** Strengthen existing coordination platforms with clear performance targets and regular reporting requirements.<sup>4</sup>

4. **Leverage Technology Solutions:** Deploy digital platforms for data collection and sharing, building on Nigeria’s growing digital infrastructure.<sup>7</sup>

5 Government of Nigeria. Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning. 2024. National Pathways for Food Systems Transformation in Nigeria: Implementation Strategy. Available from: [https://nationalplanning.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/NPFST-Implementation-Strategy-Draft\\_March\\_2024.pdf](https://nationalplanning.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/NPFST-Implementation-Strategy-Draft_March_2024.pdf)

6 Government of Nigeria. Nigeria Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan for 2024-2028. Available from: [https://www.data4sdgs.org/sites/default/files/file\\_uploads/Nigeria%20IDC%20Action%20Plan%202024%20-%202028%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.data4sdgs.org/sites/default/files/file_uploads/Nigeria%20IDC%20Action%20Plan%202024%20-%202028%20FINAL.pdf)

7 Government of Nigeria. National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Policy (2022-2027). Available from: <https://agriculture.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/National-Agricultural-Technology-and-Innovation-Policy-NATIP-2022-2027.pdf>