Diagnosing Policy Coherence for Food Systems

Results from Mozambique

Food systems policy coherence is the alignment of policies that affect the food system with the aim of achieving health, environmental, social, and economic goals, to ensure that policies designed to improve one food system outcome do not undermine others and, where possible, take advantage of synergies across policy areas to achieve better outcomes for all[1].

The Food Systems Policy Coherence Diagnostic Tool offers a practical methodology to assess food systems policy coherence and provide actionable recommendations for enhancing it. It was applied to Mozambique in 2025 via an extensive document review and expert consultations.

Structures & Mechanisms

The first module of the tool examines whether there are structures and mechanisms in place that would increase the likelihood of achieving policy coherence. The results for Mozambique, shown below, indicate that Mozambique's food system policy landscape is strong in providing the framework documents to guide food system transformation, but that there are areas to strengthen in terms of political commitment, coordination structures, monitoring and accountability, and particularly capacity and implementation and inclusivity and stakeholder engagement.

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1. Adapted from Parsons & Hawkes. 2019. Policy Coherence in Food Systems.

Mozambique's Structures and Mechanisms in Support of Food System Policy Coherence

Domain	Analysis and Recommendations
Framework Documents	Mozambique's pathways document, submitted via the UN Food System Summit in 2021, provides a foundation for food systems transformation. It includes a vision for the future that cuts across multiple domains of the food system, highlights **existing food system challenges**, sets **priorities** to address them, and includes clear **plans for targeted interventions**.
Political Commitment	Mozambique's senior leadership has publicly supported this vision, demonstrating high-level **political commitment**. However, there are no mechanisms in place to ensure that this commitment is **sustained** beyond electoral cycles or government terms.
Capacity & Implementation	Mozambique has invested in capacity building of government staff on food systems and has several policies and strategies that align with its pathway, such as the National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy for 2021–2030 and the Multisectoral Action Plan for the Reduction of Chronic Malnutrition. However, it could strengthen several areas of capacity/implementation: · Multiple consultations led to the finalisation of Mozambique's pathway document. Efforts should be made to **formally adopt or ratify it into mainstream policy**, which could strengthen the likelihood of implementation. · It would be useful to develop a **more comprehensive action plan** for pathway implementation and to have this supported with a costed investment plan or budget, comprehensively and specifically linked to the pathway.
Coordination Structures	Food systems activities and cross-sectoral dialogue are coordinated by a mechanism involving the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition, and the National Coordination Council. To strengthen coordination, stakeholders might consider designating champions or advocates for a coherent food systems approach within different government departments/agencies and strengthening mechanisms to **engage subnational government** entities in coordinated food systems policymaking.
Inclusivity, Stakeholder Engagement & Voice	While Mozambique held inclusive dialogues to develop its pathway, stakeholders might consider putting in place ongoing mechanisms for **consulting technical/ scientific experts** as well as **non-technical stakeholders** (like citizens, private-sector groups, and civil society) on food system policy issues that cut across different sectors.
Monitoring & Accountability	Stakeholders could consider clarifying the **mechanisms** and **responsibilities** for reporting on progress implementing the national pathway, as well as ensuring that data reporting on progress against key indicators are regularly publicly shared. They could also consider putting in place **methods for assessing potential impacts** of policies on different parts of the food system (i.e., synergies and trade-offs) and building public-sector staff capacity on their use.
Note: Green shading indicates domains where systems are highly supportive of coherence; **yellow** where they are moderately highly supportive; **orange** where they are only somewhat supportive, and **red** where they are generally not supportive.	

Policy Conflicts & Synergies

Module 2 considers the conflicts and synergies between existing policies across six sectors (shown in the columns of the table below) and the achievement of key goals of food system transformation, drawn from the United Nations Food Systems Summit process and shown in the rows of the table below.

Results for Mozambique are shown in the shading of each cell in the table, following the legend shown below the table. For example, the green shading in the first cell indicates that agriculture policies reviewed are somewhat coherent with (supportive of) the goal of increasing the supply of main staple crops, which contributes to achieving zero hunger. In contrast, trade policies are shown to be somewhat incoherent with the goal of increasing nutritious food consumption to contribute to healthy diets for all.

Coherence between Mozambique's Policies and Key Food System Goals

		Agriculture	Health	Environment	Trade	Social	Industrial, Economic & Monetary
Zero Hunger	Increased supply of main staples	Somewhat coherent	Somewhat coherent	Somewhat coherent	Somewhat coherent	Highly Coherent	Somewhat coherent
	Affordable prices for main staples	Somewhat coherent	Highly Coherent	Somewhat coherent	Somewhat incoherent	Highly Coherent	Somewhat coherent
Climate Resilience	Adaptation	Somewhat coherent	Highly Coherent	Highly Coherent	Somewhat coherent	Somewhat coherent	Highly Coherent
	Climate change mitigation	Somewhat incoherent	Somewhat incoherent	Highly Coherent	Somewhat incoherent	Highly Coherent	Somewhat coherent
Healthy Diets	More nutritious food consumption	Highly Coherent	Somewhat coherent	Somewhat incoherent	Somewhat incoherent	Highly Coherent	Somewhat coherent
	Less unhealthy food consumption	Neither coherent nor incoherent	Somewhat coherent	Neither coherent nor incoherent	Neither coherent nor incoherent	Somewhat coherent	Somewhat coherent
	Reduction of Food Loss & Waste	Somewhat coherent	Highly Coherent	Highly Coherent	Highly Coherent	Highly Coherent	Highly Coherent
Decent Work	Adequate wages for food system workers	Somewhat coherent	Neither coherent nor incoherent	Highly Coherent	Neither coherent nor incoherent	Highly Coherent	Highly incoherent
	Effective nutrition-sensitive social protection	Not assessed	Highly Coherent	Highly Coherent	Highly Coherent	Highly Coherent	Somewhat coherent
	Empowerment of Women & Girls	Highly Coherent	Highly Coherent	Highly Coherent	Neither coherent nor incoherent	Highly Coherent	Highly Coherent

LEGEND	Highly Coherent	Somewhat coherent	Neither coherent nor incoherent	Somewhat incoherent	Highly incoherent	Not assessed
	Policies reviewed in this sector were very much in line with achieving this goal			Policies reviewed in this sector were generally not in line with achieving this goal		

Encouragingly, many policy areas were found to be somewhat or highly coherent with most food systems goals. This was particularly true for social policies and industrial/economic/monetary policies.

For example, **social policies** help reduce hunger through social protection targeting poor rural households, school feeding programmes, constitutional recognition of the Right to Food, and food subsidies or transfers for the most vulnerable households. They support climate change adaptation by trying to enhance income-generating activities for poor and vulnerable households and providing aid to vulnerable populations after natural disasters, though they could do more to prevent credit default for small- and medium-scale producers.

Industrial, economic, and monetary policies support hunger reduction by recognising the importance of agriculture as a sector for economic growth, supporting rural and last-mile infrastructure, and providing support to staple food processing firms. They support climate change mitigation through a commitment to 'green growth' and encouraging reductions of greenhouse gas emissions among agri-food firms. However, they could do more to support decent work by ensuring that food system workers receive living wages.

More incoherence was found when it came to agriculture, health, and trade policies. **Agricultural policies** are generally coherent with increasing the supply of staple crops and reducing their prices, such as through extension services focused on staples and support for input access and irrigation expansion, but they could do more to support research and development on staple crops and the provision of financial services for staple crop farmers. They have some areas of incoherence with climate change mitigation, such as by supporting expansion of agricultural production areas, encouraging agricultural mechanisation without including mechanisms to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from that mechanisation, and supporting increased livestock production, including for ruminants—which tend to emit more greenhouse gases per unit than other types of livestock or plant-based food sources. While agriculture policies are coherent with the goal of increasing consumption of nutritious foods, such as through support for biofortification and extension services for horticultural crops, support for producers of sugar crops and oilseeds could potentially lead to overproduction and artificially low prices for consumers and processors, which could encourage overconsumption and excessive use in food processing, contradicting the goal of reducing consumption of unhealthy food.

Health policies support women's empowerment through subsidised maternal healthcare, supporting access to contraception, and targeting outreach on family nutrition, maternal, and child health topics to men as well as women. They support nutrition-sensitive social protection by including micronutrient supplementation programmes for vulnerable populations. They support climate adaptation by recognising climate change as a threat to human health, including efforts to control vector-borne diseases, and including support for access to healthcare during and after natural disasters. However, they are somewhat incoherent with the goal of climate change mitigation as dietary guidelines and similar instruments do not clearly note the importance of choosing lower-emissions nutritious foods as part of a healthy diet.

Environmental policies also showed some areas of incoherence, such as supporting land consolidation, which may lead to increased production of staple crops at the expense of more nutritious crops and thus lower consumption of nutritious foods. Limits on fishing, while often motivated by important environmental goals and supportive of maintaining fish stocks for the future, can have short-term conflicts with achieving more nutritious food consumption if they make fish (a highly nutritious food) more expensive or less available. In contrast, environmental policies were highly coherent with the goal of reducing food loss and waste, such as through support for composting food scraps and restrictions on excessive use of pesticides and fertilisers (which can damage crops).

Trade policies were the policy domain with the highest level of incoherence. For example, tariffs and non-tariff measures related to imports of main staple crops and tariffs on agricultural and food processing equipment could lead to higher prices, hindering efforts to achieve Zero Hunger. Tariffs on nutrient-dense foods and fortification equipment and inputs could similarly increase prices for nutritious foods, and a lack of support for fast-track import clearance on perishable products (like fresh fruit and vegetables) could limit such imports or lead to losses during importation. Not including strong clauses related to worker protections in trade agreements may be a missed opportunity for achieving synergies between supporting trade and decent work.

Conclusion

There are some caveats to this analysis. First, this application was conducted at the national level. Relevant province-level policies and initiatives thus are not reflected, which may under- or overestimate the level of coherence. Second, policy is complex and dynamic, and the goals of food system transformation are numerous; this analysis considers only a limited number of food systems goals and policies at one point in time. In addition, is not necessarily the case that areas of incoherence in policies should be seen as 'bad'; there are some cases where incoherence may make sense, such as due to prioritisation across goals or political economy necessities.

Still, policy incoherence can sometimes lead to inefficiency and lower likelihood of achieving policy goals, as well as missed opportunities for leveraging synergies across policy areas where they exist. While achieving perfect coherence among all food-related policies across all outcomes is unlikely—and potentially undesirable, given the costs associated with coordination and alignment—by identifying and managing critical synergies and trade-offs, Mozambique's government and the stakeholders who support it can better align efforts towards achieving key goals.

You can access the tool and supporting resources here: