

Articulating National Pathways for Food Systems Transformation in Support of the 2030 Agenda:

A Strategic National Pathway Document



**Government of the Republic of The Gambia:
Ministry of Agriculture**

July 2021



**Articulating National Pathways for Food Systems Transformation in
Support of the 2030 Agenda:**

A Strategic National Pathway Document

**Government of the Republic of The Gambia:
Ministry of Agriculture**

Banjul, The Gambia

July 2021

Contents

List of Abbreviations	i
Country Background	1
Definition of Food Systems	1
Expected Results/Outcomes of Food Systems Summit	2
Action Tracks for Developing/Formulating Food Systems	3
Discourse on the National Pathway	4
Findings of the Dialogues and Key Milestones of the Pathway	7
Commitments to Enhance Food Systems by 2030	14
Priority Areas of the National Food Systems	15
Photos during the Dialogues Process	i

List of Abbreviations

ANRP	Agriculture and Natural Resources Project
CFAN	Commercial Farmers Agribusiness Network
COHA	Cost of Hunger Study in Africa
COVID	Corona Virus Disease
FSSD	Food Systems Summit Dialogue
GDHS	Gambia Demographic and Health Survey
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
NAWFA	National Women Farmers Association
NDC	National Determined Contributions
NDP	National Development Plan
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN-RCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office
UN-FSS	United Nations Food Systems Summit
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Education Fund
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
WFP	World Food Programme
GBA	Greater Banjul Area
MECCNAR	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources
NDMA	National Disaster Management Agency
NaNA	National Nutrition Agency
NACOFAG	National Coordinating Organization for Farmers Association The Gambia
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated
URR	Upper River Region
CRR	Central River Region
LRR	Lower River Region
NBR	North Bank Region
WCR	West Coast Region
KMC	Kanifing Municipal Council
BCC	Banjul City Council

Country Background

The Gambia's economy is predominantly based on rain-fed subsistence agriculture, which is the main source of livelihood for the majority of the population. The Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy (ANR, 2017-2026) is premised on the creation of a market-led, commercialized dynamic agriculture sector that is efficient, competitive, and consistent with the National Development Plan (NDP, 2018-2021). The prognoses of production, employment, factor productivities, utilization rate of local raw materials, value-added activities, and sources of growth of output embody the objectives of the policy to deliver a market driven economy. The ANRP schemes that value addition in Food Systems to grow at 6.14 percentages per annum in the period 2017-2026. This will be largely compelled by crops (including vegetables and fruits), livestock and fisheries sub-sectors. Total employment in the sector is predicted to grow at a rate of 12.67 percentages per annum through expansion of agro-based industrial development and appropriate mechanization of crop production. This will enable industrial development to absorb larger portion of available youthful labour force.

Definition of Food Systems

The term “food system” refers to a series of activities involved in producing, processing, transporting and consuming food. Food systems touch every aspect of human existence.

The food systems in The Gambia is however fragile, and when in shock like the advent of COVID-19 the food systems is affected adversely resulting in disorder that threatens our education, health and economy, as well as human rights, peace and security. Scientists agree that

transforming our food systems is among the most powerful ways to change course and make progress towards all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Rebuilding the food systems of the world will also enable us to answer the UN Secretary-General's call to "build back better" from COVID-19. We are all part of the food system, and so we all must come together to bring about the transformation that the world needs. (UN-FSS 2021)

Expected Results/Outcomes of Food Systems Summit

The expected results of the Food Systems Summit are:

- 1) to elevate public debate about the importance of food systems leading to the achievement of the SDGs and what to do to get the public working for people and the planet,
- 2) to generate actions with measurable outcomes that enable achievement of the 2030 Agenda goals. This will include highlighting existing solutions and celebrating leaders in food systems transformation, as well as calling for new actions worldwide by different actors, including countries, cities, communities, companies, civil society, citizens and food producers,
- 3) established high-level set of principles through the process that will guide Member States and other stakeholders to leverage their food systems capacity to support the SDGs and
- 4) adoption of a system of follow-up and review that will drive new actions and results; allow for sharing of experiences, lessons and knowledge; and incorporate new metrics for impact analysis.

Action Tracks for Developing/Formulating Food Systems

The Summit's Action Tracks offer stakeholders from a wide range of backgrounds a space to share and learn, with a view to fostering new actions and partnerships and amplifying existing initiatives. The Action Tracks are aligned with the Summit's five objectives. Importantly, the Action Tracks are not separate, nor are they passive. Each Action Track is designed to address possible trade-offs with other tracks, and to identify solutions that can deliver wide-reaching benefits.

The Action Tracks drew on the expertise of actors across the Gambia's food systems. Together, they will explore how key-crosscutting levers of change such as human rights, finance, innovation, and the empowerment of women and youth can be mobilized to meet the Summit's objectives.

The Gambia's dialogues on the Food Systems leveraging on the Summit's Action Tracks were discussed below. The five global Action Tracks were regrouped into three and a fourth was added. The national and regional dialogues were on the below mentioned four Action Tracks.

- 1) Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all and shift to sustainable consumption patterns
- 2) Boost nature-positive production and advance equitable livelihoods
- 3) Build resilience against vulnerabilities, shocks and stress
- 4) Enhance private sector participation in the Food Systems.

In addition, the apex body of the farmer organizations, The National Coordination of Farmer Associations of The Gambia (NACOFAG) conducted an Independent Dialogue of their membership.

Discourse on the National Pathway

A) The purposes of current food systems

Food systems touch every aspect of human existence. Every living person depends on them functioning and all of us have a part to play. Food systems encompass every person and every process involved in inputs supplies, production, harvesting, processing, packing, distributing, selling, storing, marketing, consuming, disposal of food and food waste management.

The major purpose of the current food systems is to ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all and with a minimum impact on the environment and the natural resource base.

B) The expectations of National Food Systems by 2030

The Gambia`s Food Systems Summit Dialogues (FSSD) is part of the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. This will serve as a catalyst to the National Development Plan to launch deliberate and bold new actions to deliver visible progress on the 17 SDGs, each of which relies to some degree on healthier, more sustainable, and equitable food systems.

Furthermore, the National FSSD presents an opportunity to link the food systems from production to consumption taking into consideration climate change and the environment. The changes in climatic trends and shocks and localized conflicts have affected the Food and Nutrition Security situation of the population.

Analysis of the data from the Dialogues gave emphasis to strengthen the integration between climate, biodiversity, food, and socioeconomic components (NACOFAG 2021).

Finally, the Dialogues emphasized the need to promote farmer driven healthy diets through the transformation of agri-food systems by ensuring availability, accessibility and affordability of healthy diets. In the Gambia the need to address poverty, food insecurity and inequities highlighted as a major concern in the national Dialogues.

C) Connections between the Pathway and other Planning Documents

A number of processes informed the formulation of the National Pathway to Sustainable food systems. Apart from the regional, national and independent Dialogues, it is informed by the following national and international planning documents on food systems:

- 1) The National Development Plan 2018-2021
- 2) The Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy 2017-2026
- 3) The Gambia National Agriculture Investment Plan II-FNS 2017-2026
- 4) The African Union 2025 Agenda
- 5) The UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030
- 6) The African Union 2063 Agenda

The Pathway is in tandem the National Development Plan 2018-2021 The NDP has 8 pillars. Pillar 3 (Strategic priority 3) wants to modernize agriculture (crops & Livestock) and fisheries for sustained economic growth, food and nutritional security and poverty reduction, and Pillar (Strategic Priority 4) wants to invest in our people through improved education and health services and building a caring society.

The NDP provides key results outcome for “Increased production of basic agricultural commodities (crops and livestock) for enhanced food and nutrition security”, “Improved nutritional well-being of all Gambians, particularly mothers and children”, “Value chains enhanced for

Agriculture and Livestock Transformation”, “Improved access and quality learning and relevant life and livelihood skills for all graduates, with special emphasis on STEM, Health, and Agriculture”. Furthermore, in the Gambia, addressing Zero Hunger through Food and Nutrition Security and Building Resilience against Climate Change’ is in line with focus areas of the FSSD.

D) Methodology/Proceedings of the FSSD Process

The National Food Systems Summit Dialogues were organized based on four Action Tracks, seven regional, and one Independent Dialogue. For each Dialogue, a Chairperson, a Scribe, the Curator and the FSSD Focal Point from the Ministry of Agriculture provided technical support. The consultations were guided using a Key Informant Interview and Focus Group Discussion tools.

For all the Action Tracks, participants were drawn from relevant institutions to ensure an all-inclusive Dialogue. The UN system (RCO, UNDP, WFP, and FAO) provided support to the FSSD process.

All Dialogues were guided using a standardised questionnaire frame. Each of the Action Track Dialogues held a restitution of the outcomes of their group discussions. This was followed by a plenary session where all the four groups presented the outcomes of their group dialogues. The Independent Dialogue by the farmer-based organizations conducted work streams and plenary sessions. A draft National Pathway report was compiled from the outcomes of the various Dialogues, which was subjected to a national validation workshop.

Findings of the Dialogues and Key Milestones of the Pathway

Seven key milestones emanated from the FSSD process in The Gambia. On the implementation of these milestones, it is assumed that Food and Nutrition Security will be achieved in The Gambia by 2030. It is highly recommended that the government and her development partners adopt relevant policies and actionable programs to achieve the milestones below:

1) Increase access to land, financing and other productive resources that specifically target women, youth, and differently abled persons

The women form more than 50% of the farming population and in some regions; they are the major producers of vegetables, rice and groundnuts. Despite their numbers and their key contribution to agricultural production, they are seriously disadvantaged in that they lack access to key production factors and inputs, particular land, finance and technical expertise. Women in the Gambia, for social, religious and cultural reasons, do not own land and can only inherit land from their mothers. Consequently, women in the Gambia, lack the opportunity to have land, which they can present to the bank as a co-lateral to obtain bank loans. It is therefore imperative to increase their access to land and finance if their production is to increase.

Actions:

a) The government must make specific and deliberate policy decisions (legislative and regulatory) targeting women and youths, which grant them ownership of land for cultivation to conduct agribusiness

enterprises. The land can serve as co-lateral to give them access to finance.

b) The agricultural loan interest rate in The Gambia is too high. It must be lowered to a single digit and loans should be discounted over multiple years with a minimum of 3 years. A grace period of 6 months for crops and 12 months for livestock should be given before repayment on the loan capital should start.

c) The government should fast track the establishment of an agri-business bank and a risk support facility, both of which are being formulated.

d) Priority needs to be given to projects and programmes that will promote women and youth participation, e.g., rice; vegetable and small ruminant projects tend to benefit women and youths.

e) Promote gender equity with particular attention paid to youth participation throughout the food value chain

2) Increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of the health delivery system

There is a conspicuous inadequate access to quality health services especially in rural Gambia. This has led to high under five (5), infant and neo-natal mortalities. This has led to serious ramifications on production and productivity of the nation's food systems. In 2018, it was estimated that the country lost an equivalent of about GMD 3.956 billion due to child under-nutrition, which represented 5.1 percent of the GDP (COHA Report, 2020).

Actions:

- a) Government and the private sector should increase access and improve health service delivery including Primary Health Care in the rural areas.
- b) Government should put in place strategies to systematically train and retain qualified personnel.
- c) Government should promote and enhance Private Sector investment in health service delivery, especially in the rural areas.
- d) Mainstream food-based nutrition and household food security into sectorial policies and plans.

3) Sustainable exploitation of the country's natural resource base

There has been remarkable degradation of the country's resource base over the years. Deforestation, overfishing in our waters and inappropriate fishing nets, the poisoning of marine life, land degradation, frequent bush fires are some classical examples. Some of the adaptive measures undertaken to mitigate the degradation on the country's resource base include sensitization on bush fire control measures, encourage agroforestry, regulating fishing and fishing nets, creation of appropriate policies. There is an alarming rate of wanton felling of indigenous and protected tree species. Bad agricultural practices on slopes have seriously aggravated soil and water erosion resulting in loss of topsoil and decline in soil fertility.

Actions:

- a) Mainstream conservation agriculture in the ANR policies and enact soil and water regulations.

b) Combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. Review and enforce the fisheries regulations and practice the Maximum Sustainable Yield concept. Re-negotiate all fishing agreements in favour of sustained economic growth.

c) Enforce forestry regulations to curb illegal logging and transportation of foreign timber through Gambian territory for export. Promote community forest management concepts and non-timber forest enterprises.

d) Availability of fish and fish products in the local markets.

4) Increase food production by 100%

According to the national statistics the country produces about half of the national annual food needs. There is urgent need to gradually increase food production over the next ten years leading to national food and nutrition self-sufficiency, which is in-line with the attainment of SDG 2 target 3. Agricultural production can also be boosted if Gambians consume locally produced, safe and quality foods. Increase in production can also happen if the school feeding program, hospitals and the security services source their food needs from the local farming community. Production can further be increased by reducing vulnerabilities of the livelihoods of the population through building resilience of food systems through climate-resilient agricultural practices and social protection interventions.

Actions:

a) Promote climate smart agriculture through the use of i) irrigation (drip, and surface; and greenhouses) to encourage year-round production and crop production intensification and ii) integrated farming systems (crops, livestock and aquaculture). Less than 4% of the cultivable

area in The Gambia is irrigated. Tens of thousands of irrigable lands can be made available for lowland production if salt intrusion in the second half of the River Gambia is controlled. The government should consider construction of an anti-salt bridge on the river somewhere ecologically feasible.

b) Promote mechanization along the entire food value chain. About 30% of the cultivable land is not cultivated. Mechanization of pre and post-harvest activities will reduce drudgery and time, increase cultivation of larger areas, and will reduce postharvest losses.

c) Promote consumption of safe and nutritious diets, bio fortified foods and mineral and vitamin supplements for all.

d) Promote homegrown school feeding (HGSF) program and contract farming. The HGSF increases retention of the girl-child in school, which curbs early child marriages and closes the education gap between boys and girls. When all the children are well fed, early child development (ECD) guaranteed, and the child cognitive development is advanced.

e) Promote access to markets for agricultural produce.

f) Empower agricultural, food and nutrition security research and development.

g) Strengthen national laboratory capacity for food testing (Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary system strengthening).

h) Establish a robust early warning system to natural disasters and strengthen and the National Disaster Management Agency for rapid intervention, saving lives and restoration of lost livelihoods.

i) Include legislation on crop and livestock insurance in the Banking Act, which is under review.

j) Mainstream and enforce regulations to minimize use of toxic or banned chemical pesticides in food production.

k) To enhance processing and transportation systems for ANR products.

l) To promote production and consumption of poultry, small ruminants and milk products.

5) A harmonized and better coordinated policy environment that directly or indirectly affect food systems

The effective coordination of relevant policies on food systems remains the major issue in the attainment of the SDGs by 2030 in relation to the National Food Systems. Existing policies should be reviewed and dovetailed to ensure and cater for equity, justice, empowerment and sustainability for all.

Actions:

Establish a one-stop-shop for policies. Strengthen the unit/organ/clearing house where several policies from different ministries can be coordinated.

6) More private sector involvement in the food systems

The private sector is a key player in ensuring food safety as it underlies the entire food system. The majority of foods are produced, handled, processed, distributed, and sold by the private sector, and thus, their responsibility to ensure that products are nutritious and safe for consumption. In view of the above, increased private sector support and involvement is integral in achieving the set goals in the SDGs in relation to food systems.

Actions:

a) Create an enabling environment to increase private sector investment in the entire food systems, e.g., single digit interest rates on loans, duty waivers, tax holidays, and producer insurance.

7. Introduction and promotion of national food reserves and Government to fulfill its International fiscal obligations

In line with the call for globalization of resources for the enhance of National Food Systems, it is important for The Government to honor its commitments to national and international agreements/treaties such as the Malabo Declaration in committing 10% of public expenditure to agriculture.

The Right to Food is a long-standing international human right to which many countries are committed according to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, CESCR, 1999. It is the right to feed oneself in dignity and the right to adequate food.

National and Regional Food Reserves is part of building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses which may be caused by natural or manmade disasters. The Economic Community of West African States has adopted a policy requiring regional reserves by ECOWAS and national food reserves by the Member States.

Actions:

a) Government to increase budget allocations to the agricultural sector to 10% of the national budget in line with the AU/CAADP Malabo Declaration.

- b) Government should pass legislation providing a Right to Food to all citizens of the country.
- c) Government in collaboration with the Private Sector should build national food reserves in strategic locations around the country in conformity with ECOWAS protocols.

Commitments to Enhance Food Systems by 2030

The government is committed to continuing to support the agriculture and natural resources sectors. In the forthcoming 2022 budget the Ministry of Finance has promised to commit more resources to the ANR sectors with a view to gradually fulfilling her commitment of 10% of the budget annual according to the Malabo declaration.

Government is also committed, through the current projects to provide access to farmers and livestock owners to have access to finance. Financing in the form of matching grants are available to eligible beneficiaries.

Government is also committed to reduce post-harvest losses, food waste and improve market access to women and other smallholder farmers to both local and international markets.

Government is also committed to encourage and facilitate increased consumption of locally produced safe and quality food items, including the promotion of innovative school feeding programs that use food items sourced from the local farming communities and the consumption of fortified foods.

The Government is also committed to reduce vulnerabilities of the livelihoods of the population through building resilience of food systems

through climate-resilient agricultural practices, social protection interventions and disaster risk reduction.

The government and the private sector are committed to strengthen active Public Private Partnership across all food value chains.

Finally, the Government is committed to promote the right to food and end hunger and malnutrition in all its forms by 2030.

Priority Areas of the National Food Systems

The stakeholders throughout the country have lamented and cried out for support/interventions of government on issues that matter most to them. The intervention requested depends on the region and on the existing engagement of the stakeholder. For example, there were differences between urban and rural, between men and women and between producers and processors. However, one issue common throughout was the issue of land ownership for women. Following that was the access to finance for all categories of stakeholders but particularly for women. The urban stakeholders' major preoccupation is also about access to finance.

The second most talked about issue which cut across all categories was the issue of under 5-year-old, infant and maternal mortalities, particularly, the deplorable conditions of the health facilities in the rural areas. The lack of referral services, drugs and qualified nurses and doctors in rural health centres.

Another issue frequently talked about was the state of degradation of the natural resource base. The related issues are poor soil health, illegal fishing and illegal felling of protected species of trees for export.

Another most talked was about the prices of food items in the market. Livestock owners mentioned the problems of feed, grazing lands, and in-availability of drugs to treat zoonotic diseases. The poultry industry throughout the country laments the cost and the quality of feed and availability of day-old chicks. Finally, the crops farmers asked for interventions in farming implements, availability of certified seeds, markets to sell their produce beneficial to them and availability of fertilizers.

In conclusion, the priorities are following 4 major milestones: access by women and youth to land; end malnutrition and hunger; sustainable use of our natural resources; and, doubling agricultural (Crops & Livestock) productivity.

Photos during the Dialogues Process



Photos taken during the launch of the FSSD at the Sir DK Jawara Conference Centre



Regional Consultation in Basse, Upper River Region



Regional Consultation in Janjanbureh Central River Region



Regional Consultation in Jenoi, Lower River Region



Regional Consultation in Kerewan, North Bank Region



Regional Consultation in Brikama West Coast Region



Regional Consultation in Kanifing



Regional Consultation in Banjul



NATIONAL COORDINATING ORGANISATION FOR FARMER ASSOCIATIONS THE GAMBIA (NACOFAG) National Dialogue on the FSSD



National Dialogues on FSSD: NaNA in Kanifing

(Page Intentionnelle left blank)