



AgriDiet Update

July 2013

Understanding the Links Between Agriculture and Nutrition in Ethiopia and Tanzania

AgriDiet Partners

AgriDiet is a 3 –year joint research project between University College Cork, University College Dublin, the Ethiopian Development Research Institute, Haramaya and Mekelle Universities in Ethiopia, Sokoine and St Augustine’s Universities in Tanzania and the Institute of Development Studies in the UK.

Welcome to the first AgriDiet newsletter. AgriDiet is a joint-research project funded by Irish Aid, involving eight partner organisations, with the objective of improving our understanding of the linkages between agriculture and nutrition. To achieve this we have designed eight work packages involving integrated research studies, stakeholder meetings and communication activities.

Each of the eight AgriDiet partners play key roles in the work packages. As lead organization, the University College Cork team has organized an inception workshop, designed the conceptual framework and developed methodology guidelines for the project ([click here to link to the conceptual framework diagram on our website](#)).



The Institute of Development Studies (IDS), together with the Ethiopian Development Research Institute and Sokoine University, have led the establishment of the AgriDiet stakeholder platforms and workshops in Ethiopia and Tanzania (see page 3). IDS has also led the preparation of a position paper on agriculture-nutrition linkages to help steer other elements of the project (see page 2).

We also have six PhD researchers, three from Ethiopia currently studying at UCC and three from Tanzania studying at UCD. Both PhD research teams are preparing for community research and household surveys in selected food-insecure sites of their respective countries, including detailed nutritional research of women and infants within those households. Fieldwork will take place in 2014.

We will also be conducting research into the agri-food systems around the household survey areas, as well as a review of pro-nutrition agricultural interventions in each country.

In the next update we will be reporting on the initial findings of the country policy studies for Ethiopia and Tanzania, which are currently being drafted by EDRI and Sokoine University, respectively, and which review how policies impact on nutrition in both countries.

You can find full details of our findings as they emerge on our project website at <http://agridiet.ucc.ie>. We will also be issuing this newsletter at regular stages throughout the project, as part of our knowledge mobilization strategy (see page 3). And we would like to encourage all those interested in the agriculture-nutrition nexus to contact us, particularly those involved in similar research within Ethiopia and Tanzania.



Dr Nick Chisholm,
AgriDiet Principal
Investigator, UCC

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AgriDiet Sponsors

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AgriDiet

Objectives & Research Questions

AgriDiet has 4 main objectives;

1. To critically assess how agricultural policies and practices in Ethiopia and Tanzania address nutritional goals, especially for women and children.
2. To identify the social, economic and environmental factors influencing local agricultural practices in four selected sites of Ethiopia and Tanzania, and the implications for nutritional status of members of rural households
3. To facilitate the creation of a network of stakeholders to address nutrition issues in Ethiopia and Tanzania
4. To build the capacity of stakeholders to mobilise knowledge, promote participation and increase the evidence base for informed policymaking and practice in the area of agriculture-nutrition linkages.

The project has 3 related research questions;

1. How does the wider economic and policy environment impact on food systems and human nutrition?
2. In what ways do current agricultural and food systems impact on nutritional status, particularly of women and children?
3. What existing agricultural initiatives are likely to have positive impacts on nutritional status and have potential for wider application?

A Review of Agriculture-Nutrition Linkages

One of the first goals of the AgriDiet team was to compile a review of the latest global evidence on agriculture-nutrition linkages, in order to inform subsequent activities. This part of the project was led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). Jessica Meeker, Principal Investigator for IDS, provides a brief summary of the position paper, the full version of which can be accessed on the AgriDiet website.



“research is needed on what incentivizes farmers to think about nutrition”

Jessica Meeker, IDS Principal Investigator

The rate of chronic malnutrition in Ethiopia and Tanzania remains much too high, at 44 and 42 per cent, respectively. And both countries face major challenges from a rapidly growing population, whilst food production is expected to be increasingly impaired by climate change. So how can agriculture adapt to achieve food and nutrition security in both countries in the light of such challenges?

Agriculture has been highlighted as one of the main sectors with great potential to improve nutritional outcomes in a sustainable way. There are many pathways by which agriculture is hypothesized to improve nutrition, but, as noted in a recent Lancet article¹, “the lack of evidence is surprising given the multiple pathways of potential influence”.

Some agricultural programmes have been specifically designed to improve nutrition, including homestead gardens and biofortified crops, such as the orange-fleshed sweet potato. Whilst there is evidence of the beneficial impacts of these two examples (particularly when they incorporate educational strategies and a gender-equity focus), there is limited evidence on other nutrition-specific programmes, or indeed indirect nutrition-sensitive actions, such as programmes to raise farm productivity.

One of the key problems is the lack of evidence on how agriculture interventions have affected overall diets and nutritional status using anthropometrics and other key measures.

There are many research gaps, some of which have been identified by Hawkes et

al (2102)², including research that considers the full value chain pathway, the effects of agricultural policy on nutrition, the ability to implement and scale-up agriculture-for-nutrition interventions and the development of methodologies and appropriate metrics.

There is an additional research gap which we believe has been overlooked; what incentivizes farmers and other agricultural professionals to think about nutrition?

AgriDiet will address some of these gaps by conducting research over the whole value chain, reviewing national policy impacts on nutrition and identifying pro-nutrition agricultural interventions that have the best opportunity for scaling up.

The review has implications for the overall methodology of the project, with different approaches proposed to address the macro and meso research, the incentives and barriers to improving agriculture-nutrition linkages, assessing the relative strengths of the linkages and understanding the factors and processes behind them.

The key focus of AgriDiet is to study how agriculture links with nutrition in selected food insecure sites in order to assess the relative importance of the hypothesized pathways and to potentially identify further linkages. This will require a variety of methods, including econometric, value chain and qualitative approaches.

The project will also employ qualitative methods to assess the awareness of, and attitudes to, nutrition by key stakeholders, particularly policymakers and farmers., as well as using a variety of methods for measuring nutritional outcomes.



Participants in the Ethiopia AgriDiet stakeholder workshop, held in Addis Ababa on 28 February 2013

AgriDiet Stakeholder Workshops

The AgriDiet team established stakeholder platforms in Ethiopia and Tanzania earlier this year. These are designed to encourage information sharing, discussion and learning on agriculture-nutrition linkages, as well as communicating emerging findings from the AgriDiet research activities to influence policy and practice.

The stakeholder platforms are led by IDS, EDRI and Sokoine university. The first Ethiopian workshop was held on 28 February this year and hosted by EDRI, whilst the first Tanzanian workshop was held on 5 March and hosted by Sokoine (see report on website for full details of attendees and outcomes).

These initial workshops clearly highlighted the need for platforms that convene stakeholders from both the agriculture and nutrition sectors, and included a series of short presentations by representatives of different organisations.

The workshops also included a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify other key actors within nutrition and agriculture who should be encouraged to attend future meetings and to identify other platforms and programmes that AgriDiet could work with.

It was noted that other existing platforms tended to operate at a national, high-ranking

policy level and there was a need for better links to grassroots initiatives and to include more agriculture-based stakeholders such as extension workers and farmer representatives; these, together with agricultural policy-makers, will be encouraged to attend the next AgriDiet workshops later this year.

The workshops also identified barriers to linking agriculture and nutrition, including the lack of focus on nutrition within the agriculture sector and the lack of access to research that provides clear guidance in the local and national context, including research gaps in methodology.

The AgriDiet team has responded to the stakeholder workshop findings by incorporating a database of recent Ethiopian and Tanzanian research on agriculture and nutrition within the AgriDiet website.

The next AgriDiet stakeholder workshops are planned for November 2013 when initial findings from the AgriDiet research will be presented and further work will be conducted on attitudes to nutrition in the agriculture sector.

In the meantime the AgriDiet team is linking with other networks and initiatives to improve coordination and prevent duplication, and to improve engagement at local level.

Knowledge Mobilisation

AgriDiet has also developed a knowledge mobilization strategy, shaped by the initial findings of the stakeholder workshops.

This will ensure a variety of communication outputs tailored to key stakeholders, including project briefs, workshops, peer-reviewed papers, a conference and a project website.

IDS is leading the knowledge strategy, an initial draft of which is available on the website.

The strategy is designed around the 4th of the AgriDiet objectives (see page 2); "to build the capacity of partners to mobilise knowledge for informed policy making and practice".

This means that the AgriDiet outputs need to be relevant, available and accessible to our target audiences. But also that the stakeholders have the capacity to act on the knowledge generated by the project.

The stakeholder workshops will play a key role in knowledge mobilization, both to communicate findings and to shape the strategy through feedback from stakeholders.

The strategy also contains specific actions for each of the work package outputs, tailored to the target audiences.

The strategy will also be adapted as the project progresses.



Participants in the Tanzanian AgriDiet stakeholder workshop, held in Dar Es Salaam on 5 March 2013

AgriDiet News

AgriDiet Website—<http://agridiet.ucc.ie>

The AgriDiet website was recently launched, following a drafting phase led by Alan Stanley at IDS and Stephen Thornhill at UCC. It provides background information as well as project reports as they arise for the various work packages.

A key feature of the site are the Ethiopia and Tanzania pages where updates will be posted on fieldwork by the research teams.

The website has also responded to feedback from the initial stakeholder platforms for more focused, reliable information on agriculture-nutrition linkages for Ethiopia and Tanzania. It incorporates a link to the IDS Eldis database which generates an updated list of the latest academic research on agriculture-nutrition linkages for both countries.

We are interested to hear your feedback on the initial website structure, which will be updated as the project progresses.

References (page 2)

1 - Ruel and Alderman (2013) *Nutrition-sensitive interventions and programmes: how can they help to accelerate progress in improving maternal and child nutrition?*. The Lancet Published online 6 June 2013. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(13\)60843-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(13)60843-0)

2 - Hawkes, Turner and Waage (2012) *Current and planned research on agriculture for improved nutrition: a mapping and gap analysis*. LCIRAH <http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/Output/190847/Default.aspx>

PhD Researchers

The 3 PhD researchers from Ethiopia - Chanyalew Seyoum Aweke and Kedir Teja Roba from Haramaya University and Zenebe Abraha Kahsay from Mekelle University - arrived in UCC at the end of March. Meanwhile the 3 researchers from Tanzania - Goodluck Massawe and Happiness Mhimbula from Sokoine University and Achilana Mtingele from St Augustines University - arrived in UCD in early May. The researchers return home at the end of July to start preparing for the household survey fieldwork.

Country Policy Studies

EDRI and Sokoine University are currently preparing country studies reviewing how national policies impact on nutrition in Ethiopia and Tanzania, respectively. Findings will be summarised in the next AgriDiet Update and final reports will be posted on the website.

AgriDiet Team (from top left to bottom right) Chanyalew Seyoum Aweke, Nick Chisholm, Kathy Glavanis, Jemal Yousuf Hassen, Joyce Kinabo, Jim Kinsella, Edward Lahiff, Goodluck Massawe, Amon Mattee, Jessica Meecker, Thadeus Mkwanza, Achilana Mtingele, Happiness Muhimbula, Nora O'Brien, Deidre O'Connor, Tom O'Connor, Aifric O'Sullivan, Kedir Teja Roba, Girmay Tesfay, Stephen Thornhill, Tasew Woldehanna, Zenebe Abraha Kahsay. See the AgriDiet website "Meet the Team" section for full profiles of each of the team members.



For any information queries on this newsletter or any other aspect of the AgriDiet project please contact the editor Stephen Thornhill at University College Cork by e-mail at s.thornhill@ucc.ie or by phone on +353 21 490 3348 .