

AgriDiet Stakeholder Workshops



An AgriDiet Research Brief

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Throughout the duration of the AgriDiet project, stakeholder workshops have been convened, bringing together a total of 177 stakeholders who work in agriculture, nutrition, health, planning, finance, education, water and sanitation and gender. The objective of these workshops was to ensure the use of the generated research to influence policy and practice, bringing together stakeholders across sectors in a single space and encouraging the sharing of information and experience and the promotion of good practice in multi-sectoral collaboration.

Eight events were held, four in each country; the first four events were held at the national level, bringing together stakeholders from line ministries, international NGOs, research institutions and donor agencies. The later workshops were held at the district level, in response to an identified need to address coordination at the sub-national level.

This brief is a summary of the key findings from the workshops, and further detail can be found in the four workshop reports at <http://agridiet.ucc.ie>

National Level:

- Multi-sectoral coordination:
Coordination between the agriculture and nutrition sectors is improving. Both Ethiopia and Tanzania have National Nutrition Strategies in place with an emphasis on multi-sectoral collaboration. However, Nutrition and its budget in the Government structures falls within Health, with targets for many sectors not including nutrition outcomes. The Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture were regarded as not being well sensitized on nutrition issues and participants felt that they are often not represented in nutrition forums.
- Lack of clear guidance:
The use of evidence in policy making and programming was highlighted, but access to data and quality research is an issue. Often conclusions are contradictory, with no clear guidance on what to do, much less how to do it. Context specific programmatic and strategic evidence was called for.
- Nutrition is still viewed as a food security or emergency issue. Agricultural programmes are often still focussed on production only.
- Implementation of the nutrition strategies was also felt to be progressing slowly and only at the national level. The existing structure at grass root level, such as health and agricultural extension, is not well utilized and there is little coordination between programmes. An inventory of programmes and implementors could help to improve coordination and avoid duplication of effort.

District Level:

- Multi-sectoral coordination:
It was clear from the workshops that there is a lot of activity in both agriculture and nutrition at the district level, and that participants see the value of working together for improved nutrition. Many of the activities identified addressed nutrition through the production and promotion of nutritious foods. However, these initiatives were largely driven by NGOs, who it was felt are better coordinated than the Government. The District Government workers still tend to work in silos with agriculture focused mainly on production of staple cereals, increasing yields and improving seed quality, rather than on improving diversity, and nutrition prioritising direct interventions such as school feeding or micronutrient supplementation. In Tanzania, Nutrition Officers have been recruited in every

district, which is a great first step. However, there has been a lack of clarity around their role and responsibilities, and colleagues in the district departments have not been adequately sensitised to the importance of working collaboratively (initially some thought that they were there to cook for the staff).

- **Planning:**
Planning happens in isolation. In theory the sectors should plan together, but in practice this is often not the case. In Tanzania, representatives from each sector are invited to the planning meetings, however often nutrition is not represented. It was suggested that the Nutrition Officers should be invited to attend council management team meetings.
- **Policies:**
Policies are generally market-oriented rather than nutrition focused. National policies are focusing on large-scale commercial farming and staple cereals but little on ensuring a diverse diet. In Ethiopia it was felt that policies were all rural focused, ignoring urban nutrition issues.
- **Capacity is an issue, both financial and human.** The budget allocated to nutrition is inadequate, and in Tanzania it was raised a number of times that funds are often not released at all.
- **In both countries the point was often raised that there is a real lack of clear guidelines on how to work effectively across sectors.**

Recommended Actions

Participants identified a set of actions which they felt would help coordination across sectors and improve nutrition through agriculture.

- Decision makers need to be involved in these discussions and workshops and experts who attend workshops need to go back and advocate to their decision makers
- Clear guidelines are needed on HOW to collaborate between sectors
- Common indicators or targets are required across sectors
- Regular training of staff on nutrition issues, and why agriculture is important and how it can help address undernutrition, is required
- Funding for nutrition activities needs to be disbursed regularly and in a timely manner

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Dr Nick Chisholm,
Department of Food Business and International Development,
University College Cork, College Road, Cork, Ireland.
Telephone +353 21 4903347
e-mail n.chisholm@ucc.ie
Web <http://agridiet.ucc.ie/>

Lead Author – **Jessica Meeker**

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