

Preliminary Findings of the Expert Meeting  
of May 17, 2018 titled:

# How to make agricultural programs work for nutrition

And which approaches to use to measure progress

The Netherlands Working Group on International Nutrition (NWGN) in coordination with the Food and Business Knowledge Platform (F&BKP) organized an expert meeting on May 17, 2018. This expert meeting followed an internal NWGN workshop on metrics for nutrition improvement, organized in December. The expert meeting started with a key note from Dr. Marie Ruel, Director of the Poverty, Health and Nutrition Division of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). She presented the results of her review on Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture (NSA); summarizing what was learned so far. This was followed by case studies on experiences and lessons learned with measuring the contribution of NSA to nutrition outcomes by ICCO Cooperation and SNV. In addition, Dr. Hazel Malapit from IFPRI presented latest experiences with the Women Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI). The meeting counted with active participation of policy makers, researchers, practitioners and representatives from the private sector.

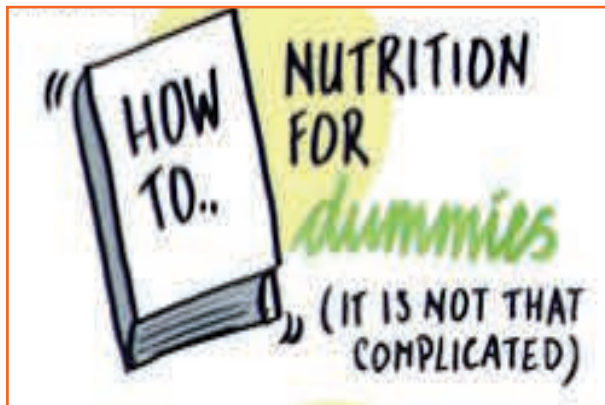
## Main Takeaways from the meeting

- Nutrition sensitive agriculture interventions have due potential to improve diets. To develop and scale this potential, on-going monitoring and rigorous evaluations of a selection of projects is required. In addition,

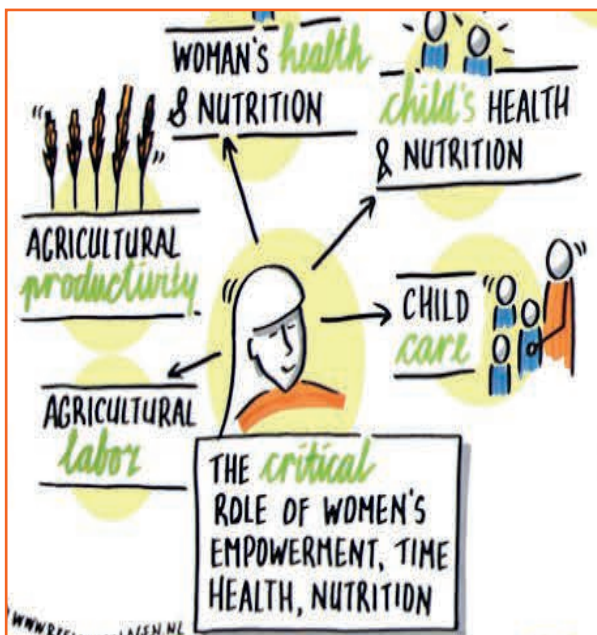


targets for NSA programs should be realistic and focused; individual programs should not aim to achieve everything. To address malnutrition adequately, integrated approaches are needed, through co-location of different nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific programs that can leverage each other.

- There is consensus about the importance of Nutrition for sustainable development; however 'making agricultural or economic development interventions nutrition sensitive' is often viewed as too complicated in terms of programming, monitoring and evaluation. Nutrition as a topic needs to become more 'accessible' for policy makers and practitioners that do not want to go fully into detail: there is a need for 'nutrition for dummies' to realize nutrition sensitive agriculture in a cost-effective way at the center of SDG 2.



- The Nutrition Community, involving practitioners, policy makers and researchers should engage (more) in a shared learning agenda. For this, common monitoring and evaluation approaches and metrics, would be helpful.
- There is a need to further clarify the different objectives, potential and requirements of monitoring, evaluation and (applied) research of NSA interventions. This includes the specification of who should be involved and how the different components relate and complement each other. External evaluations require rigorous and independent approaches. Preferably the focus should be on the quality of evaluations, rather than on the quantity, i.e. not all programs require an external evaluation.
- Contextualization of programs and questionnaires is key- what works in one context cannot be standardized across countries. Take for instance vegetarian diets into account, and if looking at gender equality, food distribution and food allocation, cultural differences between regions.



- Applying a gender lens and aiming for women's empowerment through agriculture remains pivotal. However, we need to understand exactly what works for women: programs that reach women do not necessarily benefit them, and even when they do benefit, empowerment is not guaranteed. In addition, empowerment of women can also have unintended negative consequences on health, child care and food security. WEAI and pro-WEAI are helpful tools to unpack the agri-nutrition pathways and to help fine-tune programming.



## Next steps

- The NWGN will develop further as a forum for sharing experiences, challenges, lessons learned and recommendations related to nutrition sensitive agriculture interventions and related metrics. As part of this process members will join forces to systematize experiences on how to make agriculture programs work for nutrition and the use of standardized indicators such as HFIAS and MDD-W, as well as indicators 'under construction' such as pro-WEAI, resulting in documentation of 'best practices'.
- Dutch policy makers are to engage further with NWGN members, facilitating a common agenda for adaptive programming and learning. In addition, they are to adapt the 'Food and Nutrition Security results and indicator framework 2018', making use of information and findings of the expert meeting, as well as to learn from practice on what works best in what context.