



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



FAO elearning  
ACADEMY



Webinar VI  
Sustainable Food Value Chains for  
Nutrition

Wednesday 16 September 2020  
14:30 - 16:00 CEST (Rome time)

© WorldFish / Finn Thilsted



FAO elearning  
ACADEMY  
elearning.fao.org



agreenium  
l'institut agronomique,  
vétérinaire & forestier  
de France



UNITED NATIONS  
ESCAP  
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

## Sustainable Food Value Chains for Nutrition

16 September 2020

Recording Link: <https://youtu.be/Uo31LjbQhrA>

## Questions and Answers

For more information about the international technical webinars series, please visit the [FAO elearning Academy website](https://elearning.fao.org)

### DISCLAIMER

*This document is a compilation of questions relevant to the topics covered during the International Technical Webinar, raised by the participants, and answers provided by the experts from FAO or partner institutions during the event. The answers provided in the Q&A document only reflect the personal views of the experts and do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever, endorsement, nor recommendation on the part of FAO or the partner institutions involved in the webinars. FAO reserves the right to alter, limit or discontinue any part of this service at its discretion. Under no circumstances shall FAO be liable nor held responsible for any loss, damage, liability or expense suffered that is claimed to result from the use of information posted on this site, including without limitation, any fault, error, omission, interruption or delay.*

**1) What can we do for marginalised farmers? Can we learn or do something about it? In developing countries most of the food items are produced by smallholder farmers. How can such kinds of projects be implemented?**

The course was developed largely based on materials from IFAD and FAO that take a smallholder perspective. The specific policy and program interventions will vary with context, but an evaluation criterion for selection of commodities for development is that that commodity has to have the potential to increase producer income. The course also recommends participatory approaches, including project beneficiaries such as marginalized farmers, in the selection and design of interventions.

**2) Are there any successful case studies of the SFS value chain described in the course, especially if they have been successfully mapped to SDGs for M&E?**

The guidance was based on testing an application of the approach in Nigeria and Indonesia. Those experiences are written up and available as case studies.

Nigeria: <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/publication/asset/40271825>

Indonesia: <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/publication/asset/40197427>

An M&E system is part of Step 5, Putting the project together, and certainly indicators could be mapped to SDGs.

**3) Do you have a plan or any started projects on Ethiopia?**

IFAD has funded a number of nutrition-sensitive agricultural projects in Ethiopia, and the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health also has staff there. You can reach out to them.

**IFAD:** <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/country/id/ethiopia>

**CGIAR:** Generally <https://a4nh.cgiar.org/ethiopia/>

and specifically on value chains and food systems in Ethiopia:

<https://a4nh.cgiar.org/2018/03/14/nutrition-sensitive-value-chains-and-food-systems-for-ethiopia-where-are-the-entry-points/>

**4) How can farmers be assisted to make value to their harvest to prevent post-harvest loss? How is PROMER project working with postharvest loss in the different value chains?**

In the case of PROMER postharvest loss prevention is an integral component of strategies to improve agricultural productivity and linkages between farmers and markets. For example,

Encouraging farmers to harvest at the proper maturity stage and at peak quality as well farmers have been supported with training on technologies for to constructing storage that provide dry, well-vented conditions allowing further drying in case of limited opportunities for complete drying prior to storage; protection from rain and drainage of ground water; and protection from entry of rodents and birds and minimum temperature fluctuations. In addition, the PROMER works with value chain actors to develop business relationships that allows timely purchase and transportation of the farmers produce to the market. This is complimented by the market infrastructure



development that facilitates connection between the production areas and end markets or input suppliers.

- 5) It is very encouraging to see increasing attention to the demand side of the food system (i.e. dietary choices and nutrition). However, there appear to be some "blind spots" in the approaches generally implemented (and these are inter-related): 1. How to address "First World" issues of obesity and related non-communicable diseases, that are increasingly prevalent also in urban middle classes of emerging countries, and causing severe damage? 2. How are the environmental impacts of food choices considered (i.e. we all know cattle and dairy - and animal products more generally - have a very high impact on climate, land and water use)? These impacts have to be addressed by the international community with credibility (not just left to animal-rights groups). 3. How can UN agencies, IFIs and others address these issues with their "rich/donor" constituents whose diets have the highest impact? 4. Are RBAs involved in advocacy in this direction?**

The approach presented in the course itself is applicable to nutrition issues in high-income countries as well, since the starting point is the "nutrition problem" of the beneficiary population. In addition, LMICs are also suffering from problems of overweight and obesity, as part of the nutrition transition, and the approach here focuses on providing a healthy diet - one that is adequate and not excessive in terms of nutrients - in the specific project context, regardless of where the beneficiary population lives. As noted, "doing no harm" in terms of the environment is a key criterion for selection of the commodities whose value chains could be developed, and the course itself prioritizes economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The course outlines a process a project designer can go through, including questions and types of analyses to undertake, to guide the selection of commodities and determine how to address these important issues, including the issue of environmental impact.

- 6) Can you please elaborate on cooking demonstrations? How and the process? Arrangements, etc.**

Participatory cooking demonstrations started after the analysis of the minimum diet diversity scores from the MDDW and MDDYC assessments that illuminated consumption patterns for specific food groups that needed attention. Peer group mothers (Farmers association members and non-members) were then sensitised on how to incorporate the low consumed food groups (Pulses, dark green leafy vegetables, Vitamin A-rich vegetables, roots and tubers, Vitamin A-rich fruits and poultry and fish products) in traditional recipes and as well as new creative recipes from locally in season affordable foods. The peer team mothers participated in recipe development and contributed with their knowledge and skills as well as their cooking utensils and food ingredients where possible. New ideas are complemented on site mentorship by the PROMER extension team support using localised nutrition education training packages and recipes books including harmonised resources from the nutrition stakeholders in Mozambique. The peer mothers and the extension team usually conduct



cooking demonstrations in diverse settings and at different events, for example, during farmers association meetings, agricultural shows, on market days, health clinics, schools, and during functional literacy classes.

**7) Does course need one to be involved in case studies? I.e. going to the fields and meeting farmers and communities to apply the approach. If that is the case, how will it be done since most of our countries are under restricted movements - lockdowns.**

Although the analytical studies try to rely on available data (to reduce cost and time spent, since these are often limited in project-design processes), some fieldwork is likely inevitable to groundtruth this secondary data or to ensure it is relevant for the project's beneficiary population. Different countries have different levels of restrictions, and some information might be gathered by phone or internet, or by others who live in the area and can move around. But of course the hoped-for solution is that the pandemic will end, and we can all safely move about once again.

**8) What about the risk of simplifying further the diets when using biofortification?**

In our opinion, there is no risk of simplifying diets when using biofortification as the biofortified crops are traditional regularly consumed crops and through biofortification process – which is the process of increasing the density of vitamins and minerals in a crop, through plant breeding or agronomic practices- allows improvement in vitamin and mineral nutritional value that supports to combat micronutrient deficiencies. For more information look at the evidence on biofortification on IFPRI/Harvest plus website.

JG: As noted, biofortification would not seem to incentivize *additional* simplification in diets. Biofortification, at least through HarvestPlus, focused on improving nutrient density of staples first because this would seem to be the most promising way to deliver additional micronutrients – through consumption of foods that were already mainstays of the diet. But biofortification is not just of staples of maize, wheat, and rice. Biofortified varieties of cassava, beans, pearl millet, and sweet potato are also available.

<https://www.harvestplus.org/>

<https://www.harvestplus.org/what-we-do/crops>

It should also be pointed out that HarvestPlus and other advocates of biofortification strongly believe that biofortification is only a part of a strategy to achieve a healthy diet. Efforts to ensure that a diverse range of foods, especially fruits and vegetables, are widely available, safe, affordable, and consumed should continue.

**9) What type of energy were used for the cooking demonstration as energy for cooking is a big challenge in rural communities?**

The main cooking demonstration energy used is the traditional wood fired stoves. Though extension teams have been linking farmers with improved cook stoves technology training in collaboration with other partners in PROMER implementation areas.





**10) With regards to promoting nutrition awareness, how are you accomplishing your objectives? Is this in partnership with schools? Or do you have a different approach to reach as many people as possible**

PROMER uses multiple opportunities to include and present nutrition and consumer awareness information and key messages to a wider geographical audience to raise community awareness on the utility of value chain commodities and value addition products to improve diets. For example, PROMER team has been leveraging on the enormous Peer mother groups trained on maternal infant and child feeding, use existing Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) platforms and events, such as the health and nutrition weeks, Ministry of Health and Ministry of agriculture radio and TV initiatives and community radio station broadcasting market and climate information services for promoting nutrition awareness at community, health centres and school settings.

**11) What are the key nutrition indicators being used under the current PROMER project?**

- a) Percentage of smallholder women of reproductive age with increased dietary diversity (at least 5 food groups)
- b) Number of persons/ HHs provided with targeted support to improve their nutrition (sex-disaggregated data)
- c) Number of orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) community gardens established.
- d) Number of biofortified cassava with vitamin "A" community gardens established.
- e) Number of Agro-dealers selling seeds of dark green leafy vegetables and seeds of other vegetables rich in vitamin A and Zinc.
- f) Number of farmers disaggregated by gender and age trained in processing and conservation of vegetables crops

**12) How did you create demand for the consumption of nutritious foods?**

Nutrition education and behaviour change communication was added to all the PROMER core components as an essential catalyst for ensuring that increased food production/income translates into improved diets and contributes to improved nutritional status. Activities include promotion of home gardens, educating the agri-business and (farmer) consumers on the nutritional benefits of nutrient-dense crops being promoted in their geographical areas including cooking demonstrations for taste-testing activities of the selected nutrition commodities conducted both at the events and at market fairs. Adding basic nutritional information into the functional literacy modules, adding nutrition-fortification activities in the processing and value addition activities, and educating the participants of village saving schemes to prioritize buying nutritious foods for their families. PROMER continues to influence the demand for nutrition behaviour change by focusing on more inclusive decision-making around nutrition within the home using Gender Action Learning methodology and climate change strategies.



**13) What are the main challenges faced by both pilot countries to shift from conventional value chain approach to nutrition sensitive value chain with the mobilization of multi actors?**

From PROMER experience, the main challenges to shift from conventional value chain approach to nutrition sensitive value chain are.

- a) Strengthening teams' (Project, government, and extension teams) functional competencies in nutrition sensitive approach and action.
- b) Government technical assistance for designs/proposals/ funding concepts for interventions aimed at improved nutrition outcomes.
- c) Investing in sustainable creative behaviour change strategies to support nutrition sensitive value chains across multiple stakeholders.

**14) How was the project measuring nutrient density of food crops?**

PROMER has not measured nutrition density of the food crops however focused on measuring the dietary quality, which reflects nutrient adequacy and dietary diversity.

**15) what do you mean by diversified distribution channels, how did you do this?**

PROMER is a market linkages projects with interventions in different stages of the value chain. To ensure that farmers and traders have timely and reliable access to the different markets and market opportunities the project activities use diversified distribution channels such as:

- a) Rehabilitation of key rural roads which facilitated all year-round access and trading
- b) Supported the establishment of different agreements between farmers, associations, local agro-dealers and other national, regional, and international companies with interest in the different products, therefore making produce from PROMER beneficiaries available to different markets
- c) PROMER supported the establishment of retail and wholesale markets that facilitates commercialization.
- d) The developed market information system has helped the value chain actors to access information on availability, quantity, as well as end market demand of specific produce at and given period.

**16) For Custodio and Carla: How has traceability for validation of success on objectives been managed?**

- a) Through monitoring and evaluation assessments (2 assessments were carried out during the 1<sup>st</sup> phase and the last impact evaluation assessment will be carried out at the end of this year)
- b) Reference groups updates meeting at district, provincial and national level (Farmer groups, Service providers, government extension team and PROMER management teams)
- c) Through intergovernmental technical and policy decisions discussions



- d) Through midterm and annual supervision missions between government and IFAD

**17) No results of the approach have been given. To what extent has the implementation improved the nutrition situation in Mozambique?**

The approach started in 2018 and the implementation results will be shared by 2021. The results will focus on how PROMER (markets linkage program) can deliver positive nutrition outcomes to smallholder farm families while aiming for income increase from production. This then is a **contribution** to the multi stakeholder efforts toward improving the nutrition situation in Mozambique.

**18) What are access options to the elearning course if internet is not good?**

Since these are online courses, a minimum access to the internet is required. If the internet connectivity is not stable enough, the course can be downloaded once to the computer of the learner, and then accessed anytime also without using internet.

**19) The PROMER in Mozambique went I think without any attention on animal sourced food which could help farmers in dealing against malnutrition (poultry, eggs, milk for children, etc.). Why not? or is it not a demand in Mozambique?**

As part of nutrition education and awareness sessions- PROMER has encouraged farmers to further increase their plant-based proteins which are readily available and include animal sourced food mostly poultry and eggs in the family food and children complementary food recipes where possible. Homestead integrated farming is encouraged. Farmers along the coastline and near lakes are encouraged to include fish in the diets.

**20) Was soil health improved through agroecological farming practices to ensure higher nutrient density of food crops?**

Assessments from the agricultural productivity from educating farmers in adopting soil fertility practices to produce healthful (nutrient-dense) vegetable crops give us an indication that the soil health has improved.

**21) What type of modern practice use nutritional value increases in food and good for biodiversity?**

There are a lot of resources in this area. You might start with this link on the issue generally.

<https://www.biodiversityinternational.org/research-portfolio/diet-diversity/biodiversity-for-food-and-nutrition/>

And then consider the specific program, Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition (BFN), that is operating in Brazil, Kenya, Turkey, and Sri Lanka promoting cultivation and consumption of biodiverse, often neglected and underutilized, crops.

<http://www.b4fn.org/>



Recent books from BFN include *Agrobiodiversity, School Gardens and Healthy Diets* (<https://bit.ly/39eBnaw>) and *Biodiversity, Food and Nutrition: a New Agenda for Sustainable Food Systems* (<https://www.routledge.com/Biodiversity-Food-and-Nutrition-A-new-agenda-for-Sustainable-Food-Systems/Hunter-Borelli-Gee/p/book/9780367141516>).

Another fairly recent basic reference is *Diversifying Food and Diets*, available free from the Bioversity website (<https://www.bioversityinternational.org/e-library/publications/detail/diversifying-food-and-diets/> )

**22) Could you provide the link to the e-learning course: Sustainable Food Value Chains for Nutrition and provide a brief introduction about the course (length, main learning objectives, etc).**

This course aims to equip project designers and managers with the concepts, principles and tools they need to leverage value chain approaches to improve nutrition through agriculture and food systems. The concept of Sustainable Food Value Chains for Nutrition (SFVCN) was first presented in 2016 at the 43rd session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and is the framework adopted by the Rome Based Agencies (RBAs). An SFVCN approach considers how development of a sustainable food value chain can contribute to improving nutrition of a target population. The course can be accessed here: <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=566>

**23) Some cultures obtain important nutritional supplementation through the collection of non-domesticated or semi-domesticated “wild” food plants, especially those who do not have access to healthy vegetables/fruits. Are there any successful case studies using your paradigms/framework using non-domesticated wild plants with ethnographic documentation of plants and how they are used, nutritional analyses, market analyses, etc.?**

Again, the course itself provides a framework to take these considerations into account when designing a sustainable food value chain for nutrition. And it does explicitly mention the opportunities that exist for using traditional or neglected and otherwise underutilized species (NUS) to form part of these value chains. Bioversity has a long history of understanding and promoting NUS. The website has information that could be useful in design, including a framework for supporting integration of NUS into agricultural projects and and country studies.

<https://www.bioversityinternational.org/research-portfolio/markets-for-diverse-species/>

**24) My question is what could be sustainable alternatives/opportunities to increase value (of fish) for areas where the value chain is significantly short?**

IFAD has a number of resources that could be useful for you. Please see IFAD’s webpage on fisheries, and then click on Publications and News. <https://www.ifad.org/en/fisheries>





IFAD has an interesting video on how an IFAD project supported a shift to raising and consumption of smaller fish that would be more nutritious for children.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NiR7f4ZtVg>

Also see the IFAD brochure on how the sustainable food value chain project approach (the basis for this course) was carried out in Indonesia. Fish was one of the commodities selected for development.

[https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40197148/Indonesia\\_brochure.pdf/9ab34286-983d-4b3c-ba85-d6950a50ab68](https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40197148/Indonesia_brochure.pdf/9ab34286-983d-4b3c-ba85-d6950a50ab68)

**25) What do you think the impact of Covid19 to be on the nutrition and value chain both for developed and developing countries?**

Many analyses are being done right now about Covid19 and food and nutrition. One of the most recent and comprehensive has just been issued by the Committee on World Food Security High Level Panel of Experts. It could be a good place to start.

<http://www.fao.org/3/cb1000en/cb1000en.pdf>

The CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health has also produced some analyses.

<https://a4nh.cgiar.org/2020/04/13/impacts-of-the-covid-19-crisis-on-vegetable-value-chains-in-ethiopia/>

And the CGIAR has a knowledge hub specifically dedicated to information on Covid 19.

<https://a4nh.cgiar.org/covidhub/>

**General questions about specifics of the Course:**

**26) Is the VC commodity being promoted partially for consumption or is income from VC used for purchasing nutritious food? Is general nutrition promotion and food demonstration done in parallel to VC activities? If so, which of your activities make the VC nutrition sensitive how you implemented it differently from regular VC program?**

**27) It seems that traditional agriculture programs often miss the poorest of the poor. In the course, do you address options for modifying traditional agriculture interventions to specifically meet the constraints of the poorest of the poor (who often have the highest prevalence of malnutrition)?**

**28) Opportunities for implementing arrangements (i) are usually unique to each country, and (ii) often have serious implications for project results. Are there tools provided by the course to help identify (previously untapped) opportunities for collaboration in delivering cross-sectoral interventions of the community/ household level?**

**29) Once you talk about nutrition, it is multisector. How do you coordinate with other sectors? Only agriculture is not a complete nutrition.**

**30) How to consider food safety and nutrition for nutrition-sensitive food production and marketing of nutritious food?**



31) Sustainable value chain is a good concept. Are the value chains presented sustainable?

32) One of the challenges in implementing SFVCN is around Policy, standards, national frameworks (customs, market, etc.). Is this essential and crucial pillar (essential to implement the other pillars of a SFVCN) covered in this training?

All these questions have to do with specifics about the course, and so I can answer by describing the course in a bit more detail. The course itself presents concepts around sustainability, food and nutrition, and value chains and describes a process for designing sustainable food value chains for nutrition, including implementation arrangements. It does not go into detail about specific interventions. As noted these would differ by context, which the course and accompanying guides help the designer to take into account.

The course also specifies the strategies, impact pathways, and potential intervention areas for a sustainable food value chain for nutrition. It provides references or context for many of the issues involved in designing such a project, such as consideration of food safety or elements of a healthy diet. It also highlights some of the tensions and challenges that can occur during design. For example, value chain projects are often not used to assist the poorest of the poor (e.g., the landless poor) because they are usually targeted to beneficiaries, like smallholders, who have some minimal level of production resources already available. At the same time, though, even as these value chains increase economic value for value-chain actors, they should take the needs of the poorest of the poor into account, for example, ensuring the poorest of the poor can access these foods. The need for a multisectoral approach to improving nutrition, and the need for value chain projects to integrate or coordinate with other projects or sectors is mentioned. The course goes into detail on the concept of sustainability, and how you can take this into account in project design. References for more information on this and other issues raised in the questions are also provided.

Please visit the **FAO eLearning Academy** [elearning.fao.org](http://elearning.fao.org), which offers free multilingual courses on the thematic areas covered in the Technical Webinar.



FAO eLearning Academy  
**Course Catalogue**

Click to browse

Also explore the Digital Catalogue at [www.fao.org/elearning/catalogue](http://www.fao.org/elearning/catalogue)

