

How can agriculture affect nutrition?

LEARNING RESOURCE

Key Concepts

There is untapped potential in agricultural production to support nutrition outcomes. Within agriculture, we have the opportunity to contribute to improved dietary intake and decrease the prevalence of malnutrition.

Research has shown that *nutrition-sensitive agriculture* can effectively address the underlying causes of malnutrition along *three main pathways*:

- **Food production.** Food production affects nutrition via the food that is available to households—both those who grow food for their own consumption and food that is available for purchase in local markets.
- **Agricultural income.** Agriculture helps producers generate income, thereby increasing the ability to spend more on food and non-food (including health) expenditures.
- **Women's empowerment.** Nutrition-sensitive agriculture empowers women, also supporting food security and nutrition outcomes via expenditure decisions, caring capacity and practices, and how women spend their time and energy.

These pathways help us identify where and how to design effective interventions to improve nutrition and gender equality outcomes. Applying *nutrition-sensitive* approaches to agriculture can lead to improvements in productivity and income, leading to healthier diets being available to more people around the year. Women play a key role in ensuring that family members consume a healthy diet, as well as across these aspects of food production and increased income expenditure on health and nutrition.

The pathways are not necessarily linear, and there are many interactions between them.

As we think about ways to integrate nutrition along these three pathways, agriculture development specialists typically work across three areas:

1. In our *agro-input supply and service development* work, we can think of ways to increase the availability of inputs and services that will increase the production of nutritious foods, support post-harvest management and storage, and increase the desirability and demand for nutritious foods.
2. In our development of *farmer and producer organizations*, we can integrate nutrition through training which covers nutrition, support enterprise development and crop diversification through extension services and making inputs available, and promoting women's active and meaningful participation and leadership in the group.
3. Some agricultural development activities interface directly with *producers and households*. When this happens, we can reach consumers directly. This includes introducing or strengthening ways to improve their dietary intake, driving demand for nutritious food, and improving household-level awareness of the link between agriculture and nutrition.

Putting it into practice

From the session, write down the ideas that stuck out to you from each section:

Ideas and concepts from the *food production* pathway:

Ideas and concepts from the *agricultural income* pathway:

Ideas and concepts from the *women's empowerment* pathway:

Further Reading

The Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally project (SPRING) has a training resource package on [nutrition-sensitive agriculture](#) which includes a session on [Agriculture-to-Nutrition Pathways](#) in particular.

<https://www.spring-nutrition.org/publications/series/nutrition-sensitive-agriculture-training-resource-package>

<https://www.spring-nutrition.org/publications/training-materials/agriculture-nutrition-pathways>