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# SUSTAINABLE DIETS FOR ALL

Harnessing citizens' voices for a  
diverse, healthy, fair and green  
food system

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## The food system is not working for us, or the planet

The agricultural sector is producing more food than ever. Yet a world where all people have access to healthy and diverse food produced in a fair and sustainable manner still seems a long way off. The alarming pace of ecosystem degradation, eroding biodiversity, inequitable distribution of resources, and diet-related diseases make a compelling case for re-examining and reforming food systems. However, progress towards sustainable production and consumption is patchy and painfully slow.

Agricultural and food security policies continue to favour industrial agricultural production and large multinationals at the expense of small-scale farmers, and are made in isolation from the profound changes taking place in consumption associated with liberalised trade, urbanisation, lifestyle and income. Processed foods and beverages manufactured from a few globally traded commodities have led to less diverse and low-quality diets. The upshot is a public health crisis encompassing all forms of malnutrition, as well as diet-related diseases such as obesity. One in three people suffer from diet-related malnutrition. Across Africa and Asia, the estimated annual impact of undernutrition on gross domestic product is 11 per cent - more than the annual economic downturn caused by the financial crisis of 2008-10 on these two continents. In addition, the current global food system accounts for one third of total greenhouse gas emissions.

We need a radical, system-wide rethink of food production and consumption, recognising the health of both people and ecosystems as the basic foundations for human wellbeing. Food systems need to shift from just producing food to providing sustainable and healthy diets for all. All parts of the food system need to be addressed, from production and processing, to trade, retailing and consumption.

### Citizen generated evidence

If communities can generate evidence themselves, they may be more effective in lobbying and advocating for their priorities, and less dependent on others to set the agenda. Local food systems are documented and analysed through participatory processes, and opportunities for food system reform are identified in local and national government policies. Evidence is generated and shared with key stakeholders, the media and policymakers to influence food policy debates.

## Putting consumer and producer voices and choices at the heart of food systems

Sustainable Diets for All is an advocacy programme that uses evidence, including evidence generated by citizens, to help low-income communities in Bolivia, Indonesia, Uganda and Zambia and improve their access to sustainable, diverse and nutritious food. The five-year (2016-20) programme is coordinated by Hivos, the International Institute for the Environment and Development (IIED), and partners in the focal countries.

The goal of Sustainable Diets for All is to work with citizens and partner organisations to influence policies, market practices, government actors and international institutions to promote diets which are diverse, healthy, fair and green.

### How will we achieve this?

The needs of low-income consumers, producers, traders, processors and vendors who form the backbone of the food system are rarely factored into policy decisions. Our programme aims to build the lobbying and advocacy capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) in selected countries to jointly challenge unsustainable practices and incentives in food production and consumption, while fostering changes in policies and practices that help make sustainable diets attainable for all. Our programme empowers citizens, and civil society at large, to amplify their voices in local and (inter)national food policy debates. Evidence generated by citizens will allow them to communicate their ideas, concerns and aspirations directly to policymakers, compelling them to act and to be accountable. Greater involvement by low-income consumers and producers will give them greater influence and control over the food they grow, sell, buy and eat. The private sector will be encouraged to provide more diverse, healthy and sustainable choices for consumers and producers.

A key element of the programme is building multi-stakeholder coalitions and using innovative facilitation methodologies like Food Change Labs, in which multiple actors share knowledge, evidence and ideas, and together develop local, national and international examples of how food systems can be transformed. Hivos, IIED and partners are supporting food lab processes for sustainable diets in Bolivia, Indonesia, Uganda and Zambia.

Many of the Sustainable Development Goals - on hunger, health, gender, production and consumption - depend on the type of improvements sought by this programme. The programme builds on existing good practices to transform food systems, a track record of successful collaboration in joint knowledge programmes and an extensive network of CSOs and private and public sector actors.



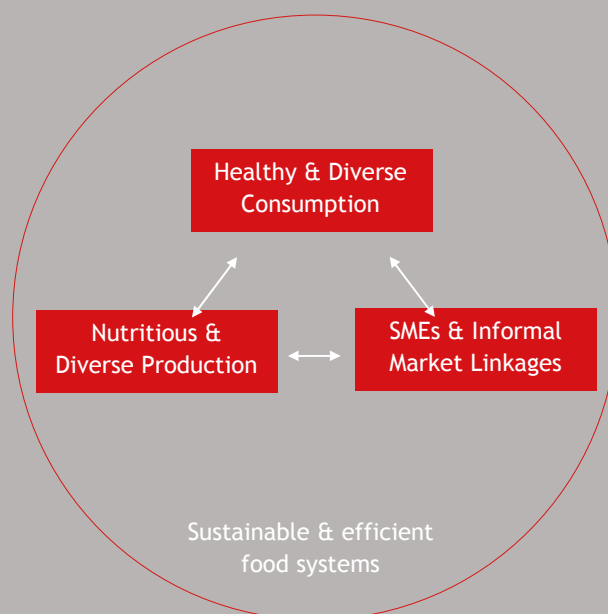
## Towards sustainable diets and food systems

Our programme will deliver policy change in relation to three key areas:

1. Healthy and Diverse Consumption, with a focus on awareness raising and the promotion of healthy food choices that improve diets.
2. Small & Medium Enterprises (SME) & Informal Market Linkages: with a focus on how the informal food sector and small businesses can help connect cities with rural areas.
3. Nutritious & Diverse Production: with a focus on crop and seed diversity including the preservation and promotion of traditional varieties.

Through the lens of our policy priorities we will engage in international debates on how efficiencies in food systems can be gained. Acknowledging the many complexities of the food system, we will throughout the course of the programme connect our priority issues to macro level food system challenges such as food losses and waste, and the carbon, water and health footprint of food systems.

## Sustainable Diets for All



Organisations, governments and businesses that share our vision are welcome to collaborate to further innovate, broaden and expand this work to achieve sustainable diets for all.

### Food Change Lab

A Food Change Lab is a multi-actor innovation process that addresses pressing issues in a local food system, by aiming to better understand them, build coalitions of change, generate ideas, and test these ideas on the ground. Our Labs are safe social spaces for all participating citizens with an interest or stake in their own food system. Because food system issues are so complex, with a myriad of actors and underlying issues and policies, the Labs take a systems approach that integrates thinking, relating and doing. Concrete coalitions and ideas on the ground are translated to advocacy efforts on national and international level.

### Our work in Bolivia, Indonesia, Uganda and Zambia and internationally

**Diet-related malnutrition** impacts all four countries with Sustainable Diets for All agencies - Bolivia, Indonesia, Uganda and Zambia. Indonesia and Zambia face a double malnutrition burden. In both countries, around 40 per cent of children under the age of five are stunted due to poor feeding, while overweight rates are at 23 per cent in Zambia, and 25 per cent of adults and 10 per cent of under-fives in Indonesia.<sup>i</sup> In Zambia a major cause is the limited diversity of the country's food production and consumption, with almost 90 per cent of agriculture centred on maize.<sup>ii</sup> In Bolivia, despite rich biodiversity generating a range of traditional healthy foods, diets are shifting towards highly processed products; rates of anaemia are at 73 per cent in rural areas and 53 per cent in cities.<sup>iii</sup> Uganda, the 'food basket of East Africa', supplies 72 per cent of the region's

commodity exports - yet four out of ten Ugandans are not getting their required dietary intake.<sup>iv</sup> Sixteen per cent of households are chronically undernourished and only four per cent are food secure.

**Sustainable Diets for All's priorities** are tailored to each country's context; the following is just a flavour of our work. In Zambia, Sustainable Diets for All helps develop and implement policies that support diversification, and supports smallholder farmers in increasing their production of indigenous crops. In Bolivia, Sustainable Diets for All also works to support the production and consumption of indigenous Andean grains, as well as to improve public policy for urban food security and provide positive food choices for consumers. In Indonesia - where rapid urbanisation means that 70 per cent of Indonesians will live in cities by 2025 - the informal food sector is vital for low-income city dwellers' access to food. Sustainable Diets for All therefore focuses on the availability and diversity of sustainable food sold by small and medium-sized enterprises and the informal sector, aiming to integrate their needs into local policy frameworks. In Uganda, Sustainable Diets for All convenes local multi-stakeholder platforms to allow marginalised groups to influence rural and urban food policy debates, and generates evidence to inform policy advocacy at both local and national levels.

**All our work takes a bottom-up approach** involving a range of stakeholders. In Bolivia's Andean region, our work prioritising Andean grains promotes capacity building for small-scale farmers as well as biodiversity and nutrition. We also help low-income consumers who work in the food sector to have a powerful voice, highlighting the need for accessible, local and nutritious food. In Uganda we work with youth, women and men, producers, farmers, consumers, food vendors, small companies and professional cooks to increase healthy, affordable and diverse food



options for low-income communities. In Zambia we support consumers to diversify their diets, increasing awareness of their right to more choice of affordable nutritious food. This is closely tied to the need for policy and regulatory support for informal markets. In Indonesia, as well as working with the informal sector, we mobilise consumers to improve consumer awareness of better nutrition, and to engage citizens in policymaking processes.

**Our international advocacy efforts** connect our national advocacy agendas in Bolivia, Indonesia, Uganda and Zambia to global policy forums that improve diets, tackle malnutrition, and address the need for sustainable consumption and production. We seek to engage with national and international decision makers through multi stakeholder collaboration, to create policy environments that accelerate the shift to more sustainable food systems, and facilitate the promotion and uptake of sustainable diets for all. We believe that a systems approach to agriculture and food is needed to address the adverse effects of current production and consumption patterns on human and

planetary health. Co-leading the United Nations Sustainable Food Systems Programme under its 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns (10YFP), we contribute to reshaping the international debate on food beyond food security, advocating for more inclusive and participatory food policymaking.

<sup>i</sup> World Food Programme (2016). The 2016 Global Nutrition Report. [www.globalnutritionreport.org](http://www.globalnutritionreport.org)

<sup>ii</sup> Indaba Agriculture Policy Research Institute (2015). Rural Agricultural Livelihoods Survey Report. [www.iapri.org.zm](http://www.iapri.org.zm)

<sup>iii</sup> UDAPE. Min. De Salud. CT-CONAN (2015). Encuesta de Evaluación de Salud y Nutrición 2012: Informe de Resultados.

<sup>iv</sup> National Planning Authority (2017). Towards Zero Hunger: A Strategic Review of Sustainable Development Goal 2 in Uganda. [www.npa.ug/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/SDG2-Strategic-Review-Summary.pdf](http://www.npa.ug/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/SDG2-Strategic-Review-Summary.pdf)

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