

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE : DELIVERING FOOD SYSTEMS DIVERSIFICATION IN KENYA

Multistakeholder Workshop | 21 January 2025

Organized by Nutrition Connect, GAIN Kenya, Glocolearning

We are deeply grateful to all the experts who participated in the workshop and shared their invaluable insights and lessons learned from their work in ushering food systems transformation.

Synopsis: Food systems diversification is key to improving resilience, diets, sustainability, and equity. However efforts are often fragmented, focusing on separate goals like nutrition, climate adaptation, or improved livelihoods. To fully realize its benefits, stronger collaboration is needed to enhance synergies, manage trade-offs, and drive systemic change. Nutrition Connect, GAIN Kenya and Glocolearning held a workshop to do just that in early 2025, bringing together key food system actors in Kenya, from across the development sector, public and private sector and civil society actors. The interactive workshop led to in-depth discussions on visions for food systems diversification, identified barriers to its actualisation and sustenance, and explored strategies to unlock its full potential.

Three key focus areas of the workshop on Food Systems Diversification in Kenya :

-  **Connecting Future Visions :** Exploring and aligning visions for food systems diversification
 -  **Identifying Barriers :** Uncovering key obstacles to diversification
 -  **Strategizing and Bundling Solutions :** Developing actionable strategies to overcome identified barriers and how stronger collaboration can enhance that
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This workshop was a first in a series, built on the Kenyan Food System Pathway that calls for diversification ([link](#)), the Kampala CAADP agreement that emphasizes resilient food systems ([link](#)), overview studies and data on food systems in Kenya ([link](#)), and a perspective on food systems diversification ([link1](#), [link 2](#)). It was attended by 35 mid and senior level officials from across sectors i.e. Public sector (4), Private sector (18), Civil Society Organization (8) and Research/academia (5). There were three breakout groups demarcated as 'Urban', 'Peri-urban' and 'Rural', that worked on developing the visions, exploring barriers and the way forward. Below is a summary of key elements. (See workshop report [here](#) and graphics [here](#))

Focus on food systems diversification

The What, Why, How ?

Participants were asked what they associate 'food systems diversification' with (see word cloud below). 'Variety', 'resilience' and 'sustainability' were emphasized by most. As a working definition, we used 'biological diversification' as an entry point and focused on; increasing diversity of species and varieties, in food consumption, markets, production and genetic resources. But with the note that this goes hand-in-hand with diversity in food systems, value chains, actors, livelihoods, and solutions. (See Workshop slides [here](#))



Opening Remarks : Opening remarks by Ruth Okowa, GAIN's Country Director for Kenya, Dr. Washington Adede, Kenya's Food systems technical working group Chair & FAO representative, and Josephine Love, BR Kenya Focal Person from the Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock were in attendance and conveyed the importance of diversification in food systems from their unique perspectives and as a critical part of multiple on-going processes, policies, and programs for transformation (see below).



2050 Visions of Diversified Food Systems In Kenya

Visions for diversified food systems in Kenya were co-developed in breakout groups focusing on urban, peri-urban and rural settings in Kenya. Here we summarize key elements :



- A knowledgeable consumer with appreciation of indigenous foods and their benefits and with adoption of proper waste management from the household level and throughout the food system.
- Easy access to affordable, nutritious, safe, & diverse foods for urban communities with more fresh produce, less processed food, and access to hygienic food kiosks and delivery services.
- Cities with integrated food systems in urban planning and governance, building in zoning & circular economy models, with green spaces used for urban agriculture, water and nutrient recycling, energy-efficient vertical farming, integrated diversified school meals and segregated food hubs away from contaminated areas
- Resilient communities with participatory evidence-based and data-driven research to guide decisions, to come to tailor-made approaches for different peri-urban communities.
- Strong youth engagement in innovative SMEs
- Centralised aggregation and distribution centres in peri-rural areas to reduce post-harvest losses and improve market efficiency.
- Emergence of new peri-urban areas with zoning whereby specified fertile land is demarcated for farming and agricultural activities, and certain degraded land is restored through regenerative agriculture
- Formalised markets for the produce
- Improved delivery services for the food produce
- Strong local seed systems
- ‘We are what we eat’ mentality, embracing the diversity of Indigenous crops, awareness & knowledge about healthy foods & diverse diets
- Whole-household inclusive approach women, men, youth, children, elderly, disabled, are all engaged in food.
- A diversity of markets/types of places to get your food and with positive messaging about healthy foods, transparent information, and higher affordability of healthy diets
- Diversified school meals combined with related education
- Well-organised cooperatives, community groups, and active multi-stakeholder platforms that are inclusive and participatory and provide good access to different types of capacities and markets
- Business-based food systems with diversity of SMEs & innovation hubs, with more cost-efficient regenerative production systems that are less dependent on rainfall, high precision, climate-smart, motorised, and adaptive supported by Artificial Intelligence (AI)



Barriers to diversification

Critical barriers for diversification for each of the settings were identified. Below is a selection & synthesis of these. For the full list of barriers we refer to the detailed report.

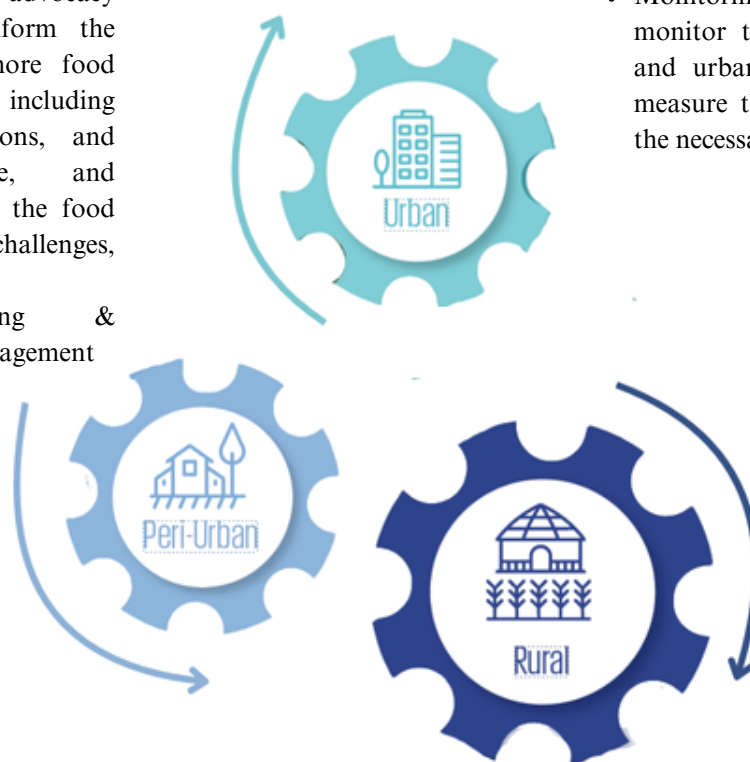


Strategic leverage points for diversification

Strategic leverage points for diversification for each of the settings were identified. Below is a selection & synthesis of these. For the full list of barriers we refer to the detailed report.

- Improvement in infrastructure with creation of centralised aggregation and distribution centres in peri-rural areas to reduce post-harvest losses and improve market efficiency.
- Advocate for policies that recognise and prioritise peri-rural areas as critical nodes in Kenya's food systems.
- Support peri-rural farmers with credit facilities and climate-smart technologies to boost productivity and diversification.
- Multi-faceted Accountability approach - Accountability should involve the government, the community and individuals
- Marketing our foods
- Active Citizenry
- Investment to education and advocacy campaigns to educate/ inform the public to advocate for more food systems diversity and why, including storytelling, local champions, and parliamentary committee, and effective communication of the food systems approach from challenges, gaps and opportunities.
- Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation for adaptive management

- Launch awareness campaigns to encourage the consumption of diverse diets & waste management e.g. innovative storytelling
- Promote urban agriculture initiatives, such as rooftop gardening and community farms
- Advocate for nutrition-sensitive urban policies that incentivise the sale and distribution of fresh, diverse foods in urban markets.
- Foster collaboration between urban policymakers, private sector stakeholders, and community organisations to enhance food supply chains, e.g. public-Private Partnerships (PPIs) on advancing food systems and food diversification for example in school meal programs.
- Monitoring and Evaluation to monitor the progress of the policies and urban food system practices to measure their effectiveness and make the necessary adjustments



- Strengthening community-driven approaches, organised groups & communities of practice
- Strengthening partnerships and complementarities through landscape approach, multistakeholder platforms, Re-activating
- Joint assisted framework, Network on innovative sustainable finance, co-investments
- Climate change adaptation & mitigation 'What you do on a day-to-day basis matters', Climate-smart diversification,
- Mobilising funding, e.g. carbon credits and sustainable finance mechanisms
- Traceability and accountability: Digitalisation, Data harmonisation, protection and Co-create and Co-design research with communities - local ownership
- Policy integration and implementation: Sensitisation on policies so that different actors and different levels of government can act upon them, Better coherence between national and county level, Incentives to help act upon policies e.g. incentives to farmers to practice nature-based solution
- Triggering shifts in mindsets through Sensitisation on benefits of diversity of species, varieties and ecosystems, More Valuebased, targeted capacity building, local champions and ambassadors, and Capacity building along the value chain
- Participatory research, MEL, and feedback sessions - to more co-own research, results and systems thinking

Five priorities for stronger coordinated actions

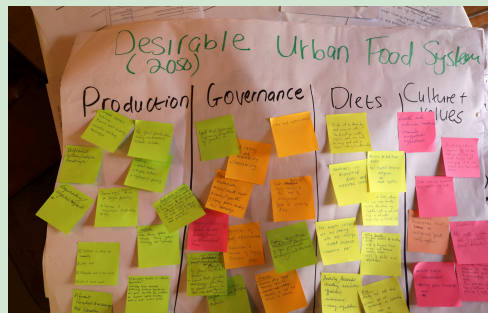
Taken together the leverage points across settings, we can identify five priority options for stronger coordinated actions to connect and amplify diversification efforts

WAYS OF VIEWING:



Collective campaigns on the multiple benefits of a diversity of healthy foods

Innovative storytelling, tiktok, local champions, school meal programs and education



WAYS OF ORGANIZING:



Empowering local structures that drive locally-owned diversification

Empowerment of: Cooperatives, Producer hubs, Community seedbanks, Local multi-stakeholder platforms, landscapes approaches, Community Interest groups, Youth groups, Storage & distribution centers, Kiosks

Empowerment through: Criteria in donor-proposals, market & investment connections, multiple capacities strengthening, local visioning, systems approaches, digitalization & traceability

WAYS OF ORGANIZING:



Coordinated effort on increasing policy coherence and implementation related to food system diversification

Fostering stronger linkages between national and county policies and development plans and between urban, peri-urban and rural policies, infrastructure investments, and action plans; joint mapping on who does what in terms of policy implementation and how to mutually reinforce efforts

WAYS OF DOING:



Local innovation hubs that empower local SMEs & youth initiatives to drive diversification along the food system in a context-specific & adaptive way
Bringing in innovative finance, access to credits, capacity building, coordinated and more connected roles of SMEs in the food systems



WAYS OF KNOWING & DOING:



Participatory research, monitoring, evaluation and learning approaches, systematic feedback sessions

Bridging local and scientific knowledge, research questions co-developed with communities, systematic feedback sessions and discussions on findings



Learnings & next steps

100% of the participants learned something new during the workshop that was useful for their own work.

Some examples of these learnings are displayed here.



Immediate next steps

100% of the participants learned something new during the workshop that was useful for their own work.

Some examples of these learnings are displayed here.



Share all workshop materials and outputs, that can serve as inputs to upcoming activities, programs, dialogues and stocktaking events



Coordinate joint input to UNFSS4+ stocktaking meeting, coordinated by FAO



Provide a multistakeholder platform for further coordination and dialogue, as part of FOLU



Build further food systems capacity in Kenya, e.g. through food systems e-course, downscaling visioning & backcasting processes



Explore options to coordinate and implement coordinated actions

To learn more, please get in touch with us



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