Playbook: Integrating Nutrition into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

Purpose & Introduction

This playbook offers a practical guide to integrating nutrition-sensitive ambition and commitments into nationally determined contributions (NDCs) through actions, targets, and/or policies that drive nutrition-climate win-wins within other NDC commitments (e.g. on agriculture and food systems, social protection, health, etc.). It outlines clear steps for identifying entry points, setting ambition levels, and embedding nutrition-related goals and actions into climate commitments, financing plans, and implementation roadmaps.

The playbook draws on the Initiative on Climate Action & Nutrition's (I-CAN)[1] experience supporting selected countries to integrate nutrition into NDCs. It is intended to support national governments and partners, including nutrition, food systems, health and climate stakeholders, as they develop and/or review their NDCs. It can also inform integration into other national policies (e.g. National Adaptation Plans, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans).

Climate change and malnutrition are two of today's most urgent challenges. By aligning nutrition with climate goals, countries can strengthen food and health systems, advance progress on the SDGs, and pursue the Paris Agreement 1.5 °C target. Integrating nutrition into NDCs is therefore a critical first step to ensure nutrition-climate co-benefits are fully reflected in policies, investments, and action.

1 I-CAN is a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral flagship initiative with the aim to catalyse climate action for nutrition benefits, and nutrition action for climate benefits. It was launched in 2022 during COP27 and is co-chaired by Egypt and GAIN, with core partners including WHO, FAO and the SUN movement.

Guiding Steps

1. Scope for Relevant Country Focal & Contact Points

- **Identify the government agency that leads NDC development.** This may be a Ministry of Environment and Climate but can also include Ministries of Finance, National Planning, as well as development agencies.
- **Engage with existing contacts and coordination platforms.** This is often the most effective entry point. Relevant partners may include UN country teams, UN Nutrition, the NDC Partnership, Scaling Up Nutrition Government Focal Points and platforms, UN Nutrition FAO, WHO, or WWF.
- To support advocacy, **prepare a short rationale on why integrating nutrition into the NDC is important** in your national climate context, highlighting potential win-wins across climate, food, and health. Resources in the Annex below, as well as indicators captured by the Food Systems Dashboard (e.g. agrifood systems emissions, nutritious food availability, etc.) can support in developing this rationale.

2. Identify Opportunities for Nutrition Integration in the NDC

- **Review the most recent NDC** to identify potential areas where nutrition-sensitive commitments could be added. Consider links to both adaptation and mitigation.
- **Table 1** below provides suggested pathways for nutrition integration segmented by thematic entry points, and offers examples of nutrition integration from NDC2.0 and 3.0.
- **Once a thematic entry point(s) have been identified, determine the level of ambition using Table 2 below.** To secure buy-in from climate stakeholders, including policymakers, donors, and implementers, it is important to ensure that the language used for nutrition-focused activities within NDCs emphasizes climate change as the primary focus. This strategic communication will help ensure that these activities receive the necessary support and resources for successful implementation.

Table 1: Identifying Opportunities For Nutrition Integration

Thematic Entry Point	Potential Pathway for Integration		Examples from NDCs
	Scan for commitments on...	To integrate nutrition-sensitive commitments like...	
Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Uses (AFOLU) & Food Security	Food security strategy and/or improvement	Introducing commitments and/or indicators to clarify that food security includes access to nutritious foods	Kenya **(3.0):** "Increase sustainable access of adequate nutritional food for all." Benin **(2.0)**: Acknowledge reaching the goals of their National Plan for Agricultural Investment and Food and Nutritional Security will also contribute to climate adaptation targets.
	Climate-resilient food production systems	Promoting climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive agriculture, including crop rotation; reduced reliance on harmful inputs (e.g., fertilizers and pesticides); adoption of diversified, resilient, and nutrient-dense crop varieties; among other practices	Somalia **(3.0):** Promotes climate-smart agriculture and gender-responsive actions like crop rotation, solar-powered irrigation systems, and use of organic fertilizers to build sustainable, conflict-sensitive food systems and improve nutrition outcomes. UAE **(3.0):** Promotes sustainable wheat variety, Sharjah-1, which is more climate-resilient, water-efficient, high-yielding, and nutritious. Organic farming, vertical farms, controlled use of fertilisers also mentioned.
	Strengthening sustainable livelihoods	Actions strengthening R&D, market linkages, and programmes to deliver climate, nutrition, and livelihood co-benefits	Cambodia **(3.0):** Promoting domestic production of fruits and vegetables; fostering linkages with social protection programmes (e.g. home-grown school feeding) to increase access to sustainable and nutritious foods; conducting R&D to support pilot projects to reuse and/or valorize food waste.
Health	National health strategy	Promoting nutrition-specific assessments and support services in primary healthcare	Malawi **(2.0):** Mentions increasing primary health care coverage and dietary diversity for livelihood improvement.
	Disease and/or malnutrition prevention	Increasing availability and use of data on climate-related health risks that can undermine nutrition and/or nutrient absorption	Sri Lanka **(2.0):** Articulates 5 targets on strengthening surveillance and data systems for climate-related vector- and rodent-borne diseases.
		Strengthen early warning systems to include nutrition indicators	Sri Lanka **(2.0):** Mentions developing early warning systems to evaluate food availability and minimise nutrition-related impacts.

Table 1: Identifying Opportunities For Nutrition Integration (continued)

Thematic Entry Point	Potential Pathway for Integration		Examples from NDCs
	Scan for commitments on...	To integrate nutrition-sensitive commitments like...	
Social Protection	Climate-proofing social welfare systems	Referencing vulnerable groups to address specific nutrition challenges	Sri Lanka (2.0): Mentions managing under- and malnutrition via strengthening welfare systems to support groups vulnerability to food insecurity, including nursing mothers, elderly, children.
Water	Adaptive/ resilient water management techniques	Management structures and/or practices that generate win-wins for sustainable, efficient water use and nutrition	Benin (2.0): Construction of small watersheds that help reduce flooding, ensuring water availability in agricultural areas for food production.
	Adaptive health infrastructure/ policy	Updates to WASH policies which enhance nutrition	Zambia (2.0): Seeks to mainstream climate change into Water and Sanitation Policy, as well as National Health Policy and Environmental Health Policy.

Table 2: Determining Level of Ambition

Level of Ambition*	When to Pursue	What it Achieves
Level 1 Connection	If nutrition is not a strong feature of NDC commitments	Catalyze intentional connection of nutrition to climate agendas .
Level 2 Coordination	If nutrition can be embedded into existing project/initiative commitments	Articulate intention and concrete plans to mobilise resources to connect climate and nutrition
Level 3 Commitment & Action	If nutrition already features strongly	Introduce explicit nutrition-sensitive activities, indicators, and/or concrete commitments to mobilising resources with distinct plans to take action to connect climate and nutrition.

*Developed based on Levels 2-4 from I-CAN report classification scheme. Countries with strong food systems strategies or coordination platforms may be able to "leapfrog" across levels of ambition.

3. Build the Nutrition-Climate Narrative

- **Draw on existing policy commitments, technical documents and evidence to elaborate the nutrition-climate narrative.** Cross-referencing policy ambitions strengthens policy coherence and institutionalisation of nutrition in climate policy.
- See the **Annex** below for a table of key policy and technical documents, including links and notes on how each resource can be used to support narrative development.

4. Support Opportunities for Financing and Implementation

- Where possible, include **costing of actions** for food systems, food security, and nutrition commitments in NDCs to ensure these measures are integrated into climate finance plans and implementation roadmaps.
  - **Tailor costs to scope and ambition**, e.g. scale of programme, type of intervention, etc.
  - **Reference existing resources for cost estimates of actions.** For example, the IPCC has estimated upfront investment costs for sustainable land management practices and technologies, which can range from USD$20-$5000 per hectare. Existing guidance resources from SUN can also support nutrition budget analysis and costing of nutrition actions.
- Where possible, integrate dual-purpose indicators to measure climate as well as nutrition outcomes. These indicators could include:
  - *Minimum dietary diversity* – e.g. aligned with newly adopted SDG2 indicator
  - *Prevalence of food insecurity* – e.g. SDG indicator 2.1.2 ("Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale")
  - *Crop yields* – e.g. changes in production of resilient, (bio)fortified, nutritious varieties
- **Dashboards** such as the Food Systems Dashboard and the Global database on the Implementation of Food and Nutrition Action (GIFNA) are helpful references for up-to-date insights on various food systems, environment, and nutrition indicators.
- **Mobilise support** through making the case for nutrition investment and engaging technical assistance partnerships where possible.
  - **Make the case for nutrition investments** through referencing co-benefits for mitigation, adaptation, and the high returns on investment. Some estimates for specific types of nutrition interventions state every US$1 spent on nutrition generates US$16 in net benefits, while investments tackling undernutrition specifically yield US$23 per dollar spent.
  - **Collaboration with strong technical partners** ensures science-backed rationale for interventions, instills greater certainty and confidence in investments, as well as supporting proactive climate risk management practices.

Annex

Type of Document	Examples	Relevant Links	Refer to this source for...
Policy Documents	National Adaptation Plan	I-CAN baseline report	Insights on degree of integration between climate and nutrition in different national contexts.
	Climate Health Vulnerability Assessments	Climate Health Vulnerability Assessments	Technical insights; existing narrative points on the integration of climate, nutrition, and health.
	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans	I-CAN Analysis of NBSAPs	Insights on degree of integration between biodiversity policies and nutrition.
		WHO Guidance on mainstreaming biodiversity for nutrition and health	6 building blocks for mainstreaming biodiversity for nutrition & health.
	National Nutrition Plans	National Nutrition Plans for the 67 SUN countries	Existing climate-nutrition narrative points for policy coherence with national nutrition strategy. Best practice examples include Bangladesh, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Honduras, Laos, Lesotho, Madagascar and Mozambique.
		Ethiopia's NNP	An example of strong integration between nutrition and climate with focuses on a holistic food systems approach, carbon footprint reduction, and stakeholder engagement
	2025 Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Commitments	Overview of 2025 N4G Commitments	Existing climate-nutrition narrative points for policy coherence.
		Recommendations for Developing Commitments on Transition Towards Resilient and Sustainable Food Systems for Nutrition	
		All other thematic recommendations	
		N4G Paris Commitment Guide	
	NDC3.0	See **Table 1** above Food Systems in NDC3.0s	Examples for strong climate-nutrition integration.
	Other national policies, e.g. National Climate Change Strategies	*Various national sources*	Technical insights; existing narrative points on the integration of climate, nutrition, and health.

Type of Document	Examples	Relevant Links	Refer to this source for...
Nutrition Evidence Documents	Food Systems Pathway	I-CAN Pathways to Impact Report	Narrative points on how each pathway is interlinked with nutrition and climate, as well as examples of integrated interventions.
	Health Pathway		
	Social Protection		
	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)		
	World Bank Investment Framework 2024	Full framework book	Chapter 5, for case study examples of nutrition interventions delivered through different sectors (including agriculture, water, and health).
	Micronutrient Forum (MNF)/Standing Together for Nutrition (ST4N) – Climate Action Brief	Action Brief	Narrative on intertwined nature of climate and nutrition crises.
Guidance Tools	WWF Food Forward NDCs	Food Forward NDCs	An interactive tool to enhance food systems & agriculture ambitions in NDCs across 5 intervention areas: food production, food environment, food governance, supply chains, and consumption (all with several sub-areas).
	Building resilience through the climate–food–health nexus : policy pathways for integrated action in Asia and the Pacific	Full document here	Narrative to promote an integrated climate-food-health nexus approach to strengthening resilience in Asia and the Pacific region; regional analyses of NDCs, NBSAPs, and HNAPs.
Other Resources	Climate finance-funded project documentation, e.g. Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility projects	*Various sources*	Literature reviews and technical insights to articulate a climate rationale for projects.

> "Climate change and malnutrition are two of today's most urgent challenges. By aligning nutrition with climate goals, countries can strengthen food and health systems, advance progress on the SDGs, and pursue the Paris Agreement 1.5 °C target."

SUN and partners from **I-CAN** have supported 9 countries to integrate nutrition considerations into their nationally determined contributions. If you would like to support, you can contact the SUN Movement Secretariat or GAIN.

Organisational Contacts: Oliver Camp (ocamp@gainhealth.org), Ed Boydell (edward.boydell@scalingupnutrition.org) & Irina Zodrow (irina.zodrow@scalingupnutrition.org)

I-CAN

Scaling Up NUTRITION
ENGAGE • INSPIRE • INVEST

gain
Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition