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Farmers’ and academia’s views”

## Barriers and enablers to healthy and sustainable food systems in Ethiopia

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### Abstract

**Background:** Healthy and sustainable food systems is indispensable for combating the triple burden of malnutrition. Without improving the food systems, the efforts to control multiple forms of malnutrition would be undermined. The purpose of this study is to identify the barriers and enablers for healthy and sustainable food systems in Ethiopia.

**Methods:** A qualitative study was used to explore the barriers and enablers of various sub-components of the food systems. The study was designed in such a way that the perspectives of rural and urban dwellers and agrarian and pastoral livelihoods of Ethiopia are represented. The study captured the views federal and regional level informants as well. Data were gathered through Focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interview (KIIs). More than 60 KIIs with decision makers, researchers and academicians were conducted. Twelve FGDs were organised with urban consumers, farmers, youth and women’s group.

**Results:** The major enable to the national food systems is the presence of comprehensive policy environment. Nutrition is also enjoying increasing attention by various stakeholders. Currently multisectoral nutrition interventions including Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture and social protection programmes are being implemented at scale. The government has adopted promising strategic directions, including cluster farming and lowland wheat initiative for boosting production. The Integrated Agro-industrial Parks initiative helps to modernize the value chain and reduce food loss. Presence of the Health Extension Program platform offers a special opportunity for promoting nutrition literacy and implementing nutrition programmes at grassroots level. However, the food systems is constrained by multiple barriers including: lack of political stability, uncontrolled population growth, subsistence rain-fed agriculture, lack of support to large-scale farming, weak agricultural cooperatives, uncontrolled food price, uncontrolled export of healthy foods, food safety irregularities, low nutrition literacy, and demotivation of frontline health and agriculture workers.

**Conclusion:** Efforts to transform the agriculture system must be accelerated. Supporting large-scale farming and scaling up initiatives of cluster and market-led farming, and lowland wheat production should be maintained. However, the initiatives need to mainstream production diversification as well. Building agricultural cooperatives’ capacity, directly linking them with consumer cooperatives, and strengthening Consumer Protection Agency, are vital.

**Keywords:** Food systems

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