



Tropentag, September 16-18, 2026, hybrid conference

“Towards multi-functional agro-ecosystems
promoting climate resilient futures”

Policy coherence for nutrition-sensitive agri-food systems in ethiopia: implications for research and evidence-informed practice

BERUK BERHANU DESALEGN¹, MELISEW DEJENE², ALEMNEH KABETA DABA³

¹*Hawassa University, School of Nutrition, Food Science and Technology, Ethiopia*

²*Hawassa University, Institute of Policy, and Development Research (IPDR),*

³*Hawassa University, School of Nursing, College of Medicine and Health Sciences,*

Abstract

Background and Objective: Ethiopia's policy landscape has increasingly emphasised nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA) as part of broader agro-food system transformation. This study examines how NSA has evolved within national policy frameworks, assesses coherence across agriculture-related strategies, and evaluates the role of research evidence and enabling conditions in supporting nutrition-sensitive agro-food systems.

Methodology: The study applies a qualitative longitudinal policy analysis combined with objective-level coherence assessment, enabling environment evaluation, and citation-based evidence mapping. Four analytical pillars are examined: (i) evolution of NSA policy framing, (ii) coherence of selected agriculture strategies with the National Agro-Food System Strategy (NAFSS), (iii) enabling environments for NSA pathways, research, and agroecological diversity, and (iv) use of research evidence in policy formulation. Data were drawn from official Government of Ethiopia policies and strategies and systematically analysed using thematic and comparative approaches.

Results: Findings show a clear progression from sector-linked nutrition interventions under the National Nutrition Programmes (NNP I and II), through the National Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Strategy, to the systems-oriented NAFSS, where nutrition is embedded as an emergent food system outcome. Policy coherence across agriculture strategies is generally medium to high, particularly for food availability, value chains, resilience, and institutional capacity. However, explicit attention to dietary quality, food environments, and consumption-side nutrition outcomes remains uneven. The analysis also reveals growing reliance on national data, Ethiopia-based research, and global evidence, alongside persistent gaps in dedicated financing for nutrition-sensitive and food system research. Context-specific initiatives, notably the Enset Development Flagship Program, demonstrate strong alignment across nutrition, resilience, and inclusion pathways.

Conclusion and Policy Implications: Ethiopia has established a strong foundation for nutrition-sensitive agro-food system transformation. Strengthening nutrition accountability, enhancing research financing, institutionalizing evidence-to-policy linkages, and better leveraging agroecological diversity are critical to translating policy ambition into measurable nutrition gains.

Keywords: Agrifood systems, dietary diversity, Ethiopia, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, policy coherence

Contact Address: Beruk Berhanu Desalegn, Hawassa University, School of Nutrition, Food Science and Technology, Piassa Street College of Agri, 05 Awasa, Ethiopia, e-mail: beruk@hu.edu.et