



ABOUT ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia faces a high burden of undernutrition and pervasive challenges in diet quality: 38 percent of children under age five are stunted and only 9 percent of children under two years of age meet minimum dietary diversity standards. These numbers highlight the need for improvement, but progress is underway. The rate of stunting has declined from 58 percent in 2000, and the share of children consuming a sufficiently diverse diet has nearly doubled since 2011.¹ However, Ethiopia also faces an increasing burden of overweight and obesity, especially among women of reproductive age in urban areas, and can expect an associated increase in noncommunicable diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure, driven by urbanization and dietary changes that are transforming the country's food system.

The government of Ethiopia has developed concrete, research-based responses to the country's nutrition challenges and emerging food-system challenges. These policy and strategy initiatives have positioned Ethiopia to foster positive developments along the agriculture to nutrition and health nexus. In addition to its multisectoral National Nutrition Policy, the country is implementing the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), which seeks to increase the nutrition sensitivity of National Agricultural Investment Plans. Efforts to make the second Agricultural Growth Programme nutrition sensitive are underway, supported by a Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture Strategic Plan. The government's Seqota Declaration—a national commitment to end child malnutrition by 2030—is the basis for an initiative to foster innovative contextual solutions to problems faced in the Tekesi River Basin, an area that is both isolated from markets and extremely dry, and develop research-based solutions that could be launched in other parts of the country. The [CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health](#) (A4NH), led by the [International Food Policy Research Institute](#) (IFPRI), is working closely with the Seqota Declaration Federal Programme Delivery Unit to identify synergies and entry points that could be pursued jointly.

ABOUT A4NH

A4NH aims to ensure that agricultural development contributes to health and nutritional improvements. Within CGIAR, A4NH is an integrated collaborative research program focusing on the CGIAR goal

of improving food and nutrition security for health. To achieve this, A4NH invests in [five flagship research areas](#), outlined below, and the [cross-cutting areas](#) of gender; monitoring, evaluation, and learning; and engagement in country processes to enhance uptake of research products. To explore the nutrition and health impacts of agriculture, A4NH begins with consumption—of healthy, affordable, and safe foods—rather than with agricultural production alone.

A4NH IN ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia is an A4NH focus country, along with [Bangladesh](#), India, Nigeria, and [Viet Nam](#). In Ethiopia, A4NH work is coordinated by IFPRI and the [International Livestock Research Institute](#) (ILRI) with support from A4NH managing partners [Bioversity International and Wageningen University and Research](#) (WUR). The program's country coordination team has strong ties to national stakeholders and platforms, as well as to global, regional, and continentwide platforms such as CAADP and the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. These ties enable A4NH to develop effective partnerships within the country and to carry lessons learned in Ethiopia to a broader audience. A4NH's work in Ethiopia focuses on four of the program's five research flagships.

Flagship 1: Food Systems for Healthier Diets

Under the leadership of WUR, [Flagship 1](#) responds to concerns about global diet trends and to countries' interest in ensuring that food-system transformations support healthier diets to address persistent problems of undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and emerging overnutrition. A4NH began work on food systems in Ethiopia in 2016. Consultations with the government, nongovernmental organizations, research institutions, and development partners informed the development of a research strategy and prioritized research questions for A4NH's second phase (2017–2022) and has been documented in an [IFPRI Discussion Paper](#).² The flagship is now working with the Ethiopian Public Health Institute and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to develop food-based dietary guidelines. The flagship also runs a [small grants project](#) designed to build local capacity by engaging young Ethiopian researchers who are pursuing master of science degrees in nutrition and food sciences at national universities.

¹ Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2011 and 2016; UNICEF 2017.

² M. Gebru, et al., 2018. "Food Systems for Healthier Diets in Ethiopia: Towards a Research Agenda," IFPRI Discussion Paper 01720, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, DC.

Flagship 2: Biofortification

[HarvestPlus](#) has engaged in advocacy work in Ethiopia since 2014, working in coordination with A4NH to promote the inclusion of [bio-fortification](#) in national plans, including the planning and implementation of the Seqota Declaration. HarvestPlus has also developed a Sub-National Biofortification Priority Index for Ethiopia, which identifies priority areas for the introduction of biofortified crops. This tool was finalized in 2017 and presented to key stakeholders in nutrition and agriculture. Biofortified crops expected to be released in Ethiopia are vitamin-A maize, zinc wheat, iron Irish potato, and iron and zinc lentils. Breeders are continuing development activities, and new crop varieties are expected to be submitted for national performance trials. The government and other development partners have indicated their willingness to be involved in delivery of biofortified crops to farmers.

Flagship 3: Food Safety

As food value chains grow longer and food systems become more complex, new challenges arise in ensuring that food is safe for consumers to eat. A4NH's [food safety](#) work in Ethiopia, led by ILRI, seeks to identify ways to improve food safety at regional and national levels and across the whole food system, with a particular focus on informal and formalizing markets. For example, researchers are testing ways to improve handling practices and microbiological safety for [milk and milk products sold, primarily by women](#), among the Borana. ILRI has compiled evidence on the efficacy of food safety interventions in informal markets that have been tested in Ethiopia and several other African countries to identify those with most promise for scaling up. Researchers are also working to address food safety risks to vulnerable populations, including children, and are collaborating with the School of Public Health at Addis Ababa University to understand the role of milk and other foods in children's exposure to aflatoxins in rural areas. Measuring levels of aflatoxins in children and collecting household socioeconomic and dietary information will provide insights on risk factors and possible interventions to reduce children's exposure.

Flagship 4: Supporting Policies, Programs, and Enabling Action through Research (SPEAR)

In Ethiopia, [SPEAR](#) aims to leverage agriculture for nutrition. This includes making agricultural programs more nutrition sensitive and more effective in improving nutrition and health; creating and strengthening policy environments that enable agriculture to support



Apollo Habtamu/ILRI

nutrition and health goals; and developing capacity and leadership for evidence-informed decision making to improve the impact of agriculture on nutrition and health.

During A4NH's first phase, the [Transform Nutrition](#) consortium worked in Ethiopia to strengthen the evidence base on improving nutrition for the first 1,000 days of a child's life—from conception to 24 months—to avoid stunting and long-term cognitive impairment. Through the [Stories of Change](#) initiative, three overlapping "Stories" emerged: (1) the evolution of Ethiopia's nutrition-sensitive agendas within the agriculture, social protection, and health sectors; (2) the ongoing alignment of national nutrition agendas with capacities to implement at zone and *woreda* levels; and (3) the challenges communities face with nutrition programming amid constant change. A4NH is working to disseminate this research to stakeholders and will work with them to see how the knowledge and evidence generated can be applied. A4NH researchers also partnered with *Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Suisse* on a [community-based action research project](#) that channels maternal and child nutrition messaging through community pastoralist platforms in the Somali Region, informing a population that is hard to reach through conventional health facilities and health extension work.

INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

A world free of hunger and malnutrition


1201 Eye Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005 USA

T. +1-202-862-5600 | F. +1-202-862-5606 | ifpri@cgiar.org | www.ifpri.org

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 **CONTACT A4NH**
John McDermott
A4NH Director
j.mcdermott@cgiar.org

Namukolo Covic
Country Coordinator, A4NH in
Ethiopia, IFPRI
n.covic@cgiar.org