

Food Systems for Healthier Diets: Bangladesh Stakeholder Meeting 2018

On 18th November 2018, the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) held its annual stakeholder meeting in Bangladesh for the Food Systems for Healthier Diets (FSHD) research flagship. The session was co-organized by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), which leads A4NH, and Wageningen University and Research (WUR), which leads FSHD. The objectives of this daylong meeting were:

- To report and discuss progress made in agenda setting, evidence, and policy engagement in FSHD;
- To discuss priorities concerning dietary gaps, drivers and related research;
- To discuss way forward for food system innovations for healthier diets in Bangladesh; and
- To validate food system policy baseline assessment.

Approximately 50 stakeholders from international and local NGOs, research institutes, United Nations and government agencies attended.

Inge Brouwer of WUR, who leads FSHD, updated the participants on the learnings of complex food system issues and the researchers' findings over the last year. She also discussed the gaps and challenges for food systems that delay changes in or limit exposure of the food system in Bangladesh. FSHD researchers Elise Talsma and Saeed Moghayer presented analyses on dietary gaps and Climate Change, Agriculture, and Food Security forecasting. The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement shared their work in different countries, including Bangladesh; GAIN Bangladesh is the SUN Movement focal partner in Bangladesh.

Participants were also informed of the research work on the Healthier Diet Platform in Bangladesh, including how the existing nutritional platform can advocate for healthier diets. In the open discussion session, a lively debate took place on dietary gaps, the SUN Movement approach, and concerns about climate change and its impact on food system changes.

As discussion turned to food systems innovations, FSHD researcher Alan de Brauw of IFPRI talked about the importance of a trust system in the input markets. IFPRI's Bangladesh Country Representative Akhter Ahmed presented the impact findings of the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Gender Linkages (ANGel) project. According to the impact study, as women are not typically reached by agriculture extensions, their inclusion and training did improve agriculture practices. Evidence also showed that combining trainings on agriculture, nutrition, and gender had much greater impacts. Hossain Zillur Rahman from the Bangladesh Power and Participation Research Centre briefed participants on the findings of the food system policy baseline survey. Study participants, he noted, were policymakers and stakeholders working in the food system. The study revealed several factors to be highlighted for a comprehensive food system policy, either individually or in combination:

- Food and nutritional security



- Land and water use
- Climate change
- Urbanization
- Agro-marketing and value chain.

After these presentation, an open question and answer session was initiated. Participants were asked for their concerns on food systems and how it needs aspiration both at government and implementation level. Participants were divided into four groups and asked to list their ideas on food systems innovations, according to the country needs and gaps identified earlier. They identified ways forward for a healthier diets-based food system, noting it will require more awareness about healthier diets and identification of a balanced diet for everyone. The need to brand food as safe, healthy, and nutritious was also highlighted. One group noted the changes needed in the food environment for choosing healthier diets.

Pictures from Stakeholder Meeting

