



## ABOUT NIGERIA

Nigeria, like many parts of the world, faces multiple burdens of malnutrition, with undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies existing alongside overweight, obesity, and associated diet-related, noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). According to recent data, 37 percent of children in Nigeria are stunted, 19 percent severely. The rates are higher among children in rural areas, at 46 percent, than in cities, at 27 percent, while rates among children in the North West are highest in the country, at 60 percent. More than half of children under age five are at risk of vitamin A and iron deficiencies as well.

On the other hand, obesity, a well-established risk factor for NCDs, is fast becoming a public health problem in Nigeria: 17 percent of women were classified as overweight and 8 percent as obese. The prevalence of overweight and obesity

was higher in urban areas, at 33 percent, compared with rural areas, at 18 percent.

The Nigerian government has instituted various policies and strategies to enhance positive nutrition outcomes in the country, with particular attention to the nutritional status of women and children. In 2016, the federal government launched an updated National Policy on Food and Nutrition to provide the framework for addressing food and nutrition insecurity problems in Nigeria together with a holistic approach for its implementation. It also inaugurated the National Council on Nutrition, the highest decision-making body on food and nutrition in Nigeria, to guide the country's nutrition objectives and targets, mobilize resources to address nutrition issues, and review nutrition strategies and their impact. Given the important role of agriculture in food and nutrition security, the federal government, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), launched the Agriculture Sector Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (AFSNS) 2016–2025. The policy document embraces a food systems approach to address the problems of malnutrition in Nigeria.

## ABOUT A4NH

A4NH, led by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), is designed to fill the gap between agricultural development and its unfulfilled health and nutritional benefits. Within CGIAR, A4NH is an integrated program focusing on the system-level outcome of improving food and nutrition security for health. To explore nutrition and health impacts, the program begins with consumption—of healthy, affordable, and safe foods—rather than with agricultural production alone.

## A4NH IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is an A4NH focus country, along with Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, and Viet Nam. In Nigeria, A4NH's work is coordinated by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), which features prominently in some of the Nigerian government's nutrition programs. A4NH's work in Nigeria is underway in four of the program's five research flagships: Food Systems for Healthier Diets (Flagship 1), Biofortification (Flagship 2), Food Safety (Flagship 3), and Supporting Policies, Programs, and Enabling Action through Research (Flagship 4), with flagships working together to further progress and share learning across countries.



Oluranti Lawal

A4NH collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders and partners in Nigeria, including FMARD, the Federal Ministry of Health, the Nigeria Institute of Social and Economic Research, the National Horticultural Institute, the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, the University of Ibadan, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and UNICEF's Nigeria Country Offices, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), the Federal Institute of Industrial Research, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Dangote Foundation, and Synergos.

### Flagship One: Food Systems for Healthier Diets (FSHD)

Nigeria's food systems are complicated and evolving, with increasing needs of consumers in growing cities and challenges such as navigating longer supply chains to deliver fresh foods to markets. Researchers in FSHD, led by Wageningen University & Research with the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, IFPRI, and IITA, are studying this situation from multiple angles to understand the food system as a whole. Their work examines dietary gaps, seeks to understand the policy environment, and identifies opportunities for private sector partnership. Goals include improving intake of fruits and vegetables in urban areas, by first understanding what drives consumer choice; reducing food loss in the tomato value chain by replacing baskets with crates; and exploring how fortified milk impacts the food system. The team is also working to map the food system in Lagos, so researchers and policymakers will have a better understanding of its workings and where interventions might be appropriate.

### Flagship 2: Biofortification

Nearly 60 percent of Nigerian children under the age of five are vulnerable to illness and infection due to vitamin A deficiency. A4NH, led by HarvestPlus, aims to sustainably increase vitamin A intake, thereby improving nutrition and health outcomes, through developing and delivering biofortified vitamin A cassava and maize varieties for Nigeria. Partnerships with the National Root Crops Research Institute resulted in six vitamin A cassava varieties, while work with the Institute of Agricultural Research and Training yielded eight vitamin A maize varieties. Research on farmer and consumer acceptance of these two biofortified crops and their efficacy in improving vitamin A deficiency status have yielded positive results. Advocacy efforts have resulted in biofortification being included in various national- and state-level nutrition and agricultural strategies, while partnerships with the private food sector, combined with innovative communication and marketing strategies, resulted in increased demand. At the end of 2017, an estimated 1.5 million Nigerian households were benefiting from enriched cassava and maize.

### Flagship 3: Food Safety

As diets change and value chains grow longer and more complex, the need to prioritize and mitigate food safety risks becomes more urgent. A4NH's work in food safety, led by the International Livestock Research Institute, with support from IITA and IFPRI, included a report that identifies where food safety investments can yield best results. This influenced a five-year project led by GAIN, which works in Kenya and Nigeria. The objective is to assess food safety challenges and develop and implement strategies to tackle them.

Aflatoxins, molds that contaminate crops and render them unsafe for consumption and unsalable, pose a food safety issue across Nigeria and throughout Africa. Maize and groundnuts, two key staple crops in Nigeria, are particularly affected. IITA has developed a biocontrol product, Aflasafe®, to mitigate this risk, and Nigeria was the first to have a country-specific strain of Aflasafe commercially available.



Milo Mitchell

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

Addressing the multiple burdens of malnutrition will require careful attention to how policies are designed. Under SPEAR, Stories of Change in Nutrition: Nigeria is a mixed-methods study aiming to document nutrition-relevant country- and state-level changes and challenges since nationally representative data came available in 2008. Taking a multisectoral perspective, with an emphasis on learning from experience, researchers are examining changes in nutrition-relevant indicators, policies, and programs, as well as stakeholder perceptions at federal, state, and local government levels. Also under SPEAR, the Transform Nutrition West Africa project works with stakeholders in countries across the region to look carefully at the direction nutrition policy is moving and its implications, details of which are shared with Nigerian policymakers through briefs and meetings.

## INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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