



## Linking agriculture, food systems and nutrition: what's your perspective?

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*What is the role of a nutritionist in improving nutrition along the food system? What support they need from other players of the food system in order to accomplish this task?*

Food and nutrition security depends on underlying social, economic and institutional factors, which ultimately affect the quantity, quality and affordability of food as well as nutrition, health and wellbeing. This can be thought of a dynamic food system – that is dependent on agriculture, food, eating and health – that involves people, as consumers as the central focus. This is where nutritionists come in.

Nutritionists, with training on nutrition and food through a human lens, can provide technical expertise to other disciplines and sectors that could strive to have more nutrition outcomes, such as agriculture, ecology, and business enterprise for example. There is a need for technical expertise in nutrition to be part of the dialogue not only to advocate for more “nutrition sensitive” programming but to ensure interventions do no harm and provide benefits to consumers. If we want to think about scaling multi-sectoral approaches in addressing both under and overnutrition that combine child care and disease control interventions with food system and livelihood-based approaches, nutritionists must be included to provide technical knowledge and expertise for appropriate programming and strategies. Areas of technical work include dietary diversity, care practices, nutrition surveillance, infectious disease burden, food composition and nutrient/health properties of foods.

However to work in systems, nutritionists need to be part of a larger team that involves not only agronomists, ecologists, anthropologists and ethnobotanists, but also those working in other sectors including health, education and social protection. Although many nutritionists understand the underlying determinants of malnutrition, many working in development are less aware. Combining sustainable agriculture with an aim to improve dietary diversity for example is often not considered in food-agriculture systems. Thus, nutritionists should not only serve as technical experts but advocates to ensure that nutrition is central for development but development is also central for nutrition.

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