



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY INDEX

June 2022

SDG:



Country:

Bhutan

Project Code:

TCP/BHU/3707

FAO Contribution:

USD 468 000

Duration:

10 March 2020 – 31 December 2021

Contact Info:

FAO Representation in Bhutan
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Implementing Partner

Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MAF).

Beneficiaries

Agriculture sector.

Country Programming Framework (CPF) Outputs

Priority Area 1: Strategic direction for inclusive agriculture development and leadership strengthened through evidence-based policy, planning and investment approach.

Priority Area 2: Transformation of the agriculture sector towards a value chain based and market-oriented sustainable system for enhanced income, gender-responsive rural livelihood and employment.

Priority Area 3: Food self-sufficiency and nutrition security enhanced.

Priority Area 4: Enabling a carbon-neutral, climate and disaster resilient sector and farming communities.



BACKGROUND

While Bhutan has seen a substantial reduction in poverty from 23.2 percent in 2007 to 8.21 percent in 2017 and increased public investment in agriculture in recent years, it remains a largely agriculture-dependent society that continues to face poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition challenges. This is particularly pronounced in rural areas where prevalence of poverty stood at 11.94 percent as of 2017. The government has therefore taken action to develop its agriculture sector, while ensuring a longer-term Renewable Natural Resources (RNR) Strategy. In 2020, the agriculture sector continued to be the main driver of growth in the country and increased by 5.07 percent, while all other sectors experienced a decline, mainly due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MAF) requested the support of FAO for the development of a robust food security and nutrition dashboard to inform policy and strategy development in the country. The enhancement of food and nutrition policies has been constrained by a lack of baseline data on the food consumption and nutrition practices of the population, which have not been reviewed since 2014.

The government also expressed its interest in FAO support for the development of a food composition table containing information on the nutritional properties of foods consumed in the country. This fundamental information is required for the development of a coherent food security and nutrition study to support the new RNR Strategy 2030.

IMPACT

This project supported the Royal Government of Bhutan in ensuring that information regarding food security and nutrition was included in the final draft RNR Strategy 2030 and the 21st Century Economic Roadmap for Bhutan.

This project contributed to improving policy coherence for sustainable development by ensuring that RNR and agriculture policies are based on solid analysis of the food security and nutrition situation, thereby contributing to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17, which aims to strengthen global partnership for sustainable development.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

This project introduced a number of government staff members to food security and nutrition survey questionnaires, as well as the concept and the importance of developing a food security and nutrition dashboard. This tool collects country-level data across all components of the food system in order to assist decision-makers in finding and prioritizing initiatives to improve diets and nutrition in a sustainable manner. While a questionnaire was designed to survey the population on their food consumption and eating habits, constraints in conducting field surveys forced the project team to rely on pre-existing data to construct proxy indicators. As a result, a food security and nutrition dashboard was created using secondary data only.

The project emphasized the importance of dialogue with communities, who were consulted during three regional consultations attended by representatives from MAF, the National Statistical Bureau, the Gross National Happiness Commission, regional agriculture research centres, the Farm Machinery Corporation Limited, the National CSI Development Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP) and local governments. Participants in these consultations received training on a range of approaches for developing strategies, establishing vision and goals and triangulating findings from various studies. The adoption of these methodologies, as well as stakeholder discussions, resulted in the formulation of elements to inform the RNR Strategy 2030 in alignment with the government's Eight National Pathways, which were presented during the worldwide Food Systems Summit Dialogues (FSSD).

¹The World Bank. 2017. *Bhutan Poverty Analysis Report*. <https://bit.ly/3OGvcRj>

Finally, a steering committee was formed and includes members from MAF and the Ministry of Health.

To assure their continuity, all actions carried out under this project were integrated into the government's action plans such as the draft Thirteenth Five-Year Plan (2023-2028) for the RNR Sector. The draft RNR Strategy 2030 has identified 32 strategic interventions. Some of these strategic interventions include: growing and promoting organic frontier crops, supporting small-scale dairy farms, creating and accelerating market development and reorienting the Bhutan organic objective.

IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

Many activities could not be completed within the anticipated time frame owing to technical challenges and time constraints. The COVID-19 outbreak created a further substantial obstacle, with measures preventing field surveys and additional community consultations from being completed. Moreover, movement restrictions impeded international consultants to provide in-person support at field level for survey designs, analysis and interpretations. Nonetheless, virtual support was provided. While some resources remained unutilized, an extension of this project was not possible due to programmatic constraints.

FOLLOW-UP FOR GOVERNMENT ATTENTION

Regional and national consultations revealed that the agriculture sector is hiring displaced workers and substituting imports, notably imports of livestock products or green vegetables thanks to the introduction of protected agricultural systems for peri-urban and urban agriculture benefiting laid-off employees and youth. As a result, the Government has begun to expand its agriculture programmes to provide further support. The RNR sector, for instance, received additional funding, resulting in a substantially greater share of the RNR sector to the GDP than in previous years – from 14.39 percent in 2016 to 19.23 percent in 2020. Furthermore, the strategy developed under this project will serve as the foundation for resource mobilization. Despite government staff being trained on the importance of developing a food security and nutrition dashboard, the lack of capacity to conduct, analyse and interpret survey results reveals the need to pursue capacity-building based on best practises and lessons learned from other countries and regions. The draft food security and nutrition dashboard developed is still to be validated, pending verification of data. The government has allocated an additional budget for this purpose.

Following the validation of the dashboard, further training for technical staff on its effective use and operation for food security monitoring will be required.

SUSTAINABILITY

1. Capacity development

FAO emphasized the importance of direct engagement of key national experts and technical employees, in particular their capacity-building, to ensure the sustainability of the technical support provided. Under this project, 70 government staff were trained on questionnaire formulation and survey techniques.

2. Gender equality

The outcomes of this project contribute to developing the RNR Strategy 2030, which contains a gender focus.

3. Environmental sustainability

Improving climate-resilient farming through the promotion of protected and precision farming practices was a key element of this project. The RNR Strategy 2030 follows “Sustain Nature First Approaches”, underlined in the Eight National Pathways for Transformations and Impact, and will guide future sustainable investments in Bhutan’s food systems.

4. Technological sustainability

The project prioritized skill and human resource development, particularly on farming practices, by employing recent technologies and innovations to make farming more appealing and efficient. The project contributed to long-term food security and rural livelihoods by promoting agriculture technologies that increase self-employment, rural income and farm labour productivity. These technologies include the use of water saving technologies, such as drip irrigation and sprinkles for an enhanced use of water for both irrigation and consumption, innovations to enhance farm production and productivity, the introduction of protected and precision farming practices and gender-friendly farm machinery, such as mini power tillers, which women can easily handle.



DOCUMENTS AND OUTREACH PRODUCTS

- ❑ **GROW BHUTAN.** July 2022. *RNR Strategy 2030* (final draft).

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Expected Impact	Food and nutrition security for the Bhutanese population is enshrined in the new RNR strategy and the 21st Century Economic Roadmap for Bhutan		
Outcome	Strengthened national capacities to support the development and implementation of the Bhutan RNR Strategy 2040		
	Indicator	Food security and nutrition study of Bhutan.	
	Baseline	0	
	End Target	1	
Comments and follow-up action to be taken	Three regional consultations on the RNR Strategy 2040 were conducted in August and September 2021, with the participation of representatives of 17 out of 20 districts. The security situation in the three remaining districts meant that participants from these areas were unable to travel and participate. The first regional consultation took place in Wangdue Phodrang and covered seven districts (Gasa, Punakha, Wangdue Phodrang, Tsirang, Dagana, Zhemgang and Trongsa), the second took place in Mongar and covered six eastern districts (Bumthang, Lhuentse, Mongar, Pemagatshel, Tashiyangtse, and Trashigang) and the third consultation was held in Paro and covered four districts (Thimphu, Chhukha, Paro and Haa).		
Output 1	Food Security and Nutrition Dashboard of Bhutan developed (in support of RNR strategy document 2040)		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of reports on the Food Security and Nutrition Situation of Bhutan.	1	Partially
Baseline	0		
Comments	Following the inception meeting, the necessary data was collected for drafting of the food security and nutrition dashboard. Arrangements for the development of the dashboard were made by FAO. The draft dashboard is awaiting validation. A validation workshop will be followed by training for technical staff on the effective use and operation of the dashboard for food security monitoring.		
Activity 1.1	Inception workshop, scoping of the data requirement, methodology and action plan		
	Achieved	Yes	
Comments	The inception meeting was successfully conducted on 16 April 2020. The participants discussed the available data needed. Due to restrictive measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the execution of field surveys was hindered, with the approach focused on the collection and analysis of available secondary data.		
Activity 1.2	Data collection, compilation analysis and tabulation and report preparation		
	Achieved	Yes	
Comments	Compilation analysis and tabulation of data were carried out based on the analysis of secondary sources of data collected from different reliable sources. Following the validation of some of the information, the draft dashboard will be ready for validation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of transmission, the organization of the validation workshop was cancelled; however, the Government may be able to allocate its own resources for this validation process.		
Activity 1.3	Validation workshop and results reporting		
	Achieved	No	
Comments	The validation workshop will be conducted soon after the data has been verified. The Government has allocated additional funds for this purpose.		
Activity 1.4	Technical staff training in food security and nutrition monitoring		
	Achieved	No	
Comments	The capacity-building training sessions for government technical staff will take place after the validation workshop.		
Activity 1.5	Report Preparation		
	Achieved	No	
Comments	The report preparation will follow the validation workshop and the capacity-building training.		

Output 2	A survey to quantify Bhutan's food consumption and diets conducted (stratified sample across regions) baseline data in support of the food security and nutrition assessment and food composition table of Bhutan)		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Size and scope of the survey and number of reports on food consumption and diets among Bhutan's population (national).	1	No
Baseline	0		
Comments	Two international consultants developed survey questionnaires. However, surveyors were not available and it was a challenge to carry out the planned survey within the available budget and time frame. The Government's technical experts and FAO decided to use existing information to develop proxy indicators.		
Activity 2.1	Survey design, CAPI formatting, pretesting		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	While survey design and CAPI formatting were carried out successfully, pretesting could not be conducted due to COVID-19 restriction measures on movement.	
Activity 2.2	Interviewers training in CAPI survey formats and field data collection and uploading into the World Bank/Survey Solutions server		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	Surveyors already had the capacities to perform computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) surveys. However, all survey activities were cancelled.	
Activity 2.3	Data analysis and report preparation		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	The report was not prepared.	
Activity 2.4	Workshop for results validation and reporting		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	No validation workshop was organized since no survey results were available.	
Output 3	Food composition table of Bhutan prepared		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of reports and number of participatory consultation/workshop and seminars.	1	No
Baseline	0		
Comments	Since surveys could not be conducted due to COVID-19 movement restriction measures, no data on food composition were available to effectively prepare a food composition table.		
Activity 3.1	Formation of user steering committee (Ministry of Agriculture; Ministry of Health/Nutrition unit; technical experts) – scoping and action plan		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	A steering committee was formed and includes members from the MAF and the Department of Public Health (Ministry of Health).	
Activity 3.2	Preparation of food composition table, including possible tests		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	While survey questionnaires were developed and training on FSN indicators carried out remotely, field surveys could not be done due to COVID-19 movement and gathering restrictions.	
Activity 3.3	Workshop validation and results reporting to the user steering committee and relevant stakeholders		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	As surveys could not be undertaken due to COVID-19 movement and gathering restriction, there were no survey results for validation.	

Output 4	Capacity development for national staff in strategy development and tools and methodologies developed under Outputs 1, 2 and 3		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of reports and number of participatory consultation/workshop and seminars.	5	Partially
Baseline	0		
Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Three regional consultations covering 20 districts, as well as a national workshop, were conducted for 70 participants. – Capacity-building of national staff on strategy development tools and methodologies was conducted. During the regional consultations, the national FAO-hired consultant explained the process, methodology and tools for drafting strategies. 		
Activity 4.1	Training and participatory workshop on strategy development and visioning (15 people, mostly from the RN strategy task force)		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	During the regional consultations for the draft RNR Strategy 2030, the FAO-hired national consultants trained participants in the formulation of a vision, mission, goals, policy objectives, guiding principles, nutrition indicators and triangulation of findings from various studies. The participants were able to apply this knowledge effectively during the training.	
Activity 4.2	Contribution to technical/expert workshop on the (triangulation of) findings of various studies (multi-agency sponsored workshop)		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	The theoretical aspects of triangulation of findings of the different studies were covered during the regional consultations. The triangulation with the actual findings from the studies could not be carried out, as most studies were incomplete.	
Activity 4.3	Training of trainers on SDG-2 indicators (food security and nutrition indicators)		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	One virtual training was conducted for statisticians working at MAF on food security and nutrition indicators during the drafting of questionnaires. The national consultant further explained to and trained the participants on FSN indicators during three regional consultations.	
Activity 4.4	Training of trainers on updating and monitoring food consumption tables		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	Since no food consumption table was developed during this project, the planned training of trainers on monitoring food consumption tables was consequently cancelled.	
Activity 4.5	Participation in national workshop on validation of RNR Strategy		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Thanks to regional consultations with relevant stakeholders, all collected feedbacks were consolidated and presented at the national level workshop for validation of the RNR Strategy.	

Partnerships and Outreach

For more information, please contact: Reporting@fao.org

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