

34. NUTRITIONAL RESILIENCE AND PRODUCTION FOR SELF-CONSUMPTION OF RURAL COMMUNITIES WITH BACKYARD POULTRY, HOME GARDENS & FARMERS' & COMMUNITY MARKETS

ACTION AREA	UNIVERSAL FOOD ACCESS TO BUILD RESILIENCE
SOLUTION CLUSTER	ENHANCE LOCAL PRODUCTION FOR LOCAL CONSUMPTION
THEMATIC AREA	LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS FOR LOCAL PRODUCTION
SUBMITTED BY	FARMERS' FORUM, INDIA

WHAT IS THE RISK, SHOCK, STRESS THAT THE SOLUTION IS TRYING TO ADDRESS?

A major development issue facing the world is the increased triple burden of nutrition (overnutrition, undernutrition and micronutrient deficiency). In 2019, 26% of the world's population experienced hunger or did not have regular access to nutrient-rich and sufficient food. Rates of child stunting, wasting, obesity and anaemia among women remain high, especially in the Global South.

This lack of/irregular access to nutritious food places immense daily stress on communities, while straining their health and nutrition in the long-term. Ironically, the major brunt of food stress is borne by those who produce food themselves: smallholder farmers, pastoralists, and agricultural labourers, especially in LMICs. Market dependency among these communities for nutritional needs is high, while their incomes remain low.

For communities facing daily food insecurity, this problem is compounded by seasonal scarcities and erratic disruptions to food systems. As food markets and supply chains become more complex, they are more vulnerable to disruptions such as conflicts, natural disasters and disease. According to the FAO's 2021 report, 'The Impact of Disasters and Crises', the frequency of these disasters has greatly increased in the past two decades, and the trend is likely to continue. Climate change has further exacerbated and accelerated the crisis.

Thus, nutritionally insecure communities are especially vulnerable to shocks such as climate disasters and market price surges. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has had devastating consequences for such groups, who often cut back on food-related expenditures in times of crisis. As a result, between 83 to 132 million people will join the ranks of the undernourished, due to the economic recession caused by the pandemic. In such a context, it becomes vital to build nutritional resilience and improve food security in these communities.

HOW DOES THE SOLUTION IMPROVE OR ENHANCE RESILIENCE OF FOOD SYSTEMS?

This solution's main objective is to reorient control of food production and consumption into the hands of the most vulnerable. It aims to improve nutrition and resilience among rural communities by promoting backyard poultry, home / kitchen gardens & wet community markets. We are not recommending these measures be pursued as against improving food value chains, but as a complementary intervention that can lead to increased self-sufficiency.

Home gardens will help improve household food security as well as alleviate micronutrient deficiencies, through several pathways, including 1) direct access to nutritionally-rich foods, 2) increased purchasing power from savings on food bills and 3) fallback food provision during seasonal lean periods, disasters, conflicts or market disruptions, especially for poor households in peri-urban and urban areas. By alleviating the daily stress of food insecurity, home gardens could also have positive impacts on physiological health. Reducing dependence on markets and handouts could also lead to increased autonomy over consumption and an enhanced sense of dignity and self-respect.

Additionally, home gardens could encourage the cultivation of indigenous crops, which are often more nutritious and resilient. This would lead to increased biodiversity as well as dietary diversity. A home garden can supply most of the non-staple foods that a family needs, including roots and tubers, vegetables and fruits, legumes, herbs and spices (FAO). If sustainable and regenerative methods of cultivation are used, a family of four would require just about 2 acres of land to fulfill most nutritional requirements (1BOG). Recently, AKRSP(I) piloted an intervention where home gardens can be cultivated even without land, making this solution possible for landless and ecologically vulnerable communities. Backyard poultry can be a source of animal protein, especially important for children's development.

As most of the produce from home gardens would be primarily meant for household consumption, it would also encourage adoption of regenerative and holistic methods of agriculture. Practicing nature-positive production at a small scale could embolden farmers to adopt these practices for commercial production as well. Over time, this could lead to improved soil fertility, carbon sequestration & higher yields.

We also recommend strengthening local wet markets, where fresh and nutritious produce are available at affordable prices or for exchange. These could provide supplementary income for surplus produce, while reducing wastage of long value chains. Most importantly, they could minimise exposure to supply chain and market disruptions caused by a variety of shocks.

Ultimately, we believe this solution would help achieve the targets under Sustainable Development Goal 2 of Zero Hunger, including mitigating malnutrition, ensuring access to nutritious food, ensuring dignified livelihoods for small scale producers, promoting sustainable and resilient food production and maintaining genetic diversity of seeds and crops.

IS THE SOLUTION RELEVANT TO BUILDING FOOD SYSTEMS RESILIENCE?

Anticipate shocks/risks/stress and/or reduce vulnerability, Manage risks, Prevent (reduce exposure), Transform the Food System when the current Food System is no longer sustainable

IN WHAT REALMS OF INTERVENTION IS THE SOLUTION DESIGNED TO ACT ON RESILIENCE?

Individual, Household, Community

WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS THAT WOULD PUT THIS ACTION INTO PLACE?

Policymakers (government), Civil (NGOs, etc.), Farmers, Indigenous groups

WHAT IS THE POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR THIS IDEA? DOES THE IDEA HAVE ANY MEMBER STATES OR POLITICAL INTERESTS? ARE THERE ANY STAKEHOLDERS WORKING ON IT?

This solution is a low hanging fruit that can be adopted without any apparent trade-offs or political consequences. Additionally, it is a relatively low-cost measure that provides valuable returns on investment; not just economic but also in long-term health and sustainability. However, such solutions tend to be overlooked as they effect change at a smaller scale than solutions that can rapidly achieve impact at scale. We argue that grassroots level change is an essential component of larger, systemic changes and ensures the sustainability of the solution over time.

Home or kitchen gardens as a way to improve nutritional security and food sovereignty have been piloted in many countries, especially in the Global South where cultivation for household consumption is an established tradition in many countries. International organisations such as the FAO and local NGOs have helped in implementing such projects in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Vietnam in Asia, Niger, Somalia, Ghana and Kenya in Africa; Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Peru in Latin and Central America; and in Grenada in the Caribbean.

IS THE SOLUTION APPLICABLE AT GLOBAL LEVEL, OR SPECIFIC CONTEXTS & PARTICULAR COUNTRIES?

This idea is particularly applicable to LMICs, especially in rural areas, where resources for cultivation are available, and everyday food insecurity, seasonal scarcities and frequent natural disasters are pressing concerns. However, it can be also be implemented in urban settings, where it can insulate the urban poor from price hikes and encourage the consumption of home-grown, organic produce. Rooftop and community gardening for organic produce is already being practiced in the urban areas of even high-income countries. This can be tailored to meet the needs of working class urban communities as well. It can also help in reducing food wastage due to long supply chains, a worsening problem in cities across the world.

Promoting home food production and local trade would address the objectives of all five Action Tracks, such as access to nutrition, sustainable consumption, nature-positive production, equitable livelihoods and developing resilience.

WHAT ARE THE KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED TO ADDRESS THIS SOLUTION?

While the promotion of home gardening and backyard poultry needs to be implemented at the grassroots level, policy support (much more than funding) is required to facilitate this movement. A national policy direction for the promotion of this solution could be provided by the government. Unfortunately, very little public or privately funded research has been conducted on non-staple crops, such as vegetables, tubers, legumes, etc. which are mostly grown by small scale producers in homestead settings (FAO Background Paper on Fruit and Vegetables). Thus, agriculture and nutrition scientists, together with indigenous producers, could co-create an evidence-based, context-specific body of knowledge on local, non-staple crops that would inform implementation of this solution. Civil society organisations, NGOs and local institutions can be enlisted to implement the solution on the ground. Extension services in the form of seed distribution of local, seasonal crops and vegetables, bio-inputs and knowledge/advisory support would be required in the initial stages of implementation. Food sovereignty could be achieved by encouraging producers to individually save seeds or set up community seed banks. Ultimately, the major implementers would be the smallholder farmers, pastoralists and agricultural workers themselves. To ensure sustainability of the solution, they need to be involved in every step of the process. As for the immediate actions required to adopt this solution at the Food Systems Summit, we believe leveraging the UNFSS network to promote the solution among the member-states would be an effective approach. We aim to create a resource document to illustrate the case for our solution, which would include a repository of reviews and case studies on the topic. We would also advocate for this solution on

community networks such as the Food Systems Community Platform, as well as via social media channels. Ultimately, we aim to convince member-states of the solution's efficacy and viability. We hope this will translate into concrete, actionable commitments, leading to its adoption in countries across the world.

HOW DOES THIS SOLUTION CONTRIBUTE TO (A) EMPOWER WOMEN AND COMBAT GENDER INEQUALITIES, AND (B) THE FULFILMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS, ESPECIALLY THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND THE RIGHT TO WATER, (C) MAKE USE OF INNOVATIONS (TECHNOLOGIES, INSTITUTIONS, PROCESSES)?

This solution contributes to these objectives in the following ways:

In most parts of the world, women are responsible for managing the nutritional requirements of the household. Thus, promoting home and kitchen gardens would give women more control over the nutrition and food security of themselves and their families, especially children. Disseminating information on nutrition and sustainable agriculture could help women in rural areas build their capabilities. It is also essential to ensure that women are encouraged to exercise their agency in adopting this solution to their specific needs and contexts. This would help combat gender inequality in several spheres, such as household decision making, as well as access to nutrition, knowledge and resources. If the community wet markets are implemented with women's empowerment in mind, this solution could also help increase women's mobility, encourage the formation of women's collectives and elevate their role in community life.

Although the right to food approach has been instrumental in structuring the work of UN agencies and holding governments accountable, the commercialisation of essential commodities such as nutritious food has led to the weakening of this right for disadvantaged communities across the world. In this way, the right to food has become a nominal rather than a substantive right. To make this a substantive right that can be realised, it is imperative to improve the capabilities of such communities. This solution seeks to do so by reducing the exposure of vulnerable communities to the vagaries of the market and global supply chains. By facilitating increased sovereignty over food production and consumption, home gardens could help increase access to and control over the fundamental right to food. Encouraging community wet markets could help rural communities stimulate and gain access to local trade, making them less dependent on external markets.

This solution aims to utilise the approaches of agroecology and regenerative agriculture in encouraging cultivation of home and kitchen gardens. Agroecology is based on the co-creation of knowledge, combining science with traditional, practical and indigenous knowledge of producers. By enhancing their autonomy and adaptive capacity, agroecology empowers producers and communities as key agents of change (FAO). For this solution, traditional knowledge of seed conservation could be used together with modern scientific nutrient management. As the produce from home gardens would be utilized for household consumption, producers would be more likely to adopt regenerative and agroecological practices. This would also further the objectives of Action Track 3, at least at the household and community level.

As the solution would have to be primarily implemented at the local level, local institutions and processes need to be involved at every stage. In the South Asian context, implementation could be devolved to Panchayati Raj institutions such as Gram Panchayats (village governance bodies) and Gram Sabhas (village assemblies); and even collectives such as FPOs and women's SHGs.