

IMPLEMENTING MULTILEVEL FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY FRAMEWORKS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALING UP PULSES IN ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

Increasingly, there is global consensus that pulse crops can help address ongoing nutrition and food security challenges in sub-Saharan Africa. Evidence shows that scaling-up production and consumption of pulses grown in sub-Saharan Africa has the potential to make positive contributions to socioeconomic and environmental sustainability. By taking a systems approach to analyze policy documents and stakeholder reports on food and nutrition security, this paper argues that policy asymmetries within multilevel governance frameworks challenge efforts to scale-up existing pulse value chains in this region, specifically Ethiopia. It demonstrates that policy sectoralization and siloing between the nutrition and agriculture agendas contribute to stalled policy implementation and create challenges to implementing nutrition-sensitive food security strategies. It concludes by suggesting several ways of combating these challenges through multilevel governance.

For decades, the global policy agenda has attempted to address global food and nutrition insecurity. Since 2000, initiatives have prioritized efforts to increase the availability, affordability and accessibility of culturally appropriate, nutritionally-dense foods under the umbrella of the ‘nutrition agenda’ (Barrett, Binder, and Streets 2012; Byiers and Seravesi 2013). Progress has been made through various nutritional, technological and agronomic interventions and investments in sustainable development programs (UN 2015a). However, millions of people, specifically in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), remain critically food and nutritionally insecure. Though the UN reports that the percentage of people in SSA suffering from undernourishment declined from 33% in the early 1990s to 23% in the mid-2010s, the total number of undernourished people continues to increase. The FAO estimates that this number has grown from 175.7 million in the early 1990s to 220 million in the mid-2010s, despite the increase in availability of food and the decline of poverty rates across SSA (FAO 2015a:2).¹

Whereas food availability in SSA has increased since the 1990s, the variety of foods eaten by those living in conditions of poverty has not. Most of the daily calories consumed in SSA are supplied by one of the ‘staple grains’ such as maize,

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¹For more on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Zero Hunger Challenge see UN 2015a and UN 2015b.

wheat or rice. Cereals make up more than 60% of the calories consumed by people living in conditions of poverty in SSA (FAO, 2015c:3). These cereal grains are high in carbohydrates but lack some essential nutrients required to maintain health. This suggests that the foods that have become more available are not necessarily meeting the nutritional needs of those consuming them.

One motivating factor behind designating 2016 as “the year of the pulse” was to draw attention to how pulses could help address undernutrition in food-insecure regions such as SSA. Increasing production and consumption of pulses like lentil, chickpea and cow pea is argued to make positive contributions to global food security and sustainable development goals due to their favorable agronomic qualities, nutrition profiles and affordability compared with other protein sources (Dakora et al. 2015:1068; Jha et al. 2014:142). There is a growing consensus among stakeholders working toward meeting food security goals that scaling up pulse value chains in regions that are chronically food insecure can become a critical pathway toward transforming subsistence agriculture into commercial agriculture (GPC 2015). Evidence from agronomic and ecological studies of pulse production suggests that scaling up value chains in SSA can make positive contributions to nutritional, economic, social and environmental sustainability (Akibode and Maredia 2011:4; IFPRI 2010; IYP 2015; Osendarp et al. 2015:S59). Yet, pulses continue to receive fewer investment resources and policy attention compared with staple cereal crops. Cereals are often designated ‘food security’ crops by regional institutions and governments while pulses are not considered integral to food security strategies (Clancey 2009; Tefera 2014:97).² The ongoing presence of chronic undernutrition in SSA combined with a lack of multilevel policies targeting nutrient-dense crops like pulses suggests that there is a mismatch between formalized efforts to address food and nutrition insecurity and the actual needs of those suffering from chronic undernutrition.

Some research suggests that the lack of coordination between agriculture and nutrition policies could be stalling advancements toward food security goals and the integration of nutrition-sensitive policy agendas into existing frameworks (FAO/CGIAR 2015:40; Pingali 2015:1). Peters (1998) defines policy coordination as “the need to ensure that the various organizations – public and private – charged with delivering public policy work together and do not produce either redundancy or gaps in services.” When policy coordination does not work, it results in policy asymmetries. ‘Asymmetry’ is often used in economics to describe unequal access to information that creates an imbalance of power in transactions that can result in

²Global yields of pulses such as pigeon pea, cowpea, lentil and chickpea have remained stagnant over the past decade in the ‘developing world’, and have decreased significantly in countries like India (Lele 2014:96; FAO 2012:128).

market failures. Information exchange facilitated by transparency and engagement helps stakeholders utilize the most comprehensive and accurate information available to appropriately decide in a given time. When applied to the policy arena, unequal access to information through stakeholder interactions and exchanges can be viewed as a factor to policy asymmetry. Essentially, it is when knowledge flows that are important to achieving desired policy outcomes do not function properly.

Others have suggested governance, policy and institutional failures are sources of policy asymmetry and suboptimal policy outcomes in current food and nutrition security strategies (von Braun 2010). This is what von Braun, Ruel, and Gillespie (2012) define as policy *sectoralization*. Policy sectoralization can lead to the creation of *policy silos*, what the OECD defines as governmental ministries working “separately from each other, following different policy objectives and working to different time scales” (OECD 2009:1). Coordinating policy across jurisdictions to address the crosscutting issues of food and nutrition security becomes more difficult to achieve and maintain as diverse networks of stakeholders (e.g., governments, UN agencies, donors, NGOs, research institutions, businesses) engage within multilevel governance systems (see Resnick et al. 2015). These issue areas often involve so many different policy areas and stakeholders at multiple levels of decision-making that it is difficult to pinpoint where one stakeholder’s engagement in, or influence on, the decision-making process begins and another’s ends. Further, it is also challenging to locate where among stakeholder interactions within decision-making systems information exchange is functioning at a sub-optimal level and contributing to unmet policy goals and missed policy objectives.

By examining existing policy documents and stakeholder reports using a systems approach to decision-making as pioneered by Simon (1962)³, this paper demonstrates where policy asymmetries and sectoralization act as barriers to implementing nutrition-sensitive food security frameworks in SSA. It examines how these factors affect the implementation of nutrition and agriculture policies at the regional level as well as in Ethiopia. The first section discusses the role of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and other regional efforts addressing food and nutritional security in SSA. The second section assesses how food and nutrition security agendas play out at the sub-state level in Ethiopia and assesses the challenges of policy implementation. The concluding section discusses some continuing challenges of implementing multilevel food and nutrition security strategies and ways to address policy asymmetries and sectoralization through multilevel governance.

³See Trienekens (2011); Jenal and Cunningham (2015); Clark and Phillips (2013) for more on governing complexity in the food system.

REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS: CAADP, SCALING-UP NUTRITION AND THE NEW ALLIANCE FRAMEWORK

Though UN agencies and other stakeholders like the G8, OECD, USAID and World Bank have significant roles in setting the global agenda for food security (see Resnick et al. 2015), regional institutions have specific objectives designed to address the socioeconomic and environmental realities of targeted regions. In 2003, the African Union Summit made the first declaration on the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) as part of The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the technical arm of the African Union. The CAADP is a regional organization that develops and administers programs in the African Union. CAADP has the objective of increasing market access of agricultural producers in Africa.

Overall, the CAADP is focused on agricultural sector policies including improving national agricultural policy frameworks, strengthening institutions and governance as well as fostering trade, investment, economic growth and sustainable development (Zimmerman et al. 2009:20). NEPAD launched a Food and Nutrition Security Knowledge Sharing and Monitoring Platform. The focus of this platform is to inform decision-making within the CAADP framework by strengthening access to information and capacities of governments and stakeholders for improved informed decision making within the Scaling-Up Nutrition (SUN) movement (NEPAD 2014).⁴ A key challenge facing NEPAD and the CAADP is modernizing the agri-food system to compete in the global market beyond providing livelihood, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to a diverse and young population (FAO 2015b:17). There have been several efforts to link agriculture and nutrition, but the most recent attempt using the multilevel governance framework is the Nutrition Capacity Initiative.

In 2011, the CAADP (along with other stakeholders including the FAO, USAID, the Gates Foundation, World Bank, and the SUN Network) launched the Nutrition Capacity Initiative that focused on helping countries coordinate their nutrition and agriculture policies, programs and investment plans (FAO 2015c:14). CAADP's current focus on nutrition as an integral component of food security strategies places attention on several policy areas at the regional and national levels that are in need of revision (Byiers and Seravesi 2013:9). The implementation of CAADP has been met with varying levels of success. For example, during a 2014 SUN teleconference that brought together 34 SUN member African country

⁴In 2010 the Scaling Up Nutrition network was established in the wake of the global food crisis of 2008–2009. The SUN network provides a nutrition-sensitive framework bringing together multi-level stakeholders, evidence, nutrition goal setting, policy roadmaps, mobilizing resources and helps to implement and expand nutrition policies in 54 member countries (see Resnick et al. 2015; SUN 2014a).

representatives, several SSA countries reported on the progress made on linking agriculture and nutrition through the implementation of the Nutrition Capacity Initiative (see SUN 2014b). However, three main issues have emerged as barriers to putting the Initiative into action: coordination, planning, monitoring, and implementation (SUN 2014b:5). Several country representatives noted that growth in agricultural production within their countries was not translating into the increase of locally available nutritious foods. They stated that some government programs are heavily focused on expanding production, but not focused enough on promoting quality and diversified production and promoting behavioral change among consumers (SUN 2014b:4). Some meeting participants noted that inter-sectional coordination between and among ministries is a significant challenge to implementation of the Initiative. CAADP supports national governments' efforts to prioritize food security in agricultural policy, but has expressed concern about the lack of integrated approaches for tackling the challenges of nutrition and food security at the national level. For example, Ethiopia expressed the desire to develop a stronger accountability framework outlining how ministries contribute to nutrition, as well as strengthen capacities to improve coordination and communication. In Cameroon, parallel decision-making structures and conflicts of interest at different levels was noted as a challenge. Cameroon also stressed the need for a 'policy enabling environment' among ministries, while Benin reports its ministries face institutional and human resource deficits, namely at the local levels of implementation (SUN 2014b:11). Thus, while national strategies are not lacking in goals, they often lack 'concrete actions needed to ensure nutrition security' (CAADP 2014).

Market development and scaling up existing agri-food value chains are vital components to any food security framework. However, there may not be a clear roadmap of implementation for countries to integrate nutrition policy and economic development initiatives in agriculture through CAADP. More emphasis is being put on the commercial potential of SSA's domestic food market through top-down policy frameworks for food security. The differences in organizational structures for agri-food value chains across SSA may be factors to the difficulties of implementation. As Robinson et al. (2014:4) note, "regulatory agencies also have very limited capacity to reach [small] enterprises... (as) most businesses in agri-food value chains operate in the informal sector outside of formal regulations and these businesses make up the value chains from which the poor tend to source their food."

A related framework administered through CAADP, the New Alliance Cooperation Framework, aims to facilitate private sector investment through country level investment plans. The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (NAFSN) was devised by the G8 in 2012. The objectives of the framework are to

generate greater private sector investment in agricultural development, while scaling up innovation to achieve sustainable food security outcomes, reduce poverty and end hunger. The G8 policy platform is largely built on the coordination of stakeholder activities (G8 2012). Yet criticisms of the G8 New Alliance Cooperation Framework and its lack of investment in nutrient-dense crops have emerged. For example, more than half the 111 agreed upon private investment projects brokered through the New Alliance Framework focus on non-food crops. The second largest group of investments target staple crops such as rice and maize. The investment projects that do target nutrient-rich crops (nuts, pulses, dairy products, and poultry) are primarily geared toward export markets. Further, only four of the 111 proposed projects facilitated by the New Alliance Framework mention that specific nutrient-dense food production should be oriented to local markets (Robinson and Humphrey 2013). Though market development and private investment are important ways to scale-up existing agri-food value chains, attention must be paid to assuring that the increased production of micro-nutrient dense foods is captured by those who are most vulnerable to micro-nutrient deficiencies with limited ability to participate in formal market transactions. When these micro-nutrient dense foods are targeted by investment plans like the New Alliance, they often do not explain how producing more crops will lead to improving access to these foods by rural people with limited resources. As Robinson and Humphrey (2013) state, “it is well known that producing more food, even if this food is nutritious, does not guarantee that it gets to the people who need it, or that businesses have incentives to sell healthy foods.”

Fluctuating supply impacts the prices grain traders and assemblers receive for pulses on the international market. Unpredictable farm-gate prices also act as disincentives for smallholders to invest land, labor and time in cultivating pulses as cash crops (Akibode and Maredia 2011:iii; Ogang 2014). Inconsistent supply of nutrient-dense crops like pulses can have significant health implications for those who are most vulnerable to micro-nutrient deficiencies who rely on pulses as dietary protein sources. Without coordinated policy efforts that include agriculture, nutrition and poverty reduction goals, policy asymmetries and inconsistent supply of micro-nutrient-dense crops like pulses will likely continue (de Pee et al. 2010:162). More emphasis must be placed on operationalizing how to implement multi-level nutrition-sensitive food security frameworks, and what implementation looks like from the ground-up. It is essential that this effort take place in the planning stage of framework development.

ETHIOPIA: FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY STAKEHOLDERS AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

As a case study, examination of the modes of interactions between and among key stakeholders involved in food and nutrition security policy frameworks implemented in Ethiopia can help our understanding of how policy asymmetries and ministerial silos emerge and function and how such suboptimal phenomena might be addressed. The challenges to fuller implementation of nutrition-sensitive food security frameworks overlap and crosscut socioeconomic and political spaces. In this respect, Ethiopia shares some common ground with neighboring countries. However, Ethiopia also has a unique set of circumstances contributing to policy asymmetries and sectoralization in the food and nutrition security policy space that are important to note.

Ethiopia has a growing population approaching 100 million and like its neighbors, has significant nutrition and food security challenges. Ethiopia has a high rate of rural poverty and has widespread, chronic undernutrition. Between 2014 and 2016, 32%⁵ of the general population was undernourished (31.6 million people) (FAO 2016b). Micro-nutrient deficiencies, particularly in iron, iodine and vitamin A, are significant public health problems in Ethiopia. The 2011 Ethiopian Demographic and Health Study estimated that 44% of children are stunted (a decline from 58% in 2000), and 29% are underweight (a decline from 42% in 2000). Almost 10% suffer from wasting which has declined from 13% in 2000. The survey also revealed the level of chronic malnutrition among women is significant. Twenty-seven percent of women are either thin or undernourished (Government of Ethiopia 2013:10).

Eighty percent of Ethiopians work in the agricultural sector and farm for subsistence on plots of land typically less than one hectare in size. The major crops produced in Ethiopia are cereals, pulses and oilseeds. From 2004–2009 cereals accounted for approximately 87% of total agricultural production (30% maize), while pulses accounted for almost 10% and oilseeds account for around 3%. (USAID 2010:11). Though many SSA countries produce and consume pulses, Ethiopia is one of the top pulse producers and exporters in Africa. It is the seventh largest exporter of chickpeas in the world. In 2013, Ethiopia chickpea exports were worth more than \$25 million (USD) (ZernoExport 2013). Pulses account for 13% of the cultivated land and almost 9% of the total crop production in Ethiopia (Yirga et al. 2010). According to the FAO, Ethiopia produces more than 322,000 metric tonnes of chickpeas each year produced by more than 800,000 farmers (Merhatsidk 2014). Fifteen percent of the chickpea produced in Ethiopia is consumed domestically, while the rest is exported (IFPRI 2010:27).

⁵In this section, numeric figures are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Specific to Ethiopia, the New Alliance Framework has focused on increasing private sector investment in seed development, reducing barriers to competitiveness and increasing transparency. However, Pelletier et al. (2012) argue integrative nutrition-sensitive food security policies prescribed by multilevel frameworks like the New Alliance have posed many challenges. The ‘Joint Sector Review Assessment’ penned by the New Alliance states that the Ethiopian government “plans to improve the private sector’s ability to reach markets by reducing barriers to competitiveness and increasing transparency requirements” (ReSAKSS 2014:24). The Ethiopia government signed on to 15 policy commitments to be implemented between 2013 and 2015. According to the Joint-Sector Review of Ethiopia’s progress on its New Alliance commitments, out of the fifteen commitments, ‘good’ progress has been made on five as of early 2014.

The Government of Ethiopia in cooperation with stakeholders like USAID, IFPRI and the FAO has developed several policies and strategies focused on agricultural development (FAO/CGIAR 2015:15). Figure 1 is the author’s compilation adapted from the ‘agriculture & food security policy change map’ in Africa Lead (2013:7–8). This simplified version helps to illustrate where stakeholders and policy frameworks fit into the Ethiopian decision-making system regarding food and nutrition security. It also illustrates how stakeholders interact and engage in information exchange (indicated by the arrows).

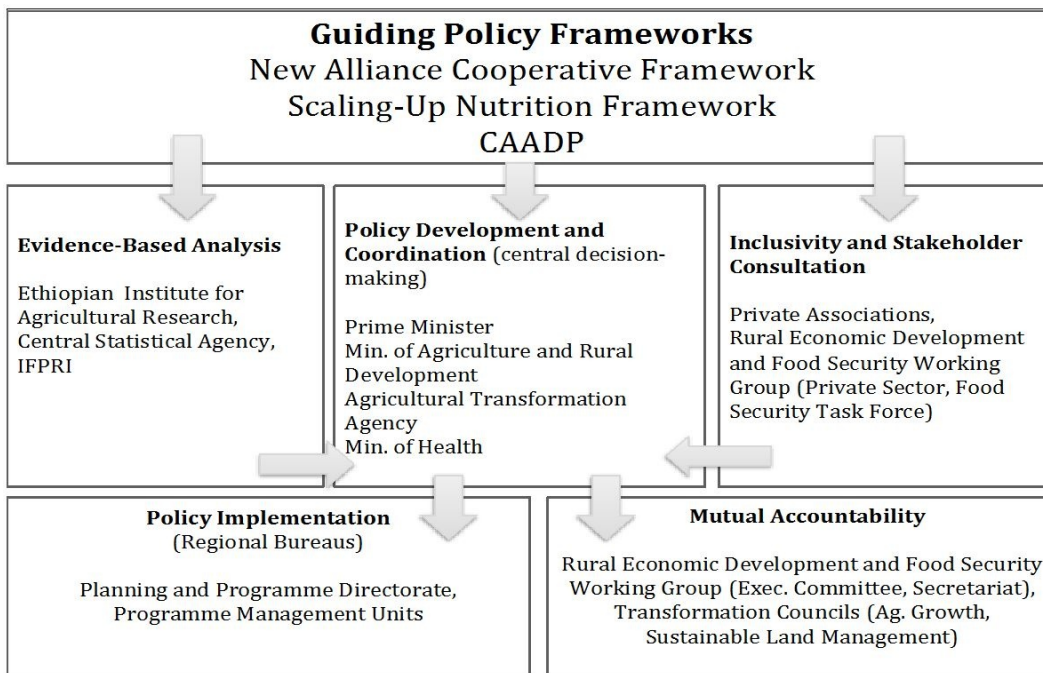


FIGURE 1. DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK FOR NUTRITION-SENSITIVE FOOD SECURITY IN ETHIOPIA

Various ministries have decision-making powers over agriculture and nutrition policies. Food regulation in Ethiopia is a shared responsibility of the Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD), Ministry of Trade and Industry, and Quality and Standards Authority of Ethiopia. However, coordination and cooperation among these government regulatory agencies is unclear (Temesgen and Abdisa 2015:65). The three specific ministries responsible for implementing agricultural, food and nutrition policies discussed here include the Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA), MoARD and MoH. The policies relevant to food and nutrition security platforms discussed here are the Agriculture Growth Program (AGP), the Ethiopia Agricultural Sector Policy and Investment Framework (PIF), the Food Security Program (FSP) and the National Nutrition Plan (NNP). Formally, these programs act as integrated frameworks meant to bridge the gaps between agricultural, food and nutrition policies. In practice, they face implementation challenges in the monitoring and evaluation phase. These implementation challenges contribute to policy asymmetries and reinforce sectoralization.

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Policy Investment Framework

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD) is the primary institution within the Ethiopian government developing agricultural and food security policy and coordinating implementation. It is the core body responsible for implementing CAADP in Ethiopia. The MoARD Planning and Programming Directorate is central to implementing the policy reform agenda. The Planning and Programming Directorate has responsibility for the coordination and planning process within MoARD. However, informants within the decision-making structure note that the Planning and Programming Directorate suffers from capacity constraints and high turnover. The effectiveness of the administrative support functions within the MoARD remains constrained by capacity limitations, including limited human resources, equipment, and communications (FAO/CGIAR 2015:12). The Regional Bureaus of Agriculture and Rural Development Regional offices (BoARD) are the principal implementers of all agricultural projects and programs at regional, zonal, and woreda (local) levels. Though the MoARD coordinates with BoARD, the details of policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and information exchange are not clear. A major challenge as noted by the Joint-Sector Review, is that the lower tiers of this structure struggle to meet the technical requirements. They also struggle to provide the financial resources needed to perform their roles effectively and communicate regularly with MoARD. Challenges facing effective information exchange, human and institutional resources create barriers to implementing policy at the grassroots level (ReSAKSS 2014:28).

The Government of Ethiopia launched an agriculture-sector specific Policy Investment Framework (PIF) in 2012 supported by the New Alliance Framework (G8 2012). The goal of the PIF is to increase stability and transparency in trade policy, while improving conditions for investment of the private sector. This framework focuses on value chain efficiency improvement, which includes investing in agricultural commodity marketing by strengthening agribusiness linkages along major commodity chains. After the finalization of the PIF, key stakeholders signed a joint communiqué for sharing costs and defining roles in PIF's implementation. Stakeholder involvement in preparation and implementation of the PIF differs significantly. For example, government and development partners are involved quite heavily, while private sector and non-state actors have a less active role in implementation.

The PIF includes support for farmer cooperatives and rural/local organizations that can help improve marketing and value addition through grassroots decision-making (MoARD 2010:10). Rural commercialization is a vital part of improving marketing channels and scaling up value chains. The PIF's primary focus is on improving economic conditions for increased agricultural production in Ethiopia through supporting investment by the private sector. The long-term goal of PIF is for Ethiopia to be a food-secure middle-income country by 2020. This is to be accomplished through agricultural and rural development strategies that include strengthening agribusiness linkages along major agricultural value chains. With CAADP, MoARD's PIF is designed to increase the production of raw materials such as chickpea, while committing to long-term investment in the sector.

Since its inception, there are policy gaps in the PIF and in the implementation of the New Alliance Framework in Ethiopia. For example, no policy states the responsibilities of several stakeholders and how they are to be coordinated along the value chain (production, distribution). There are issues with governmental transparency, as estimating funding and disbursements committed by the Government of Ethiopia is difficult (ReSAKSS 2014:24). Critics have called for stronger emphasis on nutrition within the PIF as well as a clearly defined role for agriculture in the National Nutrition Program (NNP). Yet, policy silos between agriculture, nutrition and public health act as barriers to implementing multi-issue, crosscutting nutrition-sensitive food security agendas within the country.

Though formally the MoARD is responsible for implementing the commitments outlined in the CAADP and food security initiatives implemented through the New Alliance Framework, coordination between MoARD and other sector ministries is unclear. For example, private investors in agriculture who wish to obtain complete government authorization to proceed with investments have to go through the Investment Agency, the Ministry of Natural Resource Management, MoARD, banks, revenue and customs authorities, and regional agricultural bureaus to obtain

separate authorizations ReSAKSS 2014:28). Information exchange is also an issue for engagement between government agencies and non-state actors due to a lack of human and institutional capacity. Even when invited to policy discussion forums, it has been observed that non-state actors have low turnout and their participation is often very limited (ReSAKSS 2014:29).

One MoARD informant participating in the FAO/CGIAR (2015) study stated that although governmental departments sign on to food and nutrition security programs, what is often not included in the programs is specific designation of responsibilities of each department for implementation. The informant states, “the MoA[RD] has signed the National Nutrition Program, but what it should do in practical terms has not been clearly spelled out.” The above comment demonstrates how difficult integrating top-down policy frameworks into existing national institutions is, and how the practicalities of implementation are not always given enough attention in the policy planning stage. There are significant challenges to coordinating nutrition policy across ministerial jurisdictions specializing in other issue areas like agriculture. Underdeveloped policy coordination plans devised at regional level can contribute to weakened channels of information exchange at the state level. This ultimately, results in policy asymmetries and unmet policy objectives, which stall progress on meeting the nutritional needs of those suffering from undernutrition.

The Ministry of Health and the National Nutrition Program

The Government of Ethiopia launched a National Nutrition Strategy (NNS) in 2008 to coordinate government sectors and development partners to improve nutrition. The National Nutrition Program (NNP), first launched in 2009, is the implementation framework for the NNS and is housed in, and managed by, the Ministry of Health (MoH). The MoH is an important governmental partner in executing the food and nutrition security agenda. The MoH's primary role is to develop policy and provide technical support to woreda⁶ health offices, while managing and coordinating the operation of the district health system. The MoH now has a shared role with the MoARD to oversee and implement multifaceted nutrition policies.

The NNP was revised in 2013 to clearly outline targets for each sector and includes plans to develop regional coordinating bodies and technical committees. It includes an emphasis on nutrition-sensitive approaches and mainstreaming of nutrition into other sectors, including agriculture, education, water and industry (GDFR Ethiopia 2013). The MoH is now responsible for collecting data and reporting back to partner governmental agencies with progress made in key NNP

⁶Woredas are third-level administrative divisions in Ethiopia.

issue areas. Despite joint efforts to address nutrition across related food and agriculture issue areas, sectoralization among ministries remains an issue. Stakeholders involved in the NNP state that they would like to see more attention paid to nutrition in the PIF, as well as a clear role for agriculture in the NNP. Although policy platforms are designed to integrate the food and nutrition security agenda, there may be difficulty translating proposed policy into action within ministries. In the coauthored FAO/CGIAR report on Ethiopia entitled ‘Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in East Africa’ (2015), informants within the government stress that “‘siloes’ perspectives on nutrition remain; nutrition is seen as a health and emergency issue while agriculture focuses on market-driven production” (FAO/CGIAR 2015:6). One attempt to address siloing between agriculture and nutrition objectives was the creation of the Agriculture Transformation Agency in 2010.

Agriculture Transformation Agency and the Agricultural Growth Program in Agribusiness and Market Development

With support from USAID, the ATA is a quasi-governmental institution created to support the government on agriculture policy, strategy and systemic issues. The ATA promotes transformation through enhanced support to existing structures of government, private sector and other non-governmental partners to address structural bottlenecks in the system. The ATA aims to deliver a priority national agenda to achieve inclusive agricultural transformation with food security (FAO 2015c:20). It works to strengthen markets through capacity building and linking producers with international buyers. It primarily serves the function of supporting and scaling up production to serve international markets for commodities like pulses (USAID 2015:51). It works to coordinate efforts of the MoARD and the MoH. For example, it has helped coordinate localized value chains to produce pulse crops to be used in the local production of complementary and supplementary foods designed to treat and/or prevent malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies (FAO/CGIAR 2015:29). Agriculture policy promoted by the ATA primarily focuses on promoting the commercialization of a few staple food and export crops such as sesame and maize. According to interviews conducted with researchers in the agriculture and nutrition fields within Ethiopia, the Ethiopian government invests far less in indigenous crops like barley, fenugreek and lentil, which play a significant role in everyday Ethiopian diets.⁷

The ATA is a program partner with the ‘Agricultural Growth Program-Agribusiness and Market Development (AGP-AMDe) program. The organization of the AGP-AMDe is based on a value chain approach to foster economic growth

⁷Personal Communication, Nov. 9, 2015

through innovation and investment in the agricultural sector in Ethiopia. Created in partnership with USAID's Feed the Future initiative, the AGP-AMDe targets several value chains including maize, honey, coffee, sesame, wheat and chickpea. These commodities are identified as having the economic potential to contribute to food security as well as sustainable development. The goal of this investment and technology transfer strategy is to target small landholding farmers, specifically women. This program is a central component to Ethiopia's AGP and involves multiple stakeholders such as the World Bank and other international donors while supporting the CAADP/NEPAD policy framework (ACDI/VOCA 2012). This program has been met with a considerable degree of success. It has been effective at integrating nutrition into policy platforms and training extension workers in nutrition education in terms of encouraging people to consume nutritious foods like pulses, while promoting the production of diversified crops.

International level policy initiatives and directives designed to guide policymaking at the state and sub-state levels, however, do not assure implementation at other levels of decision-making. In an interview with researchers at Mekelle University, it was expressed that the lack of quality standards and grading systems within the country hamper efforts to scale-up existing value chains, especially the distribution aspects. The lack of across-the-board food safety standards in Ethiopia acts as a barrier to development of a localized smallholder agricultural cooperatives.⁸ Another example of some challenges to scaling up pulse value chains is the series of informal links in the chain, maintained through trust-based interpersonal relationships between farmer cooperatives and grain traders. Trienekens (2011:51) argues that local value chains in situations lacking robust marketing institutions are often long, characterized by informal, trust-based exchanges, and are often difficult to map. The marketing system is very complex, as it links a network of actors as the crop moves from the production to the distribution stage. Shiferaw et al.'s 2007 study demonstrates that current mechanisms for delivering market information to producers and traders at local markets are insufficient, which limits the participation of smallholders in the existing formal market. Critics of the current structure suggest that there is a need for institutional innovations to reduce transaction costs through better coordination of marketing activities (Shiferaw and Teklewol 2007:49). To implement plans to scale-up existing value chains, frameworks developed at the international level must consider the normative behavior inhabiting value chains and existing infrastructural challenges that may be unique to the Ethiopian context.

The major challenge faced by nutrition and food security frameworks developed through the multilevel governance system is implementation at the state and sub-

⁸Personal Communication, Nov. 9, 2015.

state levels. Sectoralization and siloing limit the implementation of frameworks designed to scale up nutrition-sensitive agriculture. Still, attempts to address these challenges are underway, recognizing that institutional capacity, ground-up focused approaches and consideration of human resource capacity need to be included in food security strategies and long-term investment plans. Improving upon information exchange and communication between and among stakeholders is also key to moving toward nutrition-sensitive food security goals in Ethiopia.

CONCLUSIONS AND STEPS FORWARD: TOWARD NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

Though the idea of integrated and holistic approaches to tackling food and nutrition insecurity are attractive and in many ways crucial to addressing certain aspects of undernutrition and poverty, this paper demonstrates that policy asymmetries and sectoralization pose a significant challenge to effective governance in this issue area. It has also shown some difficulties in implementing top-down food security frameworks that do not include detailed guidelines for ‘who does what’ on the ground. Factoring in the costs of implementation, including costs to existing infrastructure and human resources, is essential to developing nutrition-sensitive food security strategies that will have long-term and sustainable impacts.

The FAO estimates that the population of SSA will continue to grow by 2.7% per year, which will put pressure on scarce environmental and economic resources. The intensifying effects of climate change will also put pressure on efforts to increase access and availability of nutrient-dense foods and land use management in SSA (FAO 2015b:2; Yirgu et al. 2013). These combined socioeconomic, and environmental pressures require action in addressing policy asymmetries that currently exist and attempting to prevent further sectoralization of policy areas by prioritizing policy (and stakeholder) coordination in planning stages. Addressing policy asymmetries and sectoralization comes down to identifying specific policies within agriculture departments that are counterproductive to increasing people’s access to nutrient-dense foods like pulses, as noted by Herforth (2012) and FAO/CGIAR (2015).

Effective multilevel nutrition governance requires an emphasis on nurturing institutions and prioritizing information linkages between agriculture, nutrition and public health. International initiative is useful sometimes but policy coherence needs to be prioritized at the regional, state and sub-state levels. This requires open lines of communication and exchange of information across ministries tasked with health, nutrition and food production issues. It also requires including the perspectives of those living in conditions of poverty in the development of frameworks to properly assess needs and allocate resources appropriately and effectively. Focusing on market development and increasing nutrient-dense food availability will have

limited impact on household food insecurity if economic insecurity restricts the ability to purchase nutrient and protein dense foods over the long-term (Pingali, Ricketts and Sahn 2013:175). For Ethiopia (and many other SSA countries), infrastructural challenges (transportation networks, water access, reliable energy sources) also need to be included in food and nutrition security strategies and assessments of needs. Otherwise, broad-based strategies will continue to face implementation problems due to lack of institutional and human capacity on the ground. An important part of the nutrition governance approach to food and nutrition security frameworks for SSA is the careful allocation of resources for implementation. Active identification of policy sectoralization and asymmetries where they exist is also important to avoid duplication and policy gaps. Including long-range follow-up evaluations of framework implementation if sustainable nutrition-sensitive food security in SSA is the objective is also crucial.

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